

CONNECTIVE ISSUE

**Supporting mental health in northern
Saskatchewan communities during COVID-19:**

**Taking a look at the impact of COVID-19 on
mental health, other impacts of the pandemic and how
to better support Indigenous populations.**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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helping students and residents

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There are countless opportunities for new physicians across Saskatchewan, from big cities to small towns, southern grasslands to northern lake country. Trying to decide between these options can be overwhelming so the SMA's Committee on Rural and Regional Practice and the Specialist Recruitment and Retention Committee launched the Roadmap Program. Every year the Roadmap Program takes students and residents on tours of rural and regional communities around the province to give them a taste of life and practice in rural Saskatchewan. They connect with local physicians, see a variety of practice choices and get a snapshot of what they can expect out of life in each community.

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CONNECTIVE ISSUE

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ON THE COVER

This photo depicts the boreal forest that covers much of northern Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan's northern communities, COVID-19 has exacerbated the gaps in health care, including mental health.

Prince Albert National Park (Photo: Tourism Saskatchewan/Greg Huszar Photography)



Psychiatrist Dr. Sara Dungavell, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry, stands next to a plane that will take her to see patients in communities located in northern Sask.

Read more on page 10.

(submitted photo)

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Send us your ideas

This magazine shares successes and news about the College of Medicine. Contact medicine.communications@usask.ca with ideas for future stories.

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Our college continues to grapple with the ongoing disruptions caused by COVID-19. In the pages of this magazine, you will learn more about work our team here has been doing related to the pandemic, as well as a host of other activities.



We began work for a partial return to campus for the current fall academic term, but that return has been impacted by the Delta variant and rising case counts in our province. As a result, while more students, faculty and staff are on campus now than had been the case before the fall, there is still a significant amount of teaching and work being done remotely. Those on campus are required to follow masking, physical distancing and other safety measures. Flexibility in our approach continues to be paramount as we work to ensure the safety of our community and others.

For everyone, this has been a long and difficult road that has extended longer than most had anticipated. For all providing care on the frontlines of our health system, our college and university community thank you and support you. The vast majority in our community have done their part to alleviate pressure on our health system. The university recently announced that

nearly 25,000 students, faculty and staff had submitted their vaccine status to USask as of the middle of September—92 per cent of the total campus population for the fall term. Of those, 91 per cent are fully vaccinated and 97 per cent have received at least one vaccination dose.

This is excellent, and kudos to our team for your part in these very good numbers that far exceed those in our province and nation! Now, we must continue to do our part and support one another and our health system. For the time being, masking and physical distancing remain important components, alongside vaccinations, of all we do.

Apart from COVID-19, we have also continued our important work to move in the right direction with regard to equity, diversity and inclusion. Most notably, we are very close to having a Division of Indigenous Health within our college—a team that will bring together Indigenous

research initiatives, students, community, and education for greatest impact.

Our researchers are back in their labs and we are seeing great success in grant applications, in particular from a number of outstanding new faculty members in the biomedical sciences recruited to our team in the last three years.

By the time you see this issue of our magazine, the college will have completed its interim accreditation review for the undergraduate medical education program, scheduled for early October. The review is a required and critical step in ensuring the program is on track for meeting accreditation requirements at the midpoint of the eight-year period. In short, your college continues its important work for our province and beyond. ♥

Dr. Preston Smith
Dean, College of Medicine



Dear fellow alumni,

The pandemic continues to have an impact on our lives and the world. The College of Medicine Alumni Association is not immune to these struggles and experienced a challenging year. The University of Saskatchewan (USask) campus was closed for several months and provincial health mandates restricted gatherings. The good news is that we have found ways to adapt. Whenever possible, events and meetings were shifted to virtual platforms.

Alumni association membership continues to expand. In June 2021, we welcomed approximately 100 graduating medical students into the alumni community by providing complimentary one-year memberships to each graduate.

I am proud that our college is becoming more diverse than ever. Through the Indigenous Admissions Pathway, the college has provided an opportunity for increased enrollment of Indigenous students. In 2020, the USask Black Medical Student Association (BMSA) was formed and advocates for Black students in the college. The alumni association has renewed its commitment to supporting students and alumni of all backgrounds.

Over the next year, the alumni association will be reviewing governance documents, prior to their expiry in 2022. The board will explore appropriate amendments and prepare recommendations for renewal. Recommendations will be shared with members.

Finally, thank you to all members for your continued support of the alumni association over the past year. Our success hinges on active engagement of the alumni community and in return we strive to provide value to our members. By supporting the alumni association—through financial or volunteer contributions—you are showing your support for medical students with a commitment to a better tomorrow.

Take care and stay safe. ♥

Dr. Terry Zlipko (MD'74)
President, College of Medicine, Alumni Association

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Are you an alumnus/alumna of the College of Medicine with a demonstrated record of leadership? 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 medicine.alumni@usask.ca for more information about joining the board of directors.

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Regina General Hospital

USask College of Medicine campus in Regina set to expand

The College of Medicine (CoM) announced that it will expand its teaching and learning presence in Regina starting in August 2022. The college’s Regina campus will become home to 40 first-year medical students.

Since 2012, the campus based at the Regina General Hospital has been home to approximately 120 medical doctor students in years two through four of the program. Starting in 2022, 40 out of 100 first-year medical students will be completing their entire degree in Regina.

“It’s something we’ve been building toward since we opened our Regina campus,” said Dr. Gill White, associate dean of the College of Medicine Regina campus. “Most recently, we’ve been planning and preparing faculty, staff and facilities support for this transition. We’re incredibly excited to soon have these future physicians take their full undergraduate medical training based in Regina.”

One of the main goals of offering all four years of the MD program in Regina is to attract more southern Saskatchewan applicants, which may improve local graduate retention rates. Currently, all 100 medical students complete their first year in Saskatoon. With the expansion, the disruption of transitioning to another site and campus while in the midst of completing their medical degree will be removed.

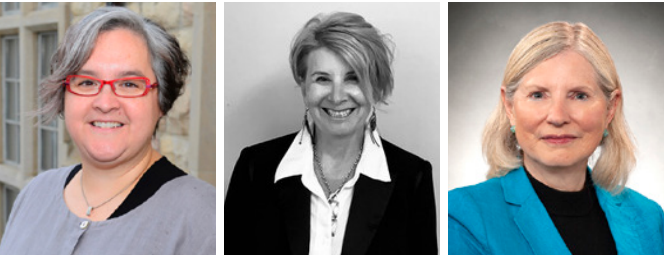
“Having our learners train in many, varied locations throughout Saskatchewan is a win-win-win,” said Dr. Preston Smith, dean of the College of Medicine. ■

Indigenous communities guide research

CoM researchers are ensuring Indigenous people and communities shape the types of research being conducted in the college.

Drs. Sarah Oosman (PhD), Caroline Tait (PhD) and Vivian Ramsden (PhD) talked about the research they’re conducting with Indigenous communities. Community support included producing COVID-19 informational videos and fact sheets about hand washing and physical distancing in multiple languages, and co-creating wellness promotion survey questions with Indigenous communities.

“Every household has been involved in the research. Our response rate has been 100 per cent in the last little while. That’s unheard of. You don’t get that by doing research on, you get that by doing research with,” said Academic Family Medicine professor Dr. Vivian Ramsden. ■



From left, health researchers Sarah Oosman (PhD), Caroline Tait (PhD) and Vivian Ramsden (PhD).



Dr. Veronica McKinney (MD), Director of Northern Medical Services (Photo: Dave Stobbe)

Division of Indigenous Health almost a reality

In a guest blog, Dr. Veronica McKinney, Director of Northern Medical Services, and Val Arnault-Pelletier, Indigenous Coordinator, write about being one step closer to creating a Division of Indigenous Health in the CoM.

The Division of Indigenous Health will be a great resource in bringing together Indigenous research initiatives, students, community and education. The division will also be a strong Indigenous voice in finding and leading intersections and opportunities to work together to create a strong model that will serve the people of Saskatchewan well.

Key priorities of the Division of Indigenous Health, that are widely shared based on the consultations and discussions to date, will be:

- Community Engagement/Relationship Building
- Faculty/Staff Professional Development – Cultural Competence and Inclusion
- Inclusive Recruitment & Retention – Faculty/Staff
- Curriculum Development/Enhancement (all facets)
- Increased Indigenous Student Recruitment
- Enhanced Student Success – Sense of belonging
- Increased Research Funding

New USask-based Indigenous centre for research on HIV, HCV and STBBI launches in Saskatoon

The waniska Centre for HIV, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and sexually transmitted blood-borne illness (STBBI), officially launched on June 21.

The team at waniska, which will serve Saskatchewan and Manitoba, will work with communities and academics, and train the next generation of Indigenous scholars, practitioners and community members in HIV/HCV/STBBI research. The centre will be using both an Indigenous and Western lens in what is dubbed etuaptmumk (a Two-eyed Seeing approach). Land- and culture-based solutions-focused research will create innovative practices, leading to health system transformation and improved health outcomes. ♥

Number of First Nations people living with IBD in Saskatchewan has doubled

The USask IBD among Indigenous Peoples Research Team, led by Drs. Juan-Nicolás Peña-Sánchez (PhD) and Derek Jennings (PhD) in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, have found that the number of First Nations people in Saskatchewan living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) has more than doubled from 1999 to 2016.

