

CONNECTIVE ISSUE

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meet the needs of our province**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Medicine
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CONNECTIVE ISSUE

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Connective Issue connects the College of Medicine alumni, faculty, students, staff and community.



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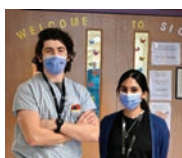
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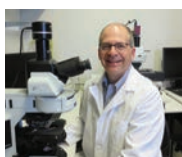
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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Dean Dr. Preston Smith (MD)

As you may have heard, April next year marks a new opportunity and challenge for me when I begin as the founding dean of the medical faculty at the University of Prince Edward Island.

I was born on PEI so this is for me a truly unique and personally important move, as it will also bring my wife, Jane, and I closer to many family members. But exciting as this is, there is truly a bittersweet element to it, as we were so warmly welcomed here, have spent nearly 10 amazing years in Saskatchewan, and being dean of this medical school has been the most challenging and rewarding work of my career.

With that final thought in mind, I do want to share an overview of the news of your college from this past year. As is always the case, it has been a busy year with so much good work taking place across our college and Saskatchewan. You may know the phrase we have used, especially in recent years, as we work and train in all corners of the province, that “our province is our campus.” While we have a lot of work to do to ensure that Indigenous, rural and remote communities are better served, we continue to improve and grow, with expansions in family medicine, increased rural learner opportunities and the very successful Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment.

Growth is a top area of focus for the CoM as we increase our medical doctor student seats from 100 to 104 with this past August’s intake, and to 108 in 2024. We offer a residency seat now and have our first resident in medical oncology, with plans to expand to even more specialty areas in the near future, including dermatology with a targeted start date of July 2024. The School of Rehabilitation Science is providing its Master

of Physical Therapy program to a class size of 55 learners now, up from 40, and is moving along in work to add much needed programs in occupational therapy and speech language pathology to its offerings.

We have also grown in another area that is a top focus and priority, with approval last April and work now underway to create a new Department of Indigenous Health and Wellness in our college. Recently, we announced that Dr. Janet Tootoosis has moved from the interim vice-dean of Indigenous health to the permanent leader of this critical unit. Her work ethic, knowledge and wisdom are highly valued and so important for ongoing improvement in how we support Indigenous people and communities in Saskatchewan. She and her team will lead the work to bring people and other resources to the new department.

As well, the college’s Division of Social Accountability is now part of the Office of the Vice-Dean Indigenous Health. This is another important step in our work to improve as an equitable, diverse and inclusive college for all people while maintaining a strong focus on Saskatchewan’s critical need to improve healthcare for Indigenous peoples.

Our Postgraduate Medical Education unit has been busy for many months preparing for a Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and College of Family Physicians of Canada regular accreditation review taking place November 26 to December 1 this year. This is right around the corner as I write this, and I do commend the PGME team, residents and faculty for their work and participation in this full review of all our residency programs and sites and of our institution and its oversight of residency education.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE



CONNECTIVE ISSUE

College of Medicine Community Advisory 2023-2024

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Ms. Kelsey Kougiya (Alumni Relations)

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Dr. Stella Blackshaw (Professor Emerita)

Dr. Jim Cross (MD'73)

Dr. Karen Shaw (MD'83)

Dr. Palak Suryavanshi (MD'19)

Dr. Wendy Vogel (MD'89)

Mr. Yousef Omar (Class of 2027)

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Director of Advancement

Sherry Buckler

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Jeff Aramenko

Advancement Officer

Jared Fingler

Alumni Relations Officer

Kelsey Kougiya

Clerical Assistant

Olivia Laybourne

Cover photo credit

Tammy Zdunich Photography

I am thrilled to share with you the incredible progress we've made over the past year in representing and advocating for our community.

Following a comprehensive review of the College of Medicine Alumni Association's operations, we recognized the need for thoughtful adjustments to secure the vibrant and sustainable future of our cherished community, and we took action.

The dawn of a new chapter is upon us! With the unveiling of the College of Medicine Alumni and Community program we mark an exciting and pivotal step in sustaining the legacy first realized 40 years ago with the birth of the Alumni Association. While this endeavour may seem daunting, it holds the promise of transforming our operations to better foster sustainability in our activities, to strengthen bonds and provide enhanced communications, and to create new opportunities for philanthropy within our community.

I couldn't be more enthusiastic about the Alumni & Community program, as it equips us to better serve the needs of our esteemed alumni, students, residents, faculty, and leadership within the USask College of Medicine. This initiative offers a revitalized platform for every member of our community to express their

individual voices while standing united as part of a rich tapestry of multigenerational and multicultural representation. It celebrates the myriad career paths and passions that are present within our community and recognizes the beautiful intersections that occur in the daily lives of our members. This unity is perfectly encapsulated in our new motto, "We are the pulse of the college."

I encourage you to become actively involved in shaping this exciting journey, and it all begins with joining our Community Advisory Committee. This committee, evolved from the former Alumni Association Board of Directors, offers you the chance to influence our funding priorities, outreach initiatives, and engagement opportunities, all aimed at benefiting the people of the USask College of Medicine.

I am looking forward to collaborating with the college to forge a bright and progressive future for our entire community. As a proud alumnus, physician, mentor and leader, I am the pulse of the college, just as are you.

Together, we are the people of the College of Medicine, the alumni and community.

