Message from the Head

Welcome to the slightly belated (my fault) June edition of the newsletter – In May our labs were mostly shut, less work going on under the auspices of Critical Research Designations. Now, Alberta is at stage 2 of opening-up and lockdown restrictions have eased. Many of us now have Expanded Research Designations (ERD) that allow labs to open, albeit with reduced staff numbers. If any labs have yet to do this, I strongly urge you to submit the application and get some lab work going. Feel free to ask for help. Looking forward, cases and mortality associated with COVID-19 continue to decline in the province. Alberta is doing well – the chances of an individual becoming infected are low and if the downward trend continues, further loosening of restrictions should be forthcoming. While this will be welcome, we all need to be alert to the fact that the majority of the population will not have had COVID-19. New infections would still be expected to spread rapidly unless constrained by virtue of: behavioural changes (physical distancing, working from home, etc); rapid identification, contract tracing and isolation; or pharmacological/immunological interventions. With active virus still in the community, and not being a closed system, further infections will occur. Currently there are no vaccines or other prophylactics available meaning that our behaviour and/or testing plus tracing and isolation remain the only tools to combat re-emergence of this pandemic. I therefore ask everyone to consider the need to stick to the current work protocols. I emphasize that, where possible, working from home is still the preferred option. Equally, maintaining good personal hygiene, especially hand washing, and physical distancing likely represents the most effective means of maintaining the COVID-19 reproduction number (R) < 1.

Other events in the news include the “Black lives matter” campaign. The spur for this movement was the tragic and avoidable death of George Floyd. The fact that similar events have previously occurred, including in multiple jurisdictions, and worse, still continue to occur, tells us there are considerable, likely systemic, problems to overcome. There is little doubt that racism is a large part of the problem. However, it is true to say that all lives matter equally and many these problems likely extend beyond overt racism. While, I’m not sure that this will change anytime soon, we as academics, we need to do our part. This means encouraging and making decisions based on good science, reason and fairness. Such actions promote equity, diversity and inclusion. Equally, where we see things that fall short of this mantra, we should aim to speak out (politely). For my part, I am committed to trying to make decisions that are based on good science, sound reason and fairness. Feel free to call me out. Recognizing the inequality of opportunity that has been afforded to different individuals can inform decision making. Trying to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion should promote the best possible teaching and research.

Finally, with the opening up of the province, it remains for me to say, enjoy the summer and make the most of the many local blessings that we have here in Calgary. None of us know what the next academic year will bring, but use the summer to refresh, complete/refine grants and come back ready to do your best.

Gutsy Walk

The annual Crohn’s Colitis Canada (CCC) Gutsy Walk fundraiser is scheduled as a virtual walk (although they prefer real money) for August 23rd, 2020. The success of this fundraiser is critical to the amount or research (i.e.grants) that CCC can support.

Many of you will know that all members of the GIRG/IRN have been or are recipients of CCC
With all good wishes, Derek McKay

1) Sign-up, fund-raise and do the walk.

2) Participate in a team (trainees in the GIRG/IRN have done this for a number of years now).

3) Make a donation; I am participating again and if you wish you can donate at https://crohnsandcolitiscanada.akaraisin.com/ui/GutsyWalk2020/participant/1658537

4) If you are unable to participate or donate, spread the word: let family and friends know about the value of this event to support research, basically and clinic, to IBD.

With all good wishes, Derek McKay

Department Awards

We are happy to announce the winners of the 2019-2020 year. A hearty congratulations to all of our trainees who worked hard this past year!

David Severson Undergraduate Award in Pharmacology

This prize was created to honour the excellent teaching contributions of Dr. David Severson, a recently retired member of our Department. Dr. Severson shared his passion for pharmacology and education in the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary. This prize is awarded to the Undergraduate students enrolled in MDSC 501 whom display the highest level of academic achievement.

2020 Winner: Jennifer Chow

J.S Davison Undergraduate Award in Physiology

This prize is awarded to the Undergraduate students enrolled in MDSC 404 who displayed the highest level of academic achievement.

2020 Winners: Bader Alharbi and Khaled Almutairi

David Proud Research Excellence Award

The David Proud Award aims to recognize exceptional research performed by trainees in the department of Physiology & Pharmacology. It is awarded to one graduate student and one postdoc, each with an outstanding research paper, published or accepted for publication within the previous 12 months.

Graduate Student: Erik van Tilburg Bernardes
Postdoctoral Fellow: Nuria Daviu

Trainee Corner

COVID19 Volunteer Opportunities
https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/volunteer

Funding

The 2019-2020 William H. Davies Medical Research Scholarship is NOW OPEN to applications.

Description: This scholarship supports students pursuing research in the medical sciences. Awards valued at $3,000 to $11,000 (1-year term), depending upon the candidate's qualifications, experience, and graduate program

Eligibility: Open to students registered full-time in a graduate program in the Cumming School of Medicine. If you have questions, please contact awardsgsse@ucalgary.ca

Mitacs: Foundations of Project Management
Aug 26 and 27th, 9:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m.
Location: TBA

This 2-day course provides an experiential, collaborative learning experience to enable participants to integrate the principles of project management, team building, group dynamics and leadership that participants can apply immediately and in their future careers and lives. Participants experience the processes of collaborative planning and management and can see the benefits firsthand.

Register here.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Engineering Solutions to COVID-19
Jun 18 9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. Online

Join us for our first-ever virtual Schulich Connects - a panel of researchers who will share their stories of responding to COVID-19 to protect your health. Register here.

WOWW Fitness Classes

The CSM’s Working Our Way to Wellness (WOWW) Committee is offering free online fitness classes. For more information on registration or to sign up for a class, click here. To receive weekly online class notifications, please email woww@ucalgary.ca.

Next Department Business Meeting:
Tuesday, September 22 2020
Location TBD

PhysPharm Achievements

Congratulations to Dr. Derek McKay who was awarded an honorary doctor of medicine from Linköping University.

Congratulations to the members of our department who were successful in the last NSERC Discovery Grant Competition: Drs. Michael Colicos, Richard Wilson and Jun Yan.

Congratulations to Dr. Ebba Kruz who was the 2020 recipient of the Award for Educational Leadership.