The research team is using their evidence to advocate for better health-care and wellness for Indigenous peoples living with IBD, informing health-care providers and policymakers. The next goal is to expand the project to other Canadian jurisdictions to promote awareness and provide an understanding of the epidemiology of IBD among Indigenous peoples. ♥

Read more at medicine.usask.ca/news/all.php



Dr. Landon Perlett (MD'15), a Métis man from rural Sask., is the first Indigenous neurologist to graduate from the College of Medicine.

First Indigenous neurologist graduates from Saskatchewan

Dr. Landon Perlett (MD'15), a Métis man from rural Saskatchewan, is the first Indigenous neurologist to graduate from the CoM.

Perlett completed both medical school and neurology residency at the University of Saskatchewan, finishing in January 2021. Born in Regina, Perlett grew up on farms in local areas, including Indian Head, Dalmeny and Lumsden.

“Being Métis means I come from a multicultural background, seeing many sides of many cultures – I’ve been able to experience life with family members who are Aboriginal or Métis,” Perlett said. “Experiencing two (cultures) has been to my benefit. It’s made me more open-minded.”

Perlett is now in a two-year fellowship in cognitive behavioral neurology at the University of Calgary. ♥

Enhanced physical therapy curriculum shines ahead of accreditation visit

Ahead of the School of Rehabilitation’s (SRS) 2021 accreditation visit, the school focused on its ongoing curricular renewal of the Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) program.

The March 2021 visit was the final component of the accreditation review, which evaluated the school’s program to ensure it aligns with the national physical therapy education standards.

In June 2021, the MPT program was granted full accreditation status through October 2027. Congratulations to all faculty, staff, clinicians and community partners (both on and off campus) who contribute to the MPT and to the students who are living evidence of a strong and successful program. ♥



Dr. Marek Radomski (MD, PhD), Vice-Dean Research, and his team have created a series of internal funding initiatives designed to support researchers at nearly every level of their careers.

Investment in ‘hungry young wolves’ yielding dividends

Vice-Dean Research Dr. Marek Radomski’s (MD, PhD) goal was to revitalize health research at the CoM.

In 2018, Radomski and his team introduced a recruiting system to recruit the best of rising biomedical research stars by offering a generous startup package of funding. The team also created a stimulus package to support and encourage existing faculty.

“The future of the college, and of the university, depends on new blood, on the hungry young wolves,” said Radomski.

Seven “hungry young wolves” have joined the biomedical faculty, each receiving between \$300,000 and \$450,000 in seed money, along with other envelopes of funding.

The medical school’s investment in rising research stars — along with its internal funding offerings for existing faculty — is paying off. By 2018, it had climbed one rung, to 14th spot in the Maclean’s rankings. In 2019, the USask medical school jumped to 12th position, one position ahead of Dalhousie and nipping at the heels of the University of Calgary. Figures compiled by Research Infosource rated USask the country’s No. 1 medical school for its remarkable 39 per cent increase in research income during fiscal year 2018-19. ♥



From top left: Dr. Alexandra King (MD), Dr. Kerri Schellenberg (MD), Dr. Malcolm King (PhD) and Dr. Gerald Pfeffer (MD).

Research reveals extraordinary rates of rare neuromuscular disorder in Indigenous people in Saskatchewan

Researchers at USask and University of Calgary have found unusually high rates of the rare neuromuscular disorder Spinal Bulbar Muscular Atrophy, also known as Kennedy's Disease, among Indigenous people in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Kerri Schellenberg (MD), worked with neurologist Dr. Gerald Pfeffer (MD), from the University of Calgary to do further genetic analysis of patients with the disease. When they realized how high the percent of Indigenous patients with the disease was (14.7 per 100,000 compared to the average of one to two per 100,000), they reached out to Drs. Alexandra King (MD) and Malcolm King (PhD), two Indigenous faculty members at the CoM who head pewasewskwan Indigenous Wellness Research Group. The Kings and pewasewskwan staff guided them on how to engage in a culturally safe manner with patients by creating a Community Guiding Circle. The research team has received a \$50,000 grant from the Kennedy's Disease Association to continue this research in Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, On., and Saskatoon. ▀

Training doctors for southeastern Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's residency training program is being expended in the southeastern part of the province.

The expansion will provide training opportunities in 12 Saskatchewan communities including: Estevan, Humboldt, Moosomin, Weyburn, Yorkton, Esterhazy, Indian Head, Melville, Redvers, Strasbourg, Watrous and Wynyard.

Many communities will operate as training sites to create a fuller learning experience and enhance patient care. There are currently 48 family medicine residency spots. The expansion will bring this allocation to 52. ▀

USask researchers seek to prevent liver disease, high blood pressure, and understand lifelong impacts of Zika virus

Dr. Scott Widenmaier, an assistant professor in the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology is one of three USask researchers who received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Widenmaier received \$807,000 to study how a relatively benign liver condition linked to obesity can transition to a severe disease leading to liver failure, liver cancer, cardiovascular failure and stroke. ▀

Read more at medicine.usask.ca/news/all.php

USask researchers awarded over \$5 million in NSERC Discovery Grants

Four CoM biomedical scientists were named as recipients of Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) Discovery grants.

The NSERC Discovery Grants program provides up to five years of support to ongoing and long-term research projects which present creativity and innovation. The recipients from the CoM includes Drs. Veronica Campanucci (PhD), Juan Ianowski (PhD) and Changting Xiao from the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology; as well as Dr. Jenny-Lee Thomassin from the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology. ▀



Dr. David Cooper (PhD), professor in the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology. (Photo: USask)

USask researchers funded to tackle MS, osteoporosis, and plant health

Two College of Medicine researchers were awarded \$250,000 each in exploration grants from the New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF).

Neurology professor Dr. Michael Levin (MD) and his team will be combining synchrotron technology, computational biology and molecular neurobiology to design treatments for decreasing nerve cell deterioration in multiple sclerosis (MS) patients. Dr. David Cooper (PhD), a professor in the Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology, and his team will be using bone science, biomedical engineering, synchrotron imaging and computer modelling to develop better treatments for osteoporosis. ▀

USask researchers help lead \$9 million Coronavirus Variants Rapid Response Network

USask researchers have joined a national network with \$9 million in funding from CIHR.

The COVID Variant Rapid-Response Network (CoVaRR-Net) is comprised of eight core pillars to focus on surveilling, sequencing, tracing and mitigating the harmful impact of COVID-19 variants. Drs. Nazeem Muhajarine (PhD) and Cory Neudorf (PhD), of the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, will be leading pillar six with Dr. Cheryl Camillo (PhD) from the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Regina. Pillar six focuses on connecting public health professionals and clinicians on the front lines of the pandemic, with scientists studying the variants. ▀

New USask radiotracers could be key for new treatments and early detection for Parkinson's

Nuclear medicine researcher Chris Phenix (PhD) was awarded \$150,000 by the Michael J. Fox Foundation to develop diagnostic radio tracers for early detection of Parkinson's Disease, a chronic degenerative brain disorder that affects more than 100,000 Canadians.

SHRF has contributed \$40,000 in matching support. Pathology professor Dr. Darrell Mousseau has is also part of the project. ▀

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN COMMUNITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In Saskatchewan's northern communities, COVID-19 has exacerbated the gaps in health care, including mental health. This became even more apparent during the pandemic with overall levels of stress increasing.

Mental health is a critical piece of individual health, and medical professionals are making an effort to focus additional attention and support in this area.

 **KRISTEN MCEWEN**

Psychiatrist Dr. Sara Dungavell (MD), an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry, regularly flies from Saskatoon to see patients in the northern communities of La Loche, La Ronge and area as well as within the Athabasca Health Authority, including Stony Rapids, Black Lake and Fond du Lac.



Dr. Sara Dungavell

Although she was unable to see patients in person at times during the pandemic, Dungavell has been able to stay in contact with her patients through virtual and tele-remote technologies.

"It was really useful because it let me be a bit more flexible in terms of my clinics," Dungavell said.

If she had availability in her schedule, Dungavell had the option to see more people from communities like La Loche or La Ronge.

"I was actually able to expand how much of the northern work I was doing by phone or by (video conference)," she added.

The increase in using technology to help patients in northern communities has also helped Dungavell in her role at the College of Medicine, where she trains psychiatry residents. As residents are largely based in Saskatoon and Regina, it's challenging to include them on the flights to the communities Dungavell visits.

Through virtual appointments, residents are able to see more patients from northern communities who have long-standing significant struggles with their mental health.

"Now my residents can see them by phone once a week ... and we can include parts of this rotation to include coordinating care, fielding calls from patients and talking about management. We weren't able to do that when care was limited to being in-person." →

Prince Albert National Park
(Photo: Tourism Saskatchewan/Greg Huszar Photography)



Scott Lake (Photo: Tourism Saskatchewan/Thomas Porter)

Mistrust leading to lower COVID-19 vaccination rates

Dungavell is also concerned distrust in the health care system will lead to lower COVID-19 vaccination rates, which will lead to grief and trauma from losing family members and losing personal physical health.

As of mid-September 2021, less than 66 per cent of residents in the Far North Central, West and East zones had received their first vaccination dose, while less than 52 per cent were fully vaccinated.

“I’m quite concerned, I’m very worried about the physical and mental health of my patients up in the north, given the low rates of vaccination,” Dungavell said. “I see the struggles, secondary to colonialism and intergenerational trauma. The people who are working in the north in the health care system are working their butts off to provide good care.”

“In general, we have underfunded and under resourced systems in the north,” Dungavell said. “I’m limited in what I can provide in terms of good quality psychiatric care. There is a lot of distrust in the (northern) communities: that they’re going to get safer, good quality care—that they can trust the health care system as a whole. I can easily imagine that getting in the way of getting vaccinated.”

Other effects of COVID-19 on northern communities

“In northern communities, there are many people with cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to trauma, or intergenerational trauma,” Dungavell added.

“In general, we have underfunded and under resourced systems in the north. There is a lot of distrust in the (northern) communities: that they’re going to get safer, good quality care—that they can trust the health care system as a whole. I can easily imagine that getting in the way of getting vaccinated.”

DR. SARA DUNGAVELL (MD)



Dr. Sara Dungavell regularly flies from Saskatoon to see patients in northern communities including La Loche, La Ronge, Stony Rapids, Black Lake and Fond du Lac. (Submitted photo)

“Because of the pandemic, I think we’re going to start seeing folks who are struggling more, given some of the losses they’ve gone through,” Dungavell said. “But it’s rarely happening in a vacuum. There’s a lot of social determinants of health and a lot of intergenerational trauma that have led to chronic issues with mental illness in northern communities. And the pandemic is really just another one of those big stressors that are going on. The pandemic has exacerbated some of the issues.”

Northern Saskatchewan residents were subject to specific restrictions early on in the pandemic. From April to June 2020, a travel ban was implemented for non-critical travel for the entire northern half of the province.

In May 2020, a grocery store in La Loche was closed due to an employee who had tested positive for COVID-19.



Dr. Veronica McKinney

Director of Northern Medical Services Dr. Veronica McKinney noted the lockdown brought up memories of time spent at residential schools for Indigenous people.

“By being mandated to stay home, not being able to go anywhere, not having food,” McKinney said. “Not being able to access groceries ... people had no food in their shelves.”

McKinney noted that restrictions also deepened the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

“There was a lot of racism,” she said. “I don’t know how else you can say it, along with stress and fear around COVID.”

She recalled instances of Indigenous people attempting to travel south for groceries but were given fines. She recalled an instance of a person who needed to travel south for cancer treatment and had booked a hotel room long in advance. When she showed up at the hotel, they saw where she was from and turned her away, McKinney explained.

Rates of infections of COVID impact Indigenous communities harder, McKinney said. COVID infection rates of Indigenous people were 33 times higher compared to the rest of Canada.

“Pre-COVID-19, we didn’t have adequate mental health supports, or resources in the north. It’s still not enough, it’s like a garden hose on a forest fire.”

DR. SARA DUNGAVELL (MD)

What else can be done to support mental health in our northern communities?

Dungavell said that moving forward, she would like to see adequate mental health support be provided, given additional trauma due to the pandemic.

“Pre-COVID-19, we didn’t have adequate mental health supports, or resources in the north,” she said. “It’s still not enough, it’s like a garden hose on a forest fire.”

McKinney noted disparities have become glaringly clear in northern communities.

“We certainly don’t have the resources for a lot of things,” she added. “We’re constantly short, constantly having to go to other places to find mental health services. I think that has certainly been a strong highlight of what’s happening.”

One step that can be taken to address mistrust in health care providers and the health care system is learning more about Indigenous people and Indigenous history.

“I think some of what’s happened has been the idea that we need to train our students and our faculty to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples,” McKinney said. “How is this affecting our health care today?”

“Our health care structure has been built on this colonialist structure that hasn’t really changed either,” she added.

A lack of understanding of Indigenous people and their history with the health care system leads to the lack of access to health care, she said.

“When the College of Medicine is teaching about things like cultural safety and cultural humility, we actually have to implement ways of measuring that as well,” McKinney said. “Our system is built on the idea that it’s hierarchical, that there’s knowledge in the system. And if we follow the system, everything will be much better.

“But it doesn’t allow for different worldviews, and it certainly doesn’t allow for strength of culture, or supporting people where they are.”

McKinney recommends a community development model should be incorporated when it comes to health care and supporting individual needs to help address these problems in the future.

“It’s not always the physicians that know best—it’s often our community, the people know what works for them.” ▀

PANDEMIC WORSENS OPIOID CRISIS IN SASK

For people struggling with opioid and other addictions, COVID-19 hit swiftly and with devastating results.

“Unfortunately, the rapid rise in fentanyl within our community directly coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant the shutdown of treatment centres, narcotics anonymous meetings and access to support and counselling services,” said Dr. Larissa Kiesman (MD), an assistant professor in Saskatoon in the Department of Family Medicine in the college.

✍ KATE BLAU

“We saw our rates of opioid overdose double and triple, while support and services were shut down or limited by the pandemic. We had people begging for support that simply wasn’t open or available to them.”

Dr. Alexander Wong (MD) saw things worsen quickly in Regina as well, where he is an associate professor in the College of Medicine’s (CoM) Department of Medicine, specializing in infectious diseases. “There was a significant shift in access to the safe supply of opioids. It created access issues that meant people were turning to street drugs, fentanyl in many cases, and that resulted in a huge number of overdose events and deaths.”

Both physicians agree that for people who already were experiencing a significant lack of support pre-pandemic, that bad situation became, in Wong’s words, “a disaster.”

Small gains were made with more safe injection sites and increased awareness.

“Governments and policymakers seem to finally grasp the concept of safe supply—substances we prescribe to people—alcohol, opiates—not to put an end to their addiction but to compassionately assist them with their addiction,” Kiesman said.

“When people suffering with substance use disorder were needing to be put in hotels to self-isolate because they had nowhere else to go, the policymakers finally understood how important this was. You can’t force someone into abstinence and expect them to peacefully follow public health orders. I think the idea that people suffering with addiction need compassion in whichever way we can grant it, came to light through this issue.”

Additionally, Kiesman has seen increased interest among her medical colleagues. “We are having more and more physicians and residents and medical students coming to us and saying, ‘I want to help,’ or ‘I want to be trained so I know how to help.’”

She said prior to the pandemic, it was much more difficult to get this interest and involvement. “I really have seen in the last two years a really deep desire among my colleagues to really care for ALL people, and especially those who are really underserved, like those in this population.”

Kiesman also mentions virtual care, but while it helps some, it is yet another barrier for others. “For those with a home and a phone, having access to their doctor and addictions counsellor and nurses and care providers at their finger-tips, has the

enormous potential to improve access to care. For the many without homes or phones, system shut down and virtual care only harms them.”

However, she stresses that it is still very much an underfunded area of healthcare that now has even more limited funding and accessibility for people with addictions. And, similar to COVID-19, it doesn’t end only in death, it also results in significant chronic illness and disease, with frequent hospitalizations, and prolonged ICU stays.

“So this is the ‘silent’ killer of humans, and depleter of hospital resources that walks alongside COVID-19,” she said.

Wong said there needs to be a dramatic expansion of harm reduction teams. “The fentanyl crisis is just as horrific now as it was earlier in the pandemic. And addiction with fentanyl is very difficult to navigate due to the potency of the drug.”

Both agree that things have become much worse, and are concerned that it may be easy for some to point to small improvements and not recognize the far greater, darker reality.

“It’s absolutely fair to say circumstances have only worsened,” Kiesman said. “All of our community-based organizations such as Prairie Harm Reduction and the Saskatoon Community Clinic and Saskatoon Tribal Council Wellness Centre and Sanctum Care Group and Crisis Intervention Services—and many, many others—kept their doors open and kept grinding out care amidst the restrictions. But everything was at reduced capacity. Homelessness in Saskatoon increased.”

“The pandemic has crushed our infrastructure, our healthcare workers, our public health services,” Wong said. “It’s driven more inequity and created an even greater divide for those who are vulnerable and marginalized in our society. The province has always been burdened with issues of inequity. Those issues are now, sadly, further amplified amidst the pandemic.”

Kiesman said, “It makes us feel a little hopeless, as we have been advocating for increased funding for addictions since I started practice 10 years ago—and beyond that—and it largely falls on deaf ears from the powers that be. Now, in a crippled healthcare system, dollars for addictions care or HIV care are going to be non-existent, I expect.”

Wong points out that everyone in the healthcare system has done extraordinary amounts of work, but there was simply too much need for the available resources. “We have so much left to do, and we need the funding for the specialized people and teams to be able to do it sustainably and as best as possible here in Saskatchewan.” ♥



Dr. Larissa Kiesman



Dr. Alexander Wong

PREP & SUPPORT:

College prepares faculty, supports health system during pandemic

 GREG BASKY

Dr. John Froh (MD) says the response from Saskatchewan physicians to a skills enhancement program developed by the College of Medicine’s Continuing Medical Education (CME) team shows its value extended far beyond simply preparing doctors who might be called upon to work in new care settings during the pandemic—including intensive care, emergency, even field hospitals.

“I’ve heard many stories from physicians that interacting on a clinical basis with someone that you may not interact with routinely and the resulting sense of team and the resulting sense of community—that we’re all in this together, we are all pulling in a common direction—was powerful and uplifting,” said Froh, who is deputy chief medical officer of the pandemic and co-chief of operations at the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s (SHA) emergency operations centre.

The Physician Skills Enhancement Program (PSEP) is one of a host of ways that CME has supported the college’s 2,000 faculty members—and indeed the province’s health system—during the pandemic. CME brought topic-specific expertise to the

table for various provincial committees, did mathematical modelling to assist the SHA with its forecasting efforts, and quickly established a comprehensive resource page on its website that was kept updated with the most current information.

According to Dr. Jim Barton (MD), associate dean CME, a webinar series that was rolled out quickly, and covered the waterfront on COVID topics, was the leading edge of his team’s response. The curriculum for the webinar series, initially presented weekly, drew upon thought leaders and content experts within the college.

The fact that around 900 people tuned in to the first webinar, and that subsequent episodes attracted up to 500 people each,

“I’ve heard many stories from physicians that interacting on a clinical basis with someone that you may not interact with routinely and the resulting sense of team and the resulting sense of community—that we’re all in this together, we are all pulling in a common direction—was powerful and uplifting.”

DR. JOHN FROH



Dr. Jim Barton



Dr. Marilyn Baetz

shows the resource met a real need, Barton said.

“People were really worried about it (COVID). They were frightened. They needed more information,” he said. “And we really helped support that information flow and education.”

According to Froh, that initial webinar series was a big help to the SHA in the early days of the pandemic, as providers and administrators tried to make sense of the “firehose of information” that was coming at them.

Barton and his team also created another webinar series specifically for the 130 members of the Department of Internal Medicine, who were under particularly heavy pressure in spring 2020. It featured some of Saskatchewan’s top pulmonologists, cardiologists, and neurologists, and attracted close to 100 physicians for each session.

“A lot of our members look after wards where we have worked at greater than 140, 150 per cent capacity for the last 18 months,” Barton said. “It (the webinar series) allowed a department with a lot of pressure on it to look after people.”

When the pandemic hit and the health authority needed to be sure it could redeploy physicians to areas of the system that were underserved or in crisis, they turned to the College of Medicine (CoM).

The CME team worked closely with the SHA to develop the PSEP, a comprehensive provincial curriculum—to Barton’s knowledge, the only one of its kind in the country—to “skill up” doctors who might need to provide care in clinical areas that might need more bench strength, such as emergency and the ICU. The program adapted content previously developed by faculty for postgraduate and undergraduate courses, to meet the just-in-time needs of professional learners.

“I can’t speak highly enough of the work that they did,” Froh said. “They took time off from their lives, both professionally and personally, to do some heavy lifting in order for us to have skill-enhanced physicians to help the health system deal with the crisis.”

They didn’t wait to be asked

“We got right in there, and were meeting daily to discuss what we could do, how we could support our learners and our faculty,” said Dr. Marilyn Baetz (MD), vice-dean of faculty engagement. “We knew we needed to reduce barriers by connecting, listening, talking, trying to find out where support was needed most.”

For example, the college’s faculty development team wasted no time creating a variety of supports to help faculty make the shift to virtual instruction of medical learners.

While academia often has a tendency to strive for perfection, Baetz credits the college for adopting a “good enough to go” approach to swiftly develop, then roll out resources for faculty and the health system.

“We acted quickly. When needs were identified, it didn’t take continuing medical education months to develop a program. That is so important when you’re in that kind of chaotic situation, to bring to the table what you can as quickly as you can.”

Pandemic forges stronger relationships

One of the ways the CoM showed its support for the health system was by participating in the regular town hall meetings involving physicians and other providers.

“Sometimes people like to divide physicians into the academic camp and the clinical camp,” said Baetz. “We are two separate entities (College of Medicine and SHA), but as a coalition, we are stronger than each is separately.”

Barton sees the past 18 months as a brilliant example of two large organizations working together. “It was splendid to see the health authority recognize that it had a need for an educating group, which the College of Medicine is. And for the college to recognize that the knowledge needed to have an impact in a meaningful way on the people of the province and the physicians.” Barton says the two objectives meshed perfectly. More than 100 physicians came through—and gave top marks to—the program,

which Barton says gave the SHA “a body of physicians that they could draw against if, you know, it really hit the fan.”

Barton describes the development of the PESP as a “relationship evolution,” because prior to the pandemic, the two large organizations have not always connected as well as they might. “This was a great piece of work, not just because of the quality of the work, but the way that it modelled what I think a future state could look like.”

Froh agrees. He says it took collaboration between the two entities to a level he’s not seen before.

Where to from here?

Baetz says the past 18 months have shown Saskatchewan physicians can get great quality education that’s homegrown and relevant. “You don’t have to go away. You don’t have to always look somewhere else. This time has really elevated the importance of our local experts.”

The ability to deliver high-quality educational content to faculty and learners virtually has been a game changer, she added, and predicts this trend will carry on for CME. She also predicts faculty will be making fewer trips to Ottawa and Toronto, but will still be able to learn from important national meetings and conferences.

Virtual communication has also shrunk distances in a geographically dispersed province, enabling faculty to connect regularly with provincial department heads who they might have only seen once or twice a year before the pandemic. Barton said the fact that faculty have been engaged at a provincial level over the course of the last 18 months has normalized online engagement.

“So somebody up in Île-à-la-Crosse, or somebody in La Ronge, or somebody down in Moosomin, or Carnduff way in the southeast, they’re on their Zoom meeting now and they feel connected to what is going on.” CME and the CoM will continue to leverage online platforms “to meet and match and greet and serve more learners more often in more places across the province.”

He said the supports and resources the college provided to faculty and the rest of the health system have created a greater sense of community. “What the pandemic did is it created a common foe, and there’s nothing like a common foe to bring people together.” ■

GIVING BACK

Dr. Cory Neudorf—a public health perspective:

FROM PREVENTION

✍ AMANDA WORONIUK

Dr. Cory Neudorf (MD'89) has called COVID-19 the biggest professional challenge of his career. As a public health physician and epidemiologist, he has spent his career devoted to health equity and public health advocacy.



Dr. Cory Neudorf

"I've dealt with large epidemics before. I've even had leadership roles with previous pandemics, but this particular one was of a scale and scope that we haven't seen in over a century," said Neudorf, a professor and researcher in the College of Medicine's Department of Community Health and Epidemiology (CH&E).

For more than 20 years, Neudorf served as chief medical officer for the former Saskatoon Health Region (now part of the province-wide Saskatchewan Health Authority). Currently, he is the interim senior medical health officer with the Saskatchewan Health Authority. Neudorf is also involved with public health at the national level as the current president of the Urban Public Health Network of Canada, former president of both the Canadian Public Health Association and the Public Health Physicians of Canada, liaison member with the Regions for Health Network (WHO Europe) and advisor for the Public Health Agency of Canada.

"(Public health) provides the chance to influence health and other policy and get more upstream on issues, rather than individual patient issues, which appeals to me," said Neudorf.

Born and raised in Saskatchewan, Neudorf credits his local upbringing for his decision to remain in the province.

"I wanted to stay here if possible and (USask) was my first choice for medical school. I was glad to get accepted and get into medical school here. I didn't have public health as a career choice at the time. I didn't even know much about it at that point," he said.

During medical school, Neudorf was going through rotations and none of the specialties had piqued his interest. It was only after looking through the Royal College specialty programs, he came across public health as an option.

"I made an appointment with Dr. Bruce Reeder, a professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology. I talked to him to get a better idea of 'what do you do, what are the different career paths in that specialty, what types of things do you have to be good at if you want to succeed in that specialty,'" said Neudorf.

He completed an elective with Saskatoon's medical health officer

(MHO), Dr. Paul Gully, and learned more about the role of a MHO and how that career path might be a good fit. Neudorf was hooked. He did residency training at the University of Toronto (U of T) and pursued a master's degree in public health and epidemiology, also from the U of T, to round out his training.

Neudorf's research focuses on improving health equity. Most recently, he led a research team that tracked the impact of public health responses to COVID-19. The data assessed how well public health measures worked across Canada and will be used to provide recommendations on how best to prepare for future pandemics.

Neudorf is also part of research teams led by his CH&E colleagues, including the national COVID Variant Rapid-Response Network led by Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine (PhD), a professor in the Department of Community Health & Epidemiology, who is investigating the COVID-19 virus variants, and the Saskatchewan rapid evidence response to COVID-19 to facilitate decision-making, led by Dr. Gary Groot (MD, PhD).

In addition to research, Neudorf has also supported national-level pandemic public health projects in a consultant role.

"I've been involved with reviews that are taking place from the

TO PROMOTION

"COVID is an amplifier of pre-existing health equity issues or gaps in our society ... The pandemic and our response to it has had direct and indirect effects on the health system and society globally—giving us a chance to re-imagine the way we do our work and incorporate action on the determinants of health in new ways."

DR. CORY NEUDORF

Canadian Institutes of Health Research's (CIHR) Institute of Population and Public Health. I sit on their advisory board," said Neudorf. "Our chief public health officer for the Public Health Agency of Canada (Dr. Teresa Tam)—her report this year is going to be focused on the future of public health—so I'm helping out with some of the consultations and reviewing drafts of that report."

Throughout the pandemic, Neudorf has been featured in the media for his public health expertise. He was also a speaker at the college's virtual Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion in August, where he shared how the pandemic has magnified inequities among vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Post-pandemic, Neudorf sees an opportunity to increase the population health approach throughout the health care system.

"COVID is an amplifier of pre-existing health equity issues or gaps in our society. It's shone a spotlight on some of those inequities, and amplified those inequities," said Neudorf.

"The pandemic and our response to it has had direct and indirect effects on the health system and society globally—giving us a chance to re-imagine the way we do our work and incorporate action on the determinants of health in new ways." ■

Creating a legacy: Nancy and Charles Weisdorff

✍️ AMANDA WORONIUK



Charles and Nancy Weisdorff

For Nancy and Charles Weisdorff, supporting the College of Medicine was inspired by their own health challenges.

“Both of us have had life-threatening illnesses. We are very thankful and impressed by the health community that took care of us and continue to do so,” Nancy said.

Nancy is a breast cancer survivor, while Charles is a kidney transplant recipient. Having benefitted from quality local care, they realized the importance of having skilled doctors provide care throughout Saskatchewan.

While updating their wills, the Weisdorffs sought to leave a lasting impact with their giving. In gratitude for the care they received, they decided to support medical students through a planned estate gift.

“We wanted to make what we left behind matter,” Nancy said. “Through our experiences—the dedication, compassion and the service that they (healthcare community) provided to us—we decided we would like to give back.”

The Weisdorffs’ gift will help remove the financial barriers for deserving students to pursue medical school.

“If students have the drive, desire and calling, but don’t have the money, we want to help them with financial support. We look at this as helping somebody who already has the motivation and dedication to hard work, to answer their calling of becoming a doctor,” said Nancy.

The Weisdorffs sought to further enhance their donation by establishing a student award, which provides financial assistance to a first-year student from Saskatchewan or one of the northern Canadian territories. They set up the award in honour and celebration of the 20th anniversary of Charles’ kidney transplant this year.

Charles stated, “I have lived and enjoyed life more fully in these past twenty years than ever before.” He has nothing but high praise and gratitude for the doctors and other medical staff who have been involved in his health care.

Students come from across the province to attend the College of Medicine and more than half of all graduates remain in Saskatchewan. Some return to serve the communities where they were raised or trained.

The Weisdorffs’ decision to make a positive difference in the lives of students extends beyond medical school. The student bursary will have a direct impact for learners today, while the planned gift will leave a legacy for tomorrow. ♥

“I was grateful to have the opportunity to meet Nancy and Charles over a video meeting. Their passion for accessibility to medical education and the importance their philanthropy will ultimately have on clinical delivery throughout Saskatchewan is incredible.”

DR. PRESTON SMITH (MD), DEAN

“Saskatchewan has given us so much. We feel very fortunate in making our lives here and so we want to give back to this province. To us, it's an investment in the people and the communities that they're going to serve.”

NANCY WEISDORFF

MAKE AN IMPACT: ALUMNI & GIVING

There are five critical areas of need:

1. Student support

With medical school tuition nearly \$100,000, support for our students in the form of scholarships, bursaries and awards or other critical student initiatives is necessary. Your gift allows promising students to pursue their dreams of medical school without worrying about financing their education.

2. Decrease chronic disease burden

Almost one in four Saskatchewan residents have at least one chronic disease (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, ischemic heart disease, or heart failure). Your support enables our research teams to work on multiple projects that improve the quality of care of these chronic conditions.

3. Research growth

Our talented research teams are searching for the clues that will unlock the mysteries of illnesses like cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer’s or stroke. They are also instrumental in participating in groundbreaking COVID-19 research. Your gift will help us discover new ways to diagnose, treat and ultimately prevent these illnesses.

4. Indigenous health

Our researchers and clinicians participate in collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities. Your support will help ongoing research initiatives in the college aimed at improving the health of Indigenous peoples and communities in culturally appropriate ways.

5. School of Rehabilitation Science

Our school prepares high-quality collaborative physical therapy clinicians and rehabilitation researchers, who are focused on improving function while promoting mobility and participation. Your support will advance rehabilitation science and health-related learning, teaching, research, and mentorship.

To learn more about supporting these initiatives or any others, please contact Jeff Aramenko or visit medicine.usask.ca/alumni/giving.php

The world’s problems are growing in size and scope, and the pressing COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted major areas of concern in medical education, research and support.

Among them is the critical role of discovery research—take the example from this pandemic of how 40 years of research on messenger RNA is the reason we have vaccines for COVID-19 in under a year.

At the USask College of Medicine, the bright young minds of today are being prepared to lead tomorrow’s healthcare innovations as future medical practitioners and scientists. As Saskatchewan’s only medical school, we exist to serve the province.

By giving to the college, you are ensuring that education, research and clinical care services continue to be improved and advanced.

Thanks to your support, we are:

- developing new treatments and therapies/tools that give hope to those struggling with mental health and addiction
- helping to ease the burdens of chronic conditions like heart disease, asthma and diabetes
- working alongside Indigenous communities for improved, equitable, culturally safe care
- improving access to care for residents in rural and remote communities and regions of Saskatchewan

With your help, we will fulfill our vision: to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Saskatchewan and the world. Together, we can transform medical education and research so that vulnerable people are not left behind and medical research is a priority. ♥

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Welcome back medical students, and congratulations to the Class of 2025 on joining our College of Medicine family!

With the guidance of our amazing faculty and staff, we hope to continue to advocate for all our students and make this year as meaningful, memorable, and exciting as possible.

While we are very hopeful for what the future holds, we also want to acknowledge that the challenges we faced last year due to the pandemic have allowed us to learn a great deal about the importance and strength of our community. It is understandable that feelings of isolation and disconnect with the world have affected all of us, and perhaps continue to do so.

This year, we have already prioritized increasing opportunities for students to connect with the university community (virtually and in-person where appropriate) through several of our events. During Welcome Week, our students across all four years were able to connect with each other, students from different colleges, as well as faculty and staff. We hosted the Healthcare Classic Slo-Pitch tournament during the summer, followed by the 18th annual Miles for Smiles charity run (with an asynchronous virtual option) in the fall.

It has been wonderful to see faculty and students come together to raise funds that will go towards Prairie Harm Reduction in Saskatoon, and Newo Yotina Friendship Centre, Regina's first safe consumption site.

This summer we also had the opportunity to participate in the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) Special General Meeting (virtually) and elect the new president, Santanna Hernandez. Her goal is to introduce a more thorough focus on equity, diversity, and inclusivity work through all divisions/portfolios of the organization, a change we are all looking forward to.



From left to right: Gloria Sun, Hifsa Noor, Aishwarya Gannamani, Erin White, Hope Anderson, Mohamed Omar, Nina Wingate, Rachel Hamilton, Robert Downey, Sahya Bhargava, Yousef Omar.

On a local scale, the SMSS has made changes to attempt to better meet the needs of the diverse communities we live and work in. Last year, we officially created an Advocacy division to increase the presence of and education on the CanMED role of "Health Advocate", EDI teachings, and environmental health within the curriculum and extracurricular opportunities. With that goal in mind, we are currently planning a workshop featuring Dr. Manuella Valle-Castro and Dr. Naheed Dosani, to highlight what it means to be a safe and effective advocate to our medical students.

Looking towards the future of the 2021-22 school year, the SMSS is cognizant of the current state of the pandemic, and continues to work with the UGME, SHA, and SMA to ensure that we are offering as many safe events as possible for our students.

While this may require some restructuring of the traditional schedule, we are greatly looking forward to the continued promotion of student engagement and interaction. We are also extremely appreciative for the continued support from the Alumni Association, which has been both reliable and instrumental in the successful events that we have been able to hold thus far.

As our plans continue to evolve and change daily, we are thankful for the patience and understanding expressed by our students, faculty, and alumni. We are hopeful that we can continue to offer safe and valuable experiences in the near future. It is important to highlight the annual Alumni-Student Hockey Game, tentatively scheduled for April. There are also two important flagship events that typically happen in the fall term—Integration Weekend, in which students have the opportunity to explore the Regina campus and practice invaluable clinical skills, and the White Coat Ceremony, where the Class of 2025 will be officially welcomed into the medical profession. These events are essential for us to build our community further, and we will strive to do so as safely as possible in the future.

As these opportunities and events could not occur without assistance from the College of Medicine, we cannot state how sincerely we appreciate the ongoing and generous support that we have and will continue to receive. If you have any questions regarding past or upcoming events, please reach out to our VP External at vpexternal.smss@gmail.com, and see our calendar at saskmedstudents.com.

The SMSS Executive

USask medical student part of inspiring new generation of health leaders, innovators

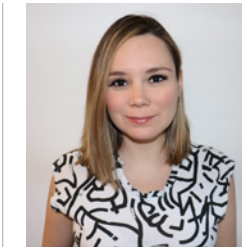
USask third-year medical student Amira Muftah has been selected to receive the 2021 Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF) Award for Medical Students.

Muftah was selected because of her passion for promoting health equity through advocacy, education and collaboration.

Among her accomplishments, Muftah is the first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Representative for the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan (SMSS). In this role, she spearheaded several curricular developments focusing on health equity, anti-oppression and anti-racism. To learn more about Muftah's achievements, visit the College of Medicine website.



Third-year medical student, Amira Muftah (Submitted photo)



Dr. Patsy Gomez-Picos (PhD) (Submitted photo)

Gomez-Picos pursues PhD in a pandemic

Dr. Patsy Gomez-Picos (PhD) traded in the mild temperatures of Mexico and moved to Canada for her doctoral program at USask. She was looking for PhD programs that included her interest in biology. The research in Dr. Brian Eames' (PhD) lab caught her attention. He happened to be recruiting students at the time, and Gomez-Picos became his first PhD student.

Gomez-Picos' research investigated the evolution of skeletal cells, and how cells make cartilage and bone in vertebrae in different animals. The research has real-world applications for osteoarthritis, a disease that affects many individuals in Canada, and has high costs to the Canadian health care system.

When the pandemic hit and USask research was paused, Gomez-Picos was fortunate to have her experiments already completed. She was working on her thesis and was also balancing motherhood, having given birth to her daughter in 2019.

"I did not expect to finish graduate school during a pandemic. No one could have imagined this," she said. "For me, I was able to spend my daughter's first year with her, but at the same time it was very challenging, because I had to write my thesis at the time."

For students who may have struggled with their studies, she had words of encouragement.

"I want to say to students, they are not alone. Just keep working hard," she said. "It's been tough, mentally speaking, but we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel."



Medical student Ryan LaBossiere



Master's of physical therapy student Carina McKay-Saturnino. (Submitted photos)

Students recognized during Indigenous Student Achievement Awards

Medical student Ryan LaBossiere and master of physical therapy student Carina McKay-Saturnino (School of Rehabilitation Science) received the Community Award during this year's USask Indigenous Student Achievement Awards Ceremony in February 2021.

LaBossiere is from Williams Lake, BC and is a member of Métis Nation of British Columbia. He is passionate about environmental issues and leads the Wicihitowin Student Group in lessening the barriers faced by Indigenous populations receiving equitable care, and to increase representation of Indigenous people in medicine.

McKay-Saturnino is from Inuvik, NT and a member of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation Band. After graduating from the SRS, McKay-Saturnino plans to return to the Northwest Territories as a physiotherapist.

Stories from the #MyMD blog

Our medical students are invited to share their experiences through the #MyMD student blog. It's a space where our students chronicle their research projects, skill building and firsthand experiences in the communities they will serve.



First-year medical student David Kim is seen performing a piece on the piano as part of the virtual talent night on March 1. (Submitted photo)

FIGHTING SENIORS' SOCIAL ISOLATION WITH MUSIC

Medical students Jamie Vander Ende and Lindsay Ironside write about how medical students were looking for a way to help older adults combat social isolation in March 2021.

The pair collaborated and reached out to classmates involved in the Senior Social Isolation Prevention Program (SSIPP) and the SMSS Geriatric Interest Group (GIG) to organize a virtual talent night.

Nine students prerecorded their performances for the night which included piano, guitar, opera, voice, and violin. Once the performances were recorded, Jamie compiled them into one video. ■

EXCERPT:

Lindsay reached out to a few care homes in Regina and we were able to connect with one that was excited to have us perform for them, Regina Sunset Extendicare. As we started to recruit people, with help from the SSIPP and GIG team, we soon realized there is abundance of talent in the College of Medicine.

Older adults in our community are struggling to find events, entertainment, and community during COVID-19. Little initiatives like this and the work that SSIPP is doing is imperative to providing them with outlets to enjoy life in a closed off world.

NATURE IS MEDICINE: LAUNCHING PARX IN SASKATCHEWAN

Medical students Sehjal Bhargava and Brooklyn Rawlyk write about how they helped to bring a national Park Prescription (PaRx) program to Saskatchewan. PaRx offers health benefits for patients as well as encourages people to be curious about nature and connect with their surroundings. ■



From left, College of Medicine MD students Brooklyn Rawlyk and Sehjal Bhargava helped bring the national Park Prescription Program to Saskatchewan. (Photo: Ryan Donnelly)

EXCERPT:

While receiving a nature prescription might seem unnecessary, it is a formalized and public reminder of how powerful time in nature can be—whether that be spending twenty minutes in a garden, walking in a park, watching the sunset, laying under a tree, or exploring local scenery. While time in nature might be a newer concept in Western medicine, it has been a mainstay of traditional medicine for years.

We talk about integrating nature as the fourth pillar of health—alongside diet, exercise and sleep. If there was one pillar to tackle, nature is accessible, flexible and takes a small amount of effort to incorporate into one's day.

EXCERPT:

Being a USask medical student in Regina has always felt like being in on a best kept secret. On July 17, Regina had the pleasure of hosting 50 students from the class of 2024 at the Regina General Hospital for a variety of skills including IV insertions, intubations, suturing, pelvic exams, and a tour of the hospital hosted by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). Students rotated from one station to the next and had an opportunity to practice hands on skills.



First-year medical students participate in the Mini-Integration Weekend in Regina. (Submitted photo)

A MINI-INTEGRATION WEEKEND IN REGINA

As first-year medical students start their medical school experience during an education, it’s challenging to make connections with their classmates and upper-year students.

Third-year medical students Eman Abdulhadi and Sarah Moroziuk write about how the SMSS provided an opportunity for connection through a Mini-Integration Weekend in Regina. ♥



Medical student Morgan Schatz. (Submitted photo)

HOW I HELPED WITH COVID CONTACT-TRACING

First-year medical student Morgan Schatz was one of nearly 50 medical students who assisted SHA with contact tracing efforts in December 2020. Though Schatz and her classmates were preparing for finals, they volunteered to make phone calls to inform people of their negative COVID test results. ♥

EXCERPT:

When we first started, there were quite a large number of calls to make, and many people had been waiting more than a few days for us to call. It was not unusual to make 150-200 calls in one day.

Within 10 days of the addition of students from the College of Medicine, along with others who joined the team during December, the SHA caught up on the outstanding calls and reduced the turnaround time between the posting of negative test results and the calls to inform the clients.

Our students' #MyMD blogs can be found at medicine.usask.ca/mymd.php

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

LEARNERS

Undergraduate medical education

2021 Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF) Award: Amira Muftah

2021 USask Indigenous Achievement Awards – Community Award: • Ryan LaBossiere • Carina McKay-Saturnino

Vince Matthews Award (Community Health & Epidemiology): Karl Vantomme

Dr. Ernest McBrien Award: Dakota Van Dijk

Lawrence & Penny Clein Scholarship in Palliative Care: Sidra Haque

Hilliard Silver Medal and Department of Medicine Prize: Amanda Ames

Dr. Vernon and Mrs. Christine Hoepfner Award for Excellence in Internal Medicine: • Christopher Ripplinger (In Province) • Amanda Ames (Out of Province)

Dr. Eric Lepp Memorial Award in Medicine: Leah Rusnell

Department of Pediatrics Prize: Zachary Huschi

Dr. J.W. Gerrard Award in Pediatrics: Shane Leyen

Professor’s Popkin Prize in Obstetrics & Gynecology: Amanda Hondl

Obstetrics & Gynecology Silver Medal: Leah Rusnell

Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Award: Aden Mah

Henry & Cheryl Kloppenburg Prize (Psychiatry): Emmitt Hayes

Dr. Karl E. Oberdieck Prize: Veronica Hammer

Dr. Beattie Award in Psychiatry: Jordan Kemp

Saskatchewan Psychiatric Association Award: Emmitt Hayes

Hugh McLean Prize & Silver Medal (Surgery): Conley Kriegler

Professor’s Prize in Surgery: Robert Bigsby

Emergency Medicine Award (Saskatoon): Andrew Tolmie

Emergency Medicine Award (Regina): Leah Rusnell

Dr. Robert G. Murray Undergraduate Award: Helen Tang

Drs. Epstein/Schnurr Award in Integrative Medicine: Shane Leyen

Reuben Brant Scholarship in Medicine: Amanda Ames Laura Neuburger

Drs. Ivan Jen & Suzanne Yip Award: Amanda Ames

James Walker Wood MD Award in Family Medicine: Kaitlyn Schick

Lindsay Gold Medal: Amanda Ames

MacLeod Silver Medal: Laura Neuburger

Saskatoon Plainsmen Club Award in Family Medicine: Kate Morrison

Dr. Walter J. Hader Scholarship in Medicine: Joel Peltonen

Spirit of the Class: Kate Morrison

Senior Stick: Ben Abelseth

Governor General’s Nominee: Amanda Ames

Dr. John T. Sibley Bursary: James Hill

Postgraduate medical education

CSCI-CIHR Resident Research Award: Dr. Amit Persad (Neurosurgery)

CanMEDS Collaborator: Dr. Rob Carey (Emergency Medicine)

CanMEDS Health Advocate: Dr. Anmol Gupta (Internal Medicine) Dr. Alicia Thatcher (Family Medicine)

CanMEDS Leader: Dr. Igbarer Ieren (Neurosurgery) Dr. Emmett Harrison (Family Medicine)

CanMEDS Professional: Dr. Oluwatosin Odeshi (Internal Medicine/Dermatology) Dr. Narges Ashrafinia (Family Medicine)

Exemplary Resident Award: Dr. Steven West (Family Medicine)

Medical Class of 1939 Resident Teacher Award in Medicine: Dr. Dillan Radomske (Emergency Medicine) Dr. Alicia Thatcher (Family Medicine)

Resident Research Day Awards: Top Poster Awards — Clinical (Academic adjudication) • 1st: Dr. Samuel Harder (Internal Medicine) • 2nd: Dr. Torabi Yasaman (Internal Medicine) • 3rd: Dr. Sanji Ali (Internal Medicine) • 4th: Dr. Rajan Minhas (Emergency Medicine)

Top Poster Awards — Clinical (Campus Community Adjudication) Dr. Amit Persad (Neurosurgery)

Top Poster Awards — What Works/ Initiatives (Academic Adjudication) • 1st: Dr. Patrick Seitzinger (Pediatrics) • 2nd: Dr. William Kennedy (Internal Medicine) • 3rd: Dr. Savita Rani (Public Health and Preventative Medicine)

Top Poster Awards — What Works/ Initiatives (Campus Community Adjudication) Dr. Suzanne Aronyk (Family Medicine Regina)

Graduate Students

Graduate Research Fund:

- Marina Beshara (MSc candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Xuan Wei (PhD candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Li Fan (PhD candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)
- Juveriya Khan (PhD candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)
- Igbarer Ieren (MSc candidate, Community Health and Epidemiology)
- Vaidehi Pisolkar (PhD candidate, Community Health and Epidemiology)
- Hanan Babeker (PhD candidate, Medicine)
- Tanmoy Das (MSc candidate, Medicine)
- Greg Guenther (MSc candidate, Medicine)
- James Matheson (MSc candidate, Medicine)

Graduate Teaching Fellowship:

- Dan McElroy (PhD candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Nataliya Tokarska (PhD candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Glinton Hanover (MSc candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)
- Lai Wong (PhD candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)
- Jacob Alhassan (PhD candidate, Community Health and Epidemiology)
- Razieh Safaripour (MSc candidate, Community Health and Epidemiology)

College of Medicine Dean’s Scholarship:

- Alexandra Debusschere (PhD candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Md Sabbir Ahmed (MSc candidate, Community Health and Epidemiology)
- Una Goncin (PhD candidate, Medicine)

Graduate Students cont'd

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Dean's Scholarship:

- Una Goncin (PhD candidate, Medicine)

CIHR (Canada Graduate Scholarship - Master's program):

Kayla Cropper (MSc candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)

CIHR (Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral program):

- Una Goncin (PhD candidate, Medicine)
- Cole Libner (PhD candidate, Medicine)

NSERC (Canada Graduate Scholarship - Master's program):

- Timothy Onofrychuk (MSc candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)
- Ananna Arna (MSc candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)
- Michelle Gerber (MSc candidate; Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)

NSERC (Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral program):

Elsa Van Ankum (PhD candidate; Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)

STAFF AWARDS

Program Administrative Assistant of the Year Awards, USask Postgraduate Medical Education:

Jalene Jepson (Family Medicine Enhanced Skills)

2021 Research Management Excellence Award, Canadian Association of Research Administrators:

Karen Mosier (Department of Surgery)

2021 Certified Health Executive designation, Canadian College of Health Leaders:

Sinead McGartland, Dean's Office

2020 CoM Sydney Inskip Award:

Nicole Toutant, Prince Albert UGME administrative coordinator

FACULTY AWARDS

2021

Program Director of the Year, USask Postgraduate Medical Education:

Dr. Karen Laframboise, MD (Department of Medicine, Internal Medicine)

Award for Excellence in Enhancing Resident Learning:

Dr. John Shaw (Department of Surgery)

Louis Horlick Spirit of the College of Medicine Award:

Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis, MD'09 (Department of Medicine)

Provost's College Award for Outstanding Teaching:

Dr. Greg Malin, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

Provost's Themed Award for Outstanding New Teacher:

Dr. Sarah Donkers, PhD (School of Rehabilitation Science)

Best Supervisor Award, USask Life and Health Sciences Research Expo:

Dr. Anne Leis, PhD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology)

Excellence in Teaching Award, Resident Doctors of Saskatchewan:

- Dr. Moses Ademola, MD (Department of Emergency Medicine)
- Dr. Eugene Choo, MD (Department of Anesthesiology)
- Dr. Luke Hnenny, MD (Department of Surgery)
- Dr. Raymond Ko, MD (Department of Ophthalmology)
- Dr. Chunjie Wang, MD, PhD (Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine)

Family Physician of the Year, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Meredith McKague, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine and CoM associate dean, undergraduate medical education)

Dr. Michael Krochak Award, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Stephen Britton, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

Awards of Excellence, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

- Dr. Sarah McLaughlin, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)
- Dr. Kendra Morrow, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

My Family Doc Rocks Award, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

- Dr. Carly Conly, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)
- Dr. Robert Haver, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

Canadian Certified Physician Executive Award, Canadian Society of Physician Leaders:

- Dr. Carmen Johnson, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)
- Dr. Cathy MacLean, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)
- Dr. Susan Shaw, MD (Department of Anesthesiology)

Fellow of the Canadian Association of Radiologists:

Dr. Sheldon Wiebe, MD (Department of Medical Imaging)

Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada:

Dr. Malcolm King, PhD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology and scientific director of Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research)

Certificate of Merit Award, Canadian Association for Medical Education:

Dr. Tara Lee, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

Medals of Distinction, Canadian Physiotherapy Association:

- Cathy Cuddington, School of Rehabilitation Science
- Peggy Proctor, School of Rehabilitation Science

Excellence in Research Award, Canadian Association for HIV Research and the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research:

Dr. Alexander Wong, MD (Department of Medicine)

YWCA Regina Women of Distinction Awards:

- Dr. Glenda Kaban, MD (Department of Emergency Medicine, health care hero category)
- Dr. Jessica Minion, MD (Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, pandemic innovator category)

Research, Innovation and Scholarship in Education (RISE) Day:

- Dr. Susan Petryk, MD (Department of Pediatrics – top poster presentation)
- Dr. Siddharth Kogilwaimath, MD (Department of Pediatrics – top abstract)
- Dr. Udoka Okpalauwaekwe, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine – top abstract)

2020

Physician Leader of the Year Award, Saskatchewan Medical Association:

Dr. Veronica McKinney, MD (Department of Academic Family Medicine)

Physician of the Year Award, Saskatchewan Medical Association:

Dr. Biswa Datta, MD (Department of Pediatrics)

R.D. Defries Award and Honorary Life Membership, Canadian Public Health Association:

Dr. Cory Neudorf, MD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology)

CBC Future 40 in Saskatchewan:

Dr. Hassan Masri, MD (Department of Medicine)

UpDoc Media's Top 40 Physical Therapy Influencers (academics and research):

Dr. Scotty Butcher, PhD (School of Rehabilitation Science)

The Louis Horlick “Spirit of the College of Medicine Award” was established by the Alumni Association in honour of Dr. Louis Horlick, Professor Emeritus, Department of Medicine, for his contributions to the College of Medicine.

The annual award is presented to an individual associated with the college who has contributed over and above the call of duty and shows the spirit, dedication and enthusiasm that Dr. Horlick has exemplified over his career. The first presentation of this award was made to Dr. H.J. Spooner in 2003, at the College of Medicine 50th anniversary celebrations.

Nominations for the 2022 Spirit of the College Award will be accepted until April 30, 2022.

To obtain a nomination form, please visit the medicine alumni webpage at medicine.usask.ca/alumni/awards.php or contact medicine.alumni@usask.ca.

ALUMNI

Spirit of the Class Award

Dr. Kate Morrison (MD'21)

The College of Medicine Alumni Association is thrilled to present the Spirit of the Class Award in 2021 to Dr. Kate Morrison (MD'21). The Spirit of the Class Award is presented annually to a member of the College of Medicine graduating class that clearly portrays their class spirit over the entire four-year program.

Throughout her journey as a student in the college, Dr. Morrison has exemplified the true spirit of what it means to be a dedicated student, supportive classmate, and compassionate physician. She is highly respected by her peers and has shown incredible fortitude in the face of adversity, particularly during an unforeseen and disruptive pandemic. Dr. Morrison has a long history of giving back and when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, she stepped up.

Congratulations, Kate! The entire alumni body of the College of Medicine is proud of you!

Spirit of the College of Medicine Award

Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis (MD'09)

The 2021 Louis Horlick “Spirit of the College of Medicine Award” recipient is Dr. Rachel Netahe Asiniwasis. Dr. Asiniwasis is a double-board certified Dermatologist currently practicing in her original hometown of Regina, Saskatchewan since graduating Dermatology residency at the University of Toronto in 2014.

She currently operates her own practice within Regina seeing a wide base of patients in southern Saskatchewan. Since 2015, she and her small team have expanded to service several remote and northern First Nations communities around Saskatchewan in a grassroots initiative. She does this through a mixture of in-person and tele-dermatology clinics.

“Dr. Asiniwasis has always demonstrated a keen interest in caring for people. She has exemplified this through remote clinics, private practice, cutting edge research, inspiring students at all levels (premed, medicine, and residency). She has taken on an additional role of helping with the pandemic—doing ward work and caring for the Covid-19 patients to help mitigate the shortage of physicians. She travels great distances to help provide medical care to those that have difficulty accessing care. She is constantly working to resolve barriers to healthcare—one example being petitioning for the cost coverage of moisturizers in atopic dermatitis patients. Her innovation, determination, and drive to help Saskatchewan is unparalleled.” — nominator

Achievement Awards

The Alumni Achievement Awards are presented annually to USask graduates who advance the reputation of the University of Saskatchewan and the Alumni Association. Award recipients are chosen for their outstanding achievements and innovation; commitment to excellence; community engagement and leadership; and contributions to the social, cultural and economic well-being of society.

Established in 1978, the University of Saskatchewan Alumni Association Awards honour the outstanding accomplishments of our alumni and attest to the excellence of the University of Saskatchewan educational experience.

Alumni from the College of Medicine who have received an Alumni Achievement Award in the past few years include:

- 2018: Drs. Suzanne Yip (MD'60) and Ivan Jen (MD'60)
- 2017: Dr. John Conly (MD'78)
- 2017: Dr. David Mulder (MD'62)

Honorary Doctor of Laws

Dr. David Mulder (MD'62) received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree, which is awarded for outstanding scholarly achievement or exceptional service to the university or community at large.

Dr. Mulder has served as a team physician with the NHL Montreal Canadiens for over 50 years, and was the chief surgeon at Montreal General Hospital. He also made significant contributions to health care throughout his career, including developing a province-wide trauma treatment system in Quebec.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2021

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

OCTOBER 2021 – APRIL 2022
Continuing Medical Education
Webinar Series

VARIOUS (OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER)
• Neonatal Resuscitation Program

NOVEMBER 26 – 27
Pain and Therapeutics Conference

DECEMBER

DECEMBER (DATE TBD)
ER Journal Club

2022

JANUARY

JANUARY (DATE TBD)
Dean’s Reception

JANUARY 21
MD Class of 2025 White Coat Ceremony

MARCH

MARCH 26
Knuckle Cup Hockey Game

MARCH (DATE TBD)
Mentorship Networking Event

* Due to ongoing pandemic restrictions and the fluid nature of pandemic event planning, we are unable to provide specific dates for some alumni events in the next year.

Please keep an eye on your email for specific dates as they become available or check the alumni section of the College of Medicine website: medicine.usask.ca/alumni

APRIL

APRIL 23 – 26
Canadian Conference on Medical Education (Calgary, AB)

MAY

MAY 25
Department of Emergency Medicine Research Day

JUNE

JUNE 16 – 18
2022 Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion

JUNE 17
2022 Alumni Association AGM

JUNE 27 – 29
PGME Resident Boot Camp

JUNE (DATE TBD)
College of Medicine Convocation

JUNE (DATE TBD)
Research, Innovation and Scholarship in Education event

OCTOBER

OCTOBER (DATE TBD)
MD Class of 2026 White Coat Ceremony

OCTOBER 13 – 15
International Conference on Physician Health (Orlando, FL)

OCTOBER 27 – 29
International Conference on Residency Education 2022 (Montreal)

Save the date

June 16 – 18, 2022,
Saskatoon

Planning is already underway for the **2022 Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion**. Be sure to save the date as this all-years event may be the biggest reunion yet—you won’t want to miss out!

Thank you

2021 Class Giving Campaign

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2021 Class Giving Campaign. Because of you, we raised \$20,000 to support undergraduate students in financial need. We encourage classes to start thinking of ideas to raise funding for students in financial need, such as starting their own fund.

If your class is interested in donating, please reach out to Steph Bodnar at steph.bodnar@usask.ca and she can help your class support students for generations to come.

EVENT RECAP

2021 Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion

August 27 – 28, 2021

Thank you to everyone that attended this year’s online 2021 Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion. Attendees were offered opportunities to listen, learn and reconnect.

This year, we celebrated nearly 25 class reunions, twice the typical number, since classes that were unable to celebrate in 2020 carried over into 2021.

Conference sessions were designed to host diverse speakers with relevant topics, while showcasing the extraordinary talent of the College of Medicine community, including:



Class of 1971 Reunion (Submitted photo)

Innovation

Betty-Ann and Wade Heggie
Lecture in Integrative Medicine
Dr. Bonnie Kaplan (PhD)

Clara and Frank Gertler
Lectureship in Medicine
Dr. Alike Lafontaine (MD’06)

Honorary Alumni Lecture
Dr. Donald Wasylenki (MD’71)

Young innovators
Dr. Emily Sullivan (MD’12)

Leadership

Leaders in medical research
Dr. John Conly (MD’78)

Medicine in a post-COVID world
Dr. Cory Neudorf (MD’89)

Student leaders
Ms. Sehjal Bhargava, Ms. Daisy Ko,
Ms. Elecktra Laxdal and
Mr. Mohamed Omar

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion in medicine
Dr. Ashley Tshala (MD’20)

Chakravarti Lecture in Health and Wellness
Dr. Manuela Valle-Castro (PhD)

Indigenous health
Dr. Janet Tootoosis (MD’99)

Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis (MD’09) was presented with the **Louis Horlick Spirit of the College Award**.

Other highlights of the conference included a special welcome and update from Dean Preston Smith, Annual General Meeting and silent auction.

Share your story. Tell us about recent highlights of your career, other achievements or personal updates, and it may be shared in the next *Connective Issue*.

1960s

Dr. Arnold Voth (MD’66): Retired and enjoying singing (pre-COVID), cross-country skiing, cycling, hiking and whitewater canoeing.

1970s

Dr. Andrew Good (MD’70): Retired for 10 years. Want to visit Saskatoon again soon, as soon as this COVID-inconvenience is over.

Drs. Maureen (MD’70) and Ken Sutherland (MD’70): We are well and happy, although weary of COVID-19. We both have continued working due to demand this year, Ken providing medical services mostly in virtual form, and Maureen providing pharmacy relief service, due to shortages of that these past two years. Our kids and grandsons have weathered the storm, too, and we all look forward to travel and getting together with family and friends again. Congratulations to the Class of 1970!

Dr. Ronald Shore (MD’70): Our dermatology practice's skin cancer screening program has recently entered its 30th year with 100 per cent survival from all skin cancers, the longest period reported in the medical literature.

Dr. Peter Powers (MD’71): Retired Dec 2017 after 43 years at St Joseph's Healthcare/Hamilton Health Sciences.

Dr. Charles Simpson (MD’71): Currently living in Saskatoon with children on both sides of the continent. Still do some medical student teaching and on board. Enjoying semi-retirement with sports and eating.

Dr. Gim Ang (MD’75): After graduating from Saskatchewan in 1975, I returned to Singapore and worked there for five years. Subsequently I moved to Perth, Western Australia where I have been living and working as a doctor since. I am now only working two days a week and plan to retire fully in a year or two. Before the pandemic, I travelled a lot but haven't done any travelling since COVID started. Over the past 10 years or so, I have been to Canada twice. The first time was to Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City. A few years ago, I travelled to Vancouver and the Rocky Mountains. I was thinking of a side trip to Saskatoon if I had been able to contact some old classmates. If any classmates ever visit Perth, they are very welcome to contact me. I have three girls and two grandchildren. That and golf and other things keep me busy.

Dr. Dennis Bishop (MD’75): In New Zealand since December 2019.

Dr. Alanna Danilkewich (MD’75): I retired as an Associate Professor of Academic Family Medicine in 2020 after a stimulating and rewarding 42 year career of clinical work, teaching, administration, and research in Saskatchewan. I was honoured with the Michael Krochak Award for contributions to Family Medicine in Saskatchewan in 2020.I live on a riverfront acreage in Saskatoon with my husband Joseph Angel and have a beautiful summer cabin in Meadow Lake. My hobbies are growing orchids, gardening, antiques, cooking gourmet food and hopefully travel again soon.

Dr. Margery Jurgens (MD’75): Have finally totally retired as of March 2020. Till then, was still active doing OR assists. Moved from Prince Albert to Crossmount (just 5 km south of Saskatoon) in December 2020 to be closer to our daughter, her husband and our grandson. Received Life Membership in the College of Family Physicians November 2017.

Dr. Anne Doig (MD’76): Retired from active clinical practice effective July 1, 2018. We took the whole family on a weeklong houseboat trip on the Shuswap in late August, 2018. I did a "Footsteps of Saint Paul" 10 day trip to Greece with two of my sisters-in-law in October, 2018, and then walked the Camino Portuges (280 km in 12 days, with packs) in April, 2019. Since then, I've been following a "learn to run" program and walking my dog Rufus to keep me busy during COVID.

Dr. Linda Swab (MD’76): Retired seven years after serving rural Sask. for 37 years. The relationships one forms in rural practice are like none other.

Dr. John Conly (MD’78): Chair, WHO Infection Prevention and Control Research and Development Expert Group for COVID-19.

1980s

Dr. James Melenchuk (MD’80): Chief Medical Officer of Saskatchewan WCB since 2006.

Dr. Barbara Germin (MD’81): Retired now.

Dr. B. Konstantynowicz (MD’81): SMA President 2020. SMA Past President – Current.

Dr. Ulla Nielsen (MD’81): It's been 40 years!

Dr. Cheri Nijssen-Jordan (MD’81): Have been active in the last two years with vaccine campaigns - first with a measles epidemic and vaccine campaign in Central Africa Republic with Doctors Without Borders. Peter and I then returned home to Alberta

and I have been Co-Lead on the Alberta Health Services COVID Vaccine Task Force since Dec 11 - a truly challenging job! I am looking forward to retirement and freedom to move around the world again—hopefully back with MSF but likely a lot of personal travel.

Dr. Volker Rininsland (MD’81): Still loving life and work in Moose Jaw.

1990s

Dr. Subhas Ganguli (MD’90): After learning that I was pre-diