



April 1, 2024

Subject: Nomination for College of Medicine Team Achievement Award

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to nominate the incredible team in the Department of Academic Family Medicine for their outstanding efforts in transforming our CaRMS recruitment system from eight independent processes into a central provincial one. Over the past three years, this team has demonstrated significant dedication, innovation, and collaboration, pivotal in achieving this monumental outcome.

The team, consisting of members from our postgraduate administration, communications, finance and research divisions from communities across the province embarked on this journey with a shared vision to enhance our recruitment processes, maximize opportunities for candidates, improve faculty and candidate experiences, and enhance efficiency across the board. Their journey began with planning and strategizing, where they identified the inefficiencies in our existing systems and brainstormed innovative solutions to address them. While this began as a need to pivot to virtual interviews during the pandemic, the team took a strong quality improvement approach to building new processes and tools for the complex task of resident recruitment and selection.

The team had a commitment to inclusivity and respect throughout the entire process. Despite the diverse perspectives and ideas within the team, every member's input was valued and considered. Individuals were valued for the unique skills and perspectives that they brought to the process. This inclusivity fostered a sense of ownership among team members, ensuring that everyone was fully invested in the project's success. Through open communication channels and regular feedback sessions, they cultivated an environment where everyone felt heard and respected, regardless of their role or seniority.

They recognized the importance of building strong relationships with key stakeholders to ensure the project's success. By fostering open lines of communication and actively seeking input from all parties involved, they were able to navigate challenges, overcome obstacles and build strong processes.

In addition to their collaborative efforts, the team's technical expertise and innovation were truly exceptional. They spearheaded the development of new systems and a software platform tailored to our department's distributed nature, leveraging technology to enhance the selection experience. Their ability to adapt to changing requirements and incorporate real-time feedback was instrumental in successfully implementing these new systems. In addition, the collaborative work done across sites to support an engaging social media presence was essential, given the shift from focusing on in-person recruitment to virtual visits and interviews. The strength of Saskatchewan's prior recruitment had been in its people and the team was able to bring this to life without candidates having the opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and learners in person.



The impact of the team's actions cannot be overstated. By centralizing our recruitment processes and implementing new systems, they have significantly streamlined operations, expanded our candidate pool for selection, and improved the overall candidate experience. These elements have significantly contributed to the Department's successful CaRMS match elements over the last two years.

In conclusion, the team at the Department of Family Medicine has demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and collaboration in transforming our recruitment systems. Their unwavering dedication to excellence, coupled with their commitment to inclusivity and respect, has been instrumental in achieving this milestone. We wholeheartedly believe that their efforts deserve recognition, and we are honoured to nominate them for this award.

The team:

Ms. Jaclyn Randall, Manager, Finance and Administration and IT lead  
Dr. Sheila Smith, Program Director  
Dr. Rhonda Bryce, Research Officer  
Ms. Jana Knezakova, Communications Manager  
Ms. Shelley Christianson, Manager, Medical Education  
Ms. Michelle Kohen, Coordinator, Academic Programs  
Ms. Jalene Jepson, Coordinator, Enhanced Skills  
Ms. Kayla Woo, Department Assistant  
Ms. Dorothy Whitbread, Program Administrator, Moose Jaw  
Ms. Heidi Brown, Program Administrator, Prince Albert  
Ms. Kristen Huebner, Program Administrator, North West  
Ms. Bobbi McLaughlin, Program Administrator, South East  
Ms. Janice Skilliter, Program Administrator, Le Ronge  
Ms. Georgie Blackwell, Program Administrator, Saskatoon  
Ms. Tracy Arnold, Program Administrator, Regina  
Ms. Cynthia Carey, Program Administrator, Swift Current

Thank you for considering this nomination.

Sincerely,

Kathy Lawrence,  
Provincial Head

1. *Describe the team's specific actions in the last year, including how they demonstrated collegiality, respect, and inclusiveness, that have been key in the achievement of an outcome, or in making progress towards an outcome, in either a lead or supporting role.*

Espoused in the quote from Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much", the Advanced Diagnostics Research Laboratory (ADRL) has come together, representing Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT), research technologists, bioinformatics scientists, to achieve numerous impressive goals in cancer diagnostics over the last year.

The ADRL, operating out of the Health Science building within the College of Medicine, is a clinical and research laboratory that provides cancer diagnostic testing. The information from this tumour testing is required for patients to access precision oncology therapy and provides tumour sequencing for College of Medicine research projects and clinical trials at the Saskatchewan Agency. In the past year, the ADRL has been successful on all three of these fronts.

In the past year, the staff of the ADRL have achieved accreditation with the Western Canadian Diagnostic Accreditation Association (WCDAA) allowing for reporting of clinically validated tumour mutations for patients across the province for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and Saskatchewan Health Authority. This required a team-based effort over and above their daily duties to develop and implement a comprehensive laboratory quality management system. ADRL is the only accredited laboratory in the province to report molecular tumour testing. Without this resource, all patients would have their tumour tissue sent out of the province.

Their interdisciplinary team, combining research technologists, bioinformatics, and MLTs, led to successful implementation of comprehensive genomic analysis of ovarian and prostate cancer testing. This requires the MLTs to determine the best way to handle fresh tissue (not routinely done), the bioinformatics team to build the informatics pipeline to handle the 50GB of data per sample, and the manager, Karen, to develop the algorithm for how to make mutation calls for each patient. The research technologists manage all the data so that the pathologists and oncologists can use it for their research.

The development from the team of how to utilize fresh tissue and build a genomic pipeline within a new platform of analysis has allowed Dr. Laura Hopkins and me to utilize this comprehensive genomic analysis for ovarian cancer research. Dr. Hopkins has opened an investigator-led clinical trial with the work ADRL staff has completed. The success of this complete tumour testing data for ovarian cancer has culminated in their latest success, which is being validated against proprietary testing, meaning that our research samples are as accurate as the most expensive clinical tests available worldwide, and for a fraction of the cost to university researchers.

*Describe how the actions of the team have been exceptional.*

To be able to meet clinical standards and be successful in research funding, an incredible amount of feedback from pathologists, oncologists, and regulatory bodies needs to be accommodated. This includes changes to pre-analytic testing workflow, new processes to ensure patient identification is maintained throughout the testing process, continual adoption of new platform testing for new mutations to ensure Saskatchewan patients get cutting-edge diagnostics and allow for access to every available precision oncology drug on the Saskatchewan formulary, and changes to reporting so that oncologists receive clear results and in a timely fashion. The team at ADRL makes change so easy to work with by always having a message that their work is central to improving patient care. They are also an incredibly close team that has respect for everyone's role in the laboratory.

Personally, I have brought five research projects through ADRL (winning multiple awards), and every project is met with enthusiasm and interest in how the results are going to improve cancer care for Saskatchewan patients. I would be so excited to share this award with them to recognize how they have made such a difference in the career trajectory of medical students, residents, and myself. I recently was promoted to associate clinical professor at the University of Saskatchewan, and this was in no small part to the research that was conducted through the ADRL.

*2. Describe the impact of the team's actions.*

The impact of supporting diagnostic and research cancer analysis means that patient tissue does not have to travel out of the province for their tumours to be

tested. We have shown this increases the success of testing to nearly 100% and gives patients and oncologists answers about their cancer and cancer therapy twice as fast as when it was sent out of province.

The research supported by ADRL has allowed for over 4 million dollars in research funding between the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and the University of Saskatchewan from Ovarian Cancer Canada, Terry Fox Research Institute Marathon of Hope, and Genome Canada supporting interdisciplinary ovarian cancer research. This has led to numerous publications, abstract presentations, Dean's research projects, Grand Rounds invitations, residency research projects, and the support of an entire research infrastructure for the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.

The development of comprehensive genomic profiling for ovarian cancer supports an oncologist investigator-led clinical trial in the first real-world clinical trial for homologous recombination repair testing for ovarian cancer. The results of this trial are set to create national and international guidelines for HRR clinical testing and treatment for ovarian cancer in the next 3 years putting the University of Saskatchewan as a world expert in cancer testing and treatment.