Dr. Terry Zlipko (MD'74)

Inaugural Co-Chair, Community Advisory Committee

Past President, College of Medicine Alumni Association

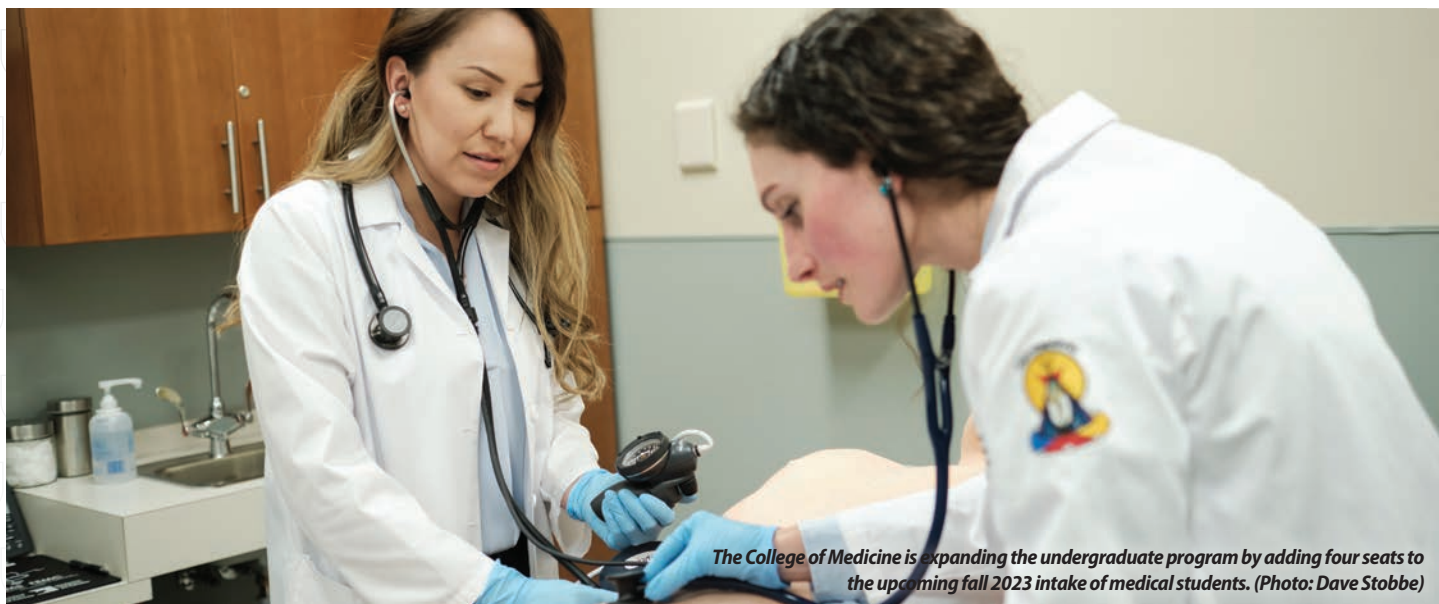
Join the Community Advisory Committee

Do you have the desire to steer meaningful change? Do you want to support the alumni community and make a positive impact on current medical students?

Please contact Alumni Relations at kelsey.kougiya@usask.ca for more information.

FEATURES

University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine set to expand medical school seats



The College of Medicine is expanding the undergraduate program by adding four seats to the upcoming fall 2023 intake of medical students. (Photo: Dave Stobbe)

Over the next two years, Saskatchewan is increasing physician numbers in the province by enhancing medical education opportunities for future doctors.

The College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan is expanding the undergraduate program by adding four seats to the upcoming fall 2023 intake of medical students. This will increase the total number of seats from 100 to 104.

"The ability to educate and train more physicians right here in the province is a key element of Saskatchewan's Health Human Resources (HHR) Action Plan to keep building on our success," Health Minister Paul Merriman said. "Physicians trained in Saskatchewan are more likely to look for opportunities closer to home and build their practice right here in Saskatchewan."

Currently, the 100 seats are divided 60/40 between Saskatoon and Regina. The Regina campus recently expanded to accept 40 first

year students, allowing those students to complete their full degree based in Regina for the first time.

The College is making plans now for even further expansion in the fall of 2024 with an additional four seats, bringing the total medical school seats to 108. The new seats, while based in Saskatoon, will involve training in various locations throughout the province. Whether based in Saskatoon or Regina, all medical students in the program take some of their training in other communities and rural areas of the province during the four-year medical doctor degree.

"Training more physicians in the province is essential to meeting the long-term health care needs of Saskatchewan people," Advanced Education Minister Gordon Wyant said. "Our government has a strong partnership with USask and we are focused on furthering the College of Medicine's long-standing role of preparing excellent physicians to serve our residents."

"The College of Medicine is excited and highly supportive of these seat expansions in our medical doctor program," College of Medicine

Dean of Medicine Dr. Preston Smith said. "Our team is working hard to ensure we are well-positioned to provide the high standard of medical education we already deliver here to these additional and very welcome learners in our program."

The College of Medicine also recently increased postgraduate residency seats from 120 to 128 including the addition of family medicine seats to the southeast area of the province.

The ministry continues to work with the College of Medicine to seek opportunities to expand medical training seats where possible and where capacity allows in order to meet the needs of patients in Saskatchewan.

For more information, contact:

Health Regina

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Media Relations

Saskatchewan Health Authority

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FEATURES

New USask Indigenous health department first of its kind in Canada



The new department will be Indigenous-led and ensure research is informed by Indigenous community needs. (Photo: Paige Bell)

 AMANDA WORONIUK

The University of Saskatchewan's (USask) College of Medicine is creating a first of its kind department in a Canadian medical school, dedicated to improving the health outcomes of Indigenous Peoples in Saskatchewan through academics and education.

The Department of Indigenous Health and Wellness received University Council approval in April 2023, and will serve as a welcoming space for Indigenous health researchers, learners, and faculty in the college. Indigenous health is a priority for the college and its new department will include collaborations across the university.

"We're creating the structure that will allow Indigenous voices to tell us where we need to go," said Dr. Janet Tootoosis (MD), interim vice-dean Indigenous health. "We're creating a community but we're also creating a physical space where people can connect and learn about what's happening in the College of Medicine."

The new department will be Indigenous-led and ensure research is informed by Indigenous community needs. It will also influence how medical education and scholarship incorporates Indigenous knowledge and systems.

"It's important that the College of Medicine has this department because Indigenous people are harmed in the health system," said Tootoosis.

The department goals are to meaningfully address Indigenous health inequities, knowledge translation, systemic racism, and the scarcity of strength-based Indigenous health research. It will also build capacity for the college to effectively respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action.

Tootoosis started in her role in June 2022 with the task of establishing a new administrative home for Indigenous health in the college. With her team in the Office of the Vice-Dean Indigenous Health (OVDIH), Tootoosis led the proposal development and stakeholder engagement process. This included key consultations with the university's governance office, provost office, and vice-president academic office.

To begin the process, Tootoosis and the OVDIH team created a working group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty and staff. This working group was responsible for drafting the department proposal and engaging in stakeholder consultation.

This first step involved understanding the vision from the college's Indigenous Health Committee (IHC), said Tootoosis. The IHC was formed more than 20 years ago to strengthen links between Indigenous world views and the medical community. The working group then engaged in robust consultation with more than 80 internal and external stakeholders including college and university leaders, Indigenous health researchers, and Indigenous leaders and communities.

"All of those (Indigenous health committee) members, past and present members were consulted. As well as internally – our leadership, our department heads, our faculty that had special interest, and externally – Indigenous communities, tribal councils and various community members," said Tootoosis.

The community engagement process incorporated what Tootoosis refers to as "authentic community engagement," which includes mutual learning and equal partnerships. Tootoosis stressed the importance of respectfully engaging and listening to Indigenous communities to understand the challenges from their perspective.

"We are trying to understand 'what are those challenges' and what – if anything – could the College of Medicine do to change the issues that we're having," she said. "That information will allow the college to respond in an informed manner versus sitting around a table and determining what's in the best interest for Indigenous populations."

External stakeholder consultations took place with Indigenous leaders at the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, various First Nations Tribal Councils and Grand Councils, and Indigenous educational leaders at institutions such as the First Nations University of Canada.

After the consultation process was complete, Tootoosis presented the department proposal at the college's faculty council in September 2022. The proposal included more than two dozen letters of support from college and university leaders, and key provincial stakeholders. The proposal received overwhelming support to move forward.

Tootoosis stressed the importance of respectfully engaging and listening to Indigenous communities to understand the challenges from their perspective.

Further presentations at University Council, the Board of Governors, and Senate resulted in the department being formally approved by the university in April 2023. A celebration and formal launch for the new department was held in late September.

Now, Tootoosis and her team will focus on the first phase of implementation – staffing the department and building its capacity in collaboration, mentorship, and networking.


"The next steps really are that recruiting and engaging faculty in duties to build the department and begin to work toward meeting the department's goals," she said. "Along with that, there will be student supports, staff supports, networking, and we have an expansion of space."

Tootoosis sees great things ahead.

"There is an opportunity for this department not to follow the traditional construct of a clinical department. And so that is an exciting opportunity for the College of Medicine on how we can enhance the structure to improve collaboration," said Tootoosis.

The department will be a "transdisciplinary hub" for research, and will foster collaboration by bringing together Indigenous health researchers from across the university, she said. The combined expertise will expand research opportunities not only within the college and USask, but also across Canada.

"All of that (collaboration) is going to result in researchers advancing research, and then increasing the knowledge translation from the research," said Tootoosis. "The research is going to become meaningful to Saskatchewan, and if it becomes meaningful to Saskatchewan, it becomes meaningful to the world."



Donor Spotlight: Drs. Lawrence and Penny Clein

L-R: Drs. Lawrence and Penny Clein established a scholarship for students studying palliative care. (Photo: Submitted)

LAWRENCE CLEIN, MBBS, BSC, FRCS(C)

The Clein's generous gift to the College of Medicine is both a testament to their kindness and an inspiring story.

The Drs. Lawrence and Penny Clein Scholarship in Palliative Care is given to a fourth-year medical student who demonstrates the potential and the interest to pursue a career related to palliative care. Inspired by his experiences working in palliative care, Dr. Lawrence Clein and Dr. Penny Clein founded this scholarship with his wife to support students who share his commitment to this area of medicine.

Palliative care today has become a very sophisticated specialty that focuses on patients with an incurable disease and those approaching the end of life. Care is provided by teams that manage pain and other physical symptoms along with spiritual, social and psychological concerns. This approach relieves the burden for family members and maintains dignity and a sense of control for the patient.

Of course, care of dying people was always a major concern of communities. However, in the past, it was the responsibility of the spiritual leaders who came to the homes of the dying to pray for their souls, so they might get to heaven. Doctors were kept away.

Following World War II, there was an advance in medicine with an emphasis on curing patients. A death was considered a failure of treatment and the dying patient would be segregated in the large 25 to 30 bed ward behind drawn curtains, and never visited by us on ward rounds.

I started medical school in 1953 and remember how we always bypassed these segregated patients and were never taught anything about care for the dying.

All that changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, following the lead of Cicely Saunders, who was first a nurse, then a social worker and finally a physician. The hospice movement was founded in the United Kingdom (UK) and then shortly after in the United States (US) by another great physician, Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (MD). Soon, hospices were all over the UK, US and Europe, and now all over the world.

I started my career as a palliative care physician in 1998 under the mentorship of the late, wonderful Dr. Srinivas Chari, in Saskatoon. Srinivas had been mentored by Dr. Balfour Mount (MD) of Montreal who had visited Cicely Saunders and he created the first palliative care unit in a hospital. Mount also introduced the term 'palliative care' rather than hospice care, which remains today.

Palliative care units in hospitals are employed for the acute management of pain, dyspnea and delirium. They are hospices for the terminal care of patients, needing end-of-life care management that cannot be given at home.

After training, I became American board certified in palliative care and worked in Regina for 15 years, eventually retiring in 2018. By this time, I had started a scholarship in palliative care for students to encourage learning in this subject. I am happy with the progress so far.

I have left a bequest in my estate for the continuation of this scholarship. After 50 years of connection with the University of Saskatchewan, it seems like a good thing to do. **I would like to take the opportunity to encourage those of you getting older to consider doing the same for an area of activity of your interest.**

A new era: Alumni Association transforms into a thriving community

 **KELSEY KOUGIYA, ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICER**



Change is an inevitable part of life, and as the saying goes, the only constant is change. The USask College of Medicine Alumni Association has embraced this notion by announcing a significant transformation in the structure and approach of its operations. As we bid farewell to the Alumni Association of years past, we usher in a new era with the introduction of the College of Medicine Alumni and Community program. This landmark shift aims to redefine how the college connects with its alumni and marks a pivotal moment in the rejuvenation of engagement initiatives for our entire college community.

Launching in Fall 2023, the Alumni and Community program is designed to create an environment where every individual feels valued and supported, irrespective of their career stage or program. This inclusivity will foster a stronger sense of belonging, networking, and collaboration among the diverse group of individuals associated with the college than ever before.

Traditionally, alumni associations have been reserved for graduates and former students. However, the USask College of Medicine recognizes that its community extends beyond alumni and that every member, from students and residents to professors and practitioners, can play an integral role in shaping the institution's future. Welcoming these new

demographics into the ranks of the Alumni and Community program strengthens the ties we all share and allows our alumni to be credited for the multifaceted roles they hold within their alma mater. When graduates return to the College of Medicine in their career they share their intuition, insight, and wisdom with those in their environment.

With sights set to the future, you can expect a steadfast increase in both Saskatchewan-local engagement but also into areas of high constituent density across North America, emphasizing that geographical location should not be a barrier to belonging to this community. With the need for global reach, digital first communications will be the priority approach for consistent and expansive delivery.

Guidance and consultation from our community will be essential to ensuring relevant and timely adaptations and support now and into the future. Recruitment has now begun for our first Community Advisory Committee, signifying a move away from a formal and structured governance toward a dynamic and open platform, with committee membership open to anyone with a vested interest in shaping engagement initiatives. The Community Advisory Committee is entrusted to be a platform that relays information out to our medical community and

peers, listens to the feedback that is returned, and acts in the best interest of the network.

The success of the new Alumni and Community program can only be achieved through the active participation and support of each individual in our network. As a crowdfunded program, the impact and efficacy of engagement initiatives is directed relative to the generosity of our community. Please consider making a charitable gift today to ensure not only the success of this program but its impact for our community.

The college's pulse is stronger than ever, beating with the energy and diversity of its extended community. As the new Alumni and Community Program takes shape, it heralds a bright new era for its members. Each member plays a vital role in shaping the future, making this change a celebration of the college's legacy and a step toward its continued success.

We are the pulse of the college.

Make a charitable contribution to the Alumni and Community Program.

<https://donate.usask.ca/online/medicine.php>

For more information on joining the Community Advisory Committee, contact kelsey.kougiya@usask.ca.



Baetz appointed interim dean

Dr. Marilyn Baetz has been appointed interim dean at the College of Medicine, as Dr. Preston Smith will formally complete his deanship effective Apr. 1, 2024, and will be on administrative leave from Jan. 1 to Mar. 31, 2024.

Baetz will hold this role for a one-year term, from Jan. 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2024, or until a new dean is appointed. She currently serves as the vice-dean, Faculty Engagement in the college, a role she has held since Nov. 1, 2019. In this position, she is the college's senior leader for all matters related to faculty recruitment, retention, and engagement, as well as a liaison between the college and the physician community.

Baetz is a full professor of psychiatry in the college and previously served as the provincial head of the Department of Psychiatry from 2010 to 2019—a joint position with USask and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). In this administrative role, she strategically led a diverse provincial department of physicians and scientists toward a tripartite mission for education, research and clinical excellence. An outstanding researcher, strong leader and dedicated mentor, she has worked as a psychiatrist for 25 years, during which time she has trained many undergraduate students and residents in psychiatry.



Overcoming the odds to receive one of Canada's highest honours

When he arrived in Canada, Dr. Haissam Haddad (MD) was told he had less than a one per cent chance of ever working in the country's medical system.

Thirty-seven years later, the acclaimed cardiologist has been appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada for his contributions to the medical field, notably within the Ottawa Heart Institute and University of Saskatchewan (USask).

"Dr. Haddad's compassionate and empathetic approach, combined with his expertise in medicine and education, greatly contributes to the betterment of society," said Dr. Preston Smith, dean of the USask College of Medicine.

"His remarkable leadership, determination, and humility have garnered immense respect and admiration from his colleagues, including myself. Dr. Haddad is a valuable asset to our college and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and we deeply appreciate his exceptional leadership and experience."

Haddad is now the Provincial Head of the Department of Medicine at the USask College of Medicine and Provincial Head of Medicine for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, but the Syrian-born physician faced an uphill climb to get to this point. He came to Canada in the late 1980s after practising for three years as a family physician in his home country.

He had planned to join his brother to study cardiology in France, however Haddad and his wife decided to go to Halifax, N.S. instead, where her family already lived.

When he arrived, he sought advice from an Arabic-speaking pathologist,

who told him to open a pizza shop or a grocery store. It only fueled Haddad's drive to succeed.

"This upset me, and it inspired me," he said.

Haddad was fluent in Arabic and French but had to learn English before writing his Canadian licensing exam. Three years later, he passed it and went on to study general internal medicine at Dalhousie and a cardiology residency at the University of Alberta.

Haddad says he was drawn to cardiology because of how dynamic the field is. He says a cardiologist can "save someone's life in five minutes" in intensive care, while also being able to give heart failure patients a new life through transplantation.

His interest in this area of cardiology soon led to a prolific research career, beginning after he became a faculty member in the Division of Cardiology at Dalhousie University.

"Soon after starting my faculty position, I realized there are too many clinical questions with no answers," he said. "I thought I was obligated as a physician – obligated to my patients – to work hard to find answers."

In addition to a long list of publications, his contributions to the field include writing heart transplantation and heart failure management guidelines with the Canadian Cardiovascular Society and serving as one of two Canadian contributors to the U.S.-based National Institutes of Health Heart Failure Network.

After working as a cardiologist in Halifax for four years, Haddad was recruited to lead the Ottawa Heart Institute's Heart Failure and Transplant Programs, where he tripled the number of transplantations performed and created a successful heart failure fellowship program.

In 2016, Haddad was recruited to lead the Department of Medicine at USask. Since then, he's enlisted more than 100 specialists to the department, doubling its size. He's continued his research work through mentorship of the USask Cardiovascular Research Group, and bolstered faculty engagement and participation in research throughout the department. As provincial head of the department, he serves on the senior leadership of the College of Medicine and Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Haddad and his wife have also raised two children, both born in Canada. One is a geriatrician and the other, a cardiologist, is beginning advanced training in interventional cardiology and structural heart disease at Dalhousie University, in Halifax.

"Before this award, my biggest accomplishment was to convert having no hope to hope, and to become a successful person and a physician," said Haddad. "When I learned more about this award, I see that it summarizes my 37 years in Canada."

Reversing the effects of Alzheimer's Disease: Dr. Ron Geyer on NeuroEPO

 RESEARCHERS UNDER THE SCOPE, OFFICE OF THE VICE-DEAN RESEARCH

For decades, families have watched Alzheimer's disease steal their loved ones' cognitive function. It's the most common form of dementia; one that affects a third of people over the age of 85.

It's a disease Dr. Ron Geyer (PhD) and Dr. Andrew Kirk (MD) want to tackle.

Right now, most pharmaceuticals target the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, without addressing its root cause. Most lose their effectiveness after three months.

Geyer, a biochemist and professor of pathology at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine, said a novel protein could change that.

"They did a first clinical trial with this drug and they showed pretty exceptional efficacy," said Geyer.

NeuroEPO, first developed by researchers at the Center for Molecular Immunology in Cuba, stimulates red blood cells in the brain. It's a recombinant form of the naturally produced erythropoietin protein (EPO), which stops neuron cells from dying, promoting their growth and communication mechanisms.

During its first round of human trials in early-stage Alzheimer's disease patients, 82 per cent of those receiving the treatment saw stabilization in their cognitive function. For more than half receiving the drug, cognitive function improved.

Alzheimer's disease progressed and worsened for almost everyone receiving the placebo.

"We decided to move this forward and do a Phase Two trial in Canada," Geyer said.

Once the study is approved by Health Canada, trials will involve between 80 and 100 patients. Geyer said so far, everything is on track to begin testing NeuroEPO this summer.

The trick, he said, is delivering the drug directly to the brain.

"It breaks down in the blood quicker than normal EPO, so that's good in that it doesn't cause side effects," Geyer said.

He said his research group has teamed up with Rocket Science Health Inc., a company that's developed a way to deliver NeuroEPO through the nose to the brain.

Compared to a COVID-19 nasal swab, Geyer said the delivery mechanism for this drug is 'much more comfortable'.



Dr. Ron Geyer (PhD) is a biochemist and professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. (Photo: Submitted)

Working with the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation, Geyer said his team is also expanding PET scans and neurological diagnostic tools for patients taking part in the study.

"We're hoping that with that, with those diagnostic assays, including MRI to measure the total brain volume, that the clinicians can use this information immediately as the trial starts to better diagnose their Alzheimer's patients, provide more clarity on the diagnosis, let them develop a treatment plan earlier."

Geyer said patients and doctors in Saskatchewan have already contacted his team, trying to sign up.

"We want to make it as broadly available as possible," he said.

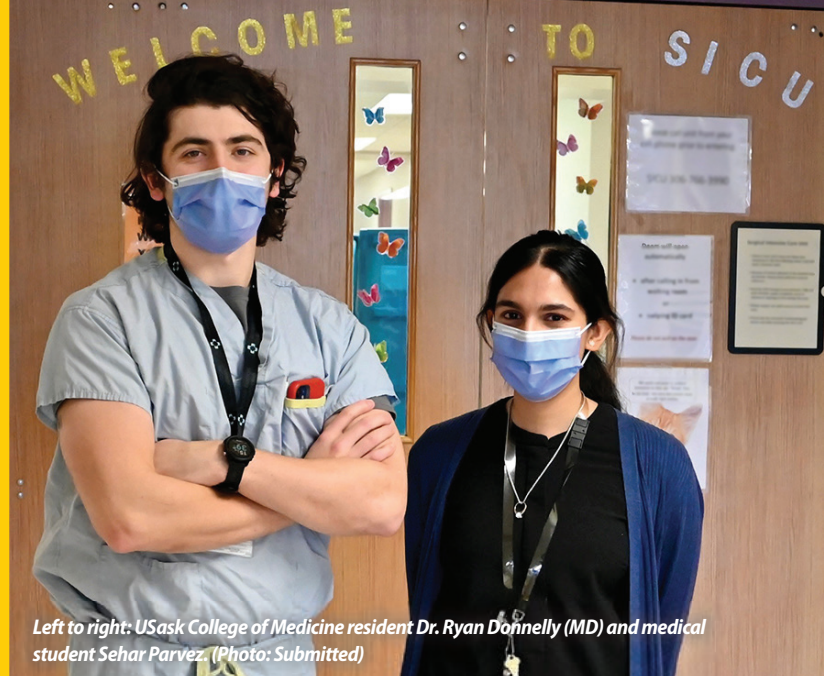
Still, NeuroEPO will not be widely available, until a third-phase trial in the future which proves the drug's efficacy, shows no adverse effects, and involves at least 300-500 patients with Alzheimer's disease.

Geyer said his team is up to the challenge.

"It's almost impossible to find someone who doesn't know someone who has some form of dementia," said Geyer. "The ultimate goal is to keep people out of the hospital."

When Can ICU Patients Be Discharged Home

 RESEARCHERS UNDER THE SCOPE, OFFICE OF THE VICE-DEAN RESEARCH



Left to right: USask College of Medicine resident Dr. Ryan Donnelly (MD) and medical student Sehar Parvez. (Photo: Submitted)

Patients in intensive care units often move to a regular ward before they're discharged and sent home. Increasingly, hospitals are skipping that step, sending a handful of ICU patients directly home.

"We were really looking at analyzing the data of safety in terms of discharging patients home safely in terms of outcomes such as mortality, or a re-admission to hospital," said Dr. Ryan Donnelly (MD), who's currently finishing his first year of residency in Regina.

He said for young patients without serious co-morbidities, direct discharges to home are an option.

"If you have a patient who's in the ICU who has been waiting for a ward bed and ends up getting well enough to go home, it kind of started that way," he said.

"The data analyzing it came after the practice started."

Under the supervision of Dr. Eric Sy (MD) and Dr. Vincent Lau (MD), Donnelly teamed up with Sehar Parvez, who's now in her fourth year of medical school at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina campus.

Their team's work was first published in

September 2021 in the Canadian Journal of Anesthesia, with a subsequent article published in January 2023's journal of Critical Care Medicine.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic limited any direct interviews with patients, Donnelly and Parvez started by combing through more than 8,000 papers that mentioned direct-to-home discharges.

"The evidence that we've gathered from my meta-analysis is that it can be safe," said Donnelly. "It's something that is going to be happening more and more."

Their next step was to put together a questionnaire and sending it to healthcare providers across the country. They received more than 350 responses.

"About a third of healthcare providers didn't know that there is an increase in the direct discharge home from the ICU," said Parvez. "I thought that was very interesting."

She and Donnelly found critical care providers were more likely to feel comfortable discharging an intensive care patient directly home, especially compared to healthcare workers who weren't as familiar with the practice.

Parvez went on to analyze outcomes for 120 patients who were in the hospital between February 2020 and May 2021. Each was

discharged directly home after spending time in the critical care unit.

"We found that 32% of our direct discharges to home at that time were from substance overdose," said Parvez.

She and Donnelly studied outcomes for patients, watching whether they had to be re-admitted to hospital within 30 days to a year.

Parvez said the practice is safest when a patient has health care support workers checking in with them, documenting and communicating changes immediately to their family doctor.

In this episode, both Donnelly and Parvez share what it was like to be a medical school student during a global pandemic, as they learned to do research under the supervision of clinicians at the Regina General Hospital.

"We had to learn very quickly though how to do research in a virtual environment," said Parvez. "We didn't know how to use Zoom right away. We didn't know how to share a screen right away,

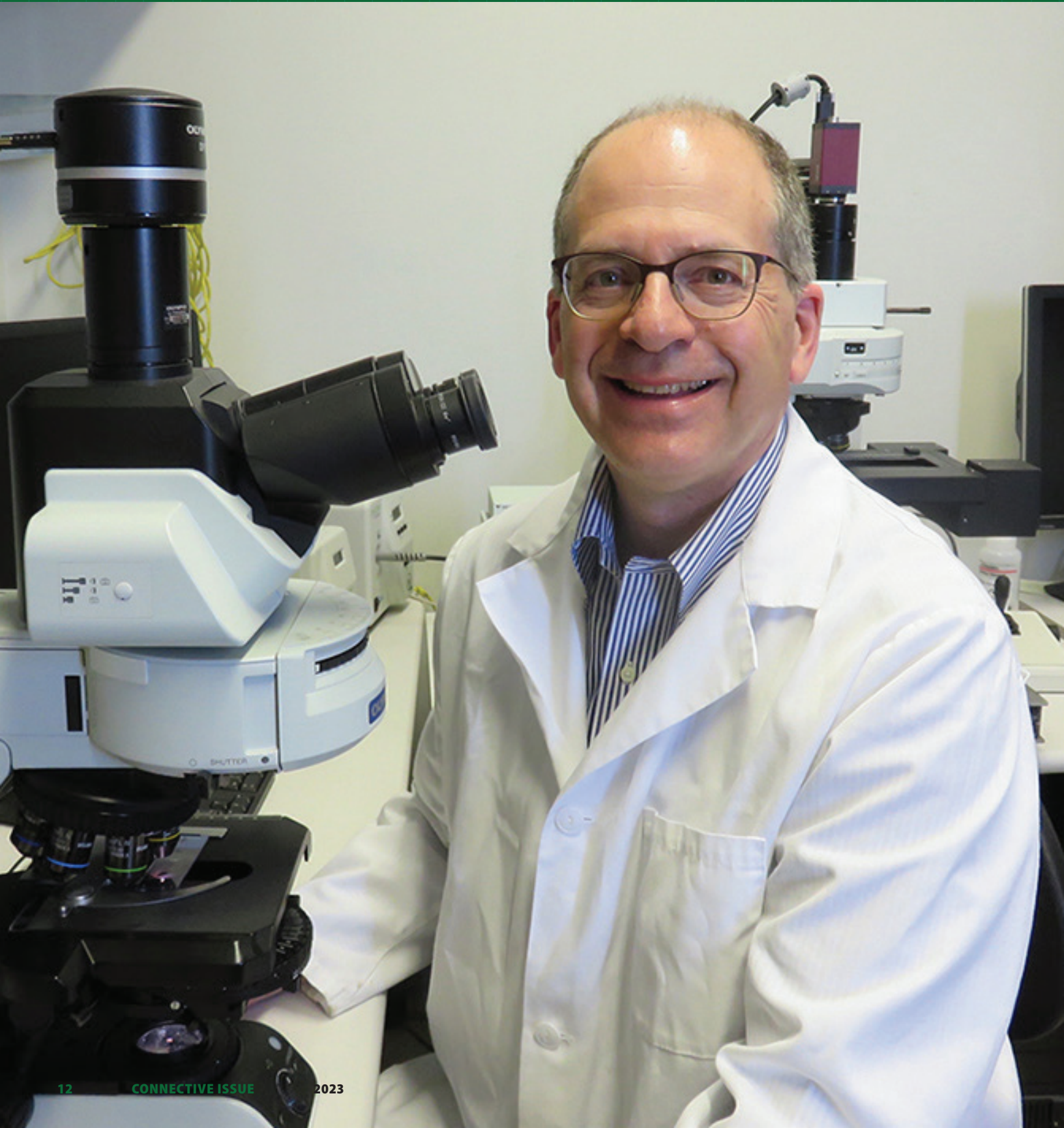
She now is looking at internal medicine as a potential career path.

"It informed my desire to want to work on being a mentor, being an educator, and continuing to practice evidence-based medicine," said Donnelly, a family medicine resident. "It was certainly rewarding."

GIVING

Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation Proud to Support Vital MS Research in Saskatchewan

SHERRY BUCKLER, DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT



Recently, the Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation (SCHF) generously donated \$750,000 to the University of Saskatchewan (USask) College of Medicine to support research on Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Dr. Michael C. Levin (MD), Saskatchewan Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Research Chair at the college, and his research team are focused on developing medications to combat nerve cell damage associated with MS. The disease, for which there is no known cure, affects approximately 3,700 people in Saskatchewan, which has one of the world's highest MS rates.

"Funding is a crucial part of continued research and discovery for MS research and the commitment from our partners at the Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation will help us get closer to positive outcomes for MS patients everywhere," said College of Medicine dean, Dr. Preston Smith (MD). "Because of their generosity, Dr. Levin and his team can continue their ground-breaking work to find treatments for this devastating disease."

MS is a central nervous system disorder that impairs communication between the brain and spinal cord, resulting in muscle weakness, lack of muscle control, vision problems, and other neurological symptoms. Since the chair was established in 2017, Dr. Levin and his team have made remarkable progress. They've identified an abnormal protein, A1, in the brains of MS patients, which triggers nerve cell death when it gets stuck in the wrong part of nerve cells. Using advanced drug design, they've developed therapies that move A1 to its normal location, preventing nerve cell death and promoting regeneration. This breakthrough has the potential to prevent lifelong disability caused by MS.

The SCHF's recent commitment of \$750,000 over three years will support the chair's critical needs, including infrastructure, research support, and essential equipment, all aligned with the goal of advancing MS treatment and ultimately finding a cure.

The SCHF has a longstanding history of supporting MS research in Saskatchewan, including a significant donation in 2010 to establish the chair position in collaboration with the USask College of Medicine and the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation.

To learn more about the pioneering MS research at the University of Saskatchewan, visit <https://research-groups.usask.ca/skms-office>

"Funding is a crucial part of continued research and discovery for MS research and the commitment from our partners at the Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation will help us get closer to positive outcomes for MS patients everywhere,"



Philanthropist's generous contribution enhances rural healthcare

 SHERRY BUCKLER, DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT



The Canadian Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health (CCRAH) is celebrating its new name along with a generous \$1.5 million donation aimed at enhancing the well-being of rural communities in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Shelley Kirychuk (PhD), CCRAH's director, expressed immense gratitude for the transformative gift. The anonymous donor's contribution will fund a mobile unit that will travel throughout rural Saskatchewan, providing essential primary healthcare services and facilitating agile field research in rural Saskatchewan.

This mobile unit marks a significant advancement for CCRAH, which traditionally operates in rural areas but previously lacked a mobile service centre to reach more people. It will extend support to rural communities and farmers, offering services and improving residents' quality of life. Kirychuk emphasized that the donor's passion for rural health is what

made this expansion possible and will enhance the centre's visibility and partnerships in rural regions.

The celebration of the new name coincided with the announcement of the generous gift during CCRAH's open house. The centre officially adopted its new name on June 1, 2023, emphasizing its commitment to rural Saskatchewan and a broad range of health and safety initiatives, including agriculture, dementia care, ergonomics, injury prevention, access to care, and Indigenous community support.

In its nearly 38-year history, CCRAH has consistently expanded its research and services. The donation will also have a significant impact on the Agricultural Health and Safety Network (AHSN), a crucial program connecting nearly 200 rural municipalities with services and knowledge mobilization for farmers and their families.

To learn more about CCRAH and to make a gift to support their critical work, visit www.cchsa-ccssma.usask.ca



The Cuddington's gift will support medical education in Regina. (Photo: Davis Frerichs)

Giving back is an act of inspiration and celebration

For Dr. Gord Cuddington (MD) and Cathy Cuddington, giving back to their community has never been a question. Now, they're hoping to inspire others to step up and support vital projects that will benefit everyone in Saskatchewan.

"It's our pleasure and honour to be able to do this. It's an obvious choice for us," states Cathy Cuddington.

Cathy and her husband, Dr. Gord Cuddington, have made giving back to the community a habit in their lives. Initially inspired by Gord's parents and their history of supporting worthwhile causes, Cathy and Gord have been giving back to their community by making choiceful donations for years.

Their most recent contribution will support the renovation and outfitting of the specialized anatomy lab for the College of Medicine – Regina campus. The Regina campus is based almost entirely in Regina General Hospital, making it a one-of-a-kind educational experience for medical students in Canada. Students can learn in the same kind of environment that they will eventually practice in, providing invaluable experience at a critical point in their education.

"We see this gift as giving back as thanks for the career that the College of Medicine gave us—and our daughter, who also graduated from the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan," Cuddington says. "It sounds a bit cliché, but for us it's about making sure this kind of opportunity exists right here in Saskatchewan."

The Cuddington's see the Regina Campus as a unique intersection of education, healthcare and community. Supporting the fundraising efforts

for the anatomy lab is an opportunity to see the funds in action in a way that will have a very real influence on Saskatchewan healthcare in the long term.

"Having this centre in Regina has greatly expanded the college. This couldn't have been done just in Saskatoon. It's a really great thing to be able to develop this second centre of excellence outside of Saskatoon," says Cuddington.

In addition to making a good cause possible with their own donation, the Cuddington's want their history of giving to move others to action.

"We really do want to be an example or an inspiration for other people who have the opportunity to make a contribution and make a difference."



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We are grateful to the Hospitals of Regina Foundation who have partnered with the College of Medicine and generously agreed to match all gifts up to \$200,000.00. Contributions from the Cuddington's and other donors are sincerely appreciated. However, additional support is essential to successfully conclude the Regina expansion project. We invite you to make a meaningful contribution today. Visit give.usask.ca to make a difference.

Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion: A recap and planning for 2024

✍ KELSEY KOUGIYA, ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICER



Attendees at the 2023 Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion. (Photo: Dave Stobbe)

Each year the College of Medicine celebrates the people and progress of our college and healthcare communities through its annual conference, Highlights in Medicine.

A time-honoured tradition, it has evolved into a unique combination of educational lectures from renowned clinicians and healthcare professionals alongside USask medicine alumni class reunions.

The 2023 rendering, themed “Healing Ourselves, Healing Our Communities,” sought to provide support and solace to our physician community in a time when the healthcare landscape felt physician burnout, resource strain and increased pressures across the industry. Conference attendees heard from renowned medical practitioners, including Canadian Medical Hall of Fame Inductee Dr. Jim Dosman (MD), Honoured Alumni Lecturer Dr. Morris Markentin (MD), and former Deputy Surgeon General Dr. Scott McLeod (MD), among others in the notable lecture line up.



Together with the banquet silent auction, gifts from the Class of 1973 and Class of 1998, along with numerous individual contributions, the 38th annual Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion raised \$48,700.75 to support three different student bursaries and the college's Surgical Skills Lab.



Beyond professional development, the 2023 Highlights in Medicine brought together past graduating classes for a weekend of comradery and reminiscing. Closing out the weekend, the Highlights banquet saw conference attendees and reunion classes come together in Saskatoon at the Delta Bessborough Hotel for an evening of splendor. At the sold-out event, guests were joined by College of Medicine Dean Dr. Preston Smith (MD), USask President Peter Stoicheff and the Saskatchewan Minister of Advanced Education, the Honorable Gordon Wyatt, who recognized the value of continued education in the community.

Together with the banquet silent auction, gifts from the Class of 1973 and Class of 1998, along with numerous individual contributions, the 38th annual Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion raised \$48,700.75 to support three different student bursaries and the college's Surgical Skills Lab.



A special thank you to the Class Representatives who not only served on the conference's scientific committee but gathered their classmates, introduced lectures, and hosted social activities throughout the weekend's program. Through their support and efforts, the 2023 Highlights in Medicine wrapped up with extraordinary success and attendance.

Looking toward 2024 and the 39th annual Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion, the audience is being expanded to welcome all medical practitioners in Saskatchewan and beyond. The coming year's program is still in development but is expected to grow in stature once again. Registrations are set to open in February 2024, and you are encouraged to register promptly to take advantage of early bird pricing.



Help us organize the 2024 conference by representing your class.

For more information, contact Kelsey Kougiya, alumni relations at 306-966-5763 or kelsey.kougiya@usask.ca

**SAVE THE DATE
for the 2024 Highlights in Medicine
Conference and Reunion
June 20-22, 2024**

**Honoured Years:
1954, 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984,
1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019**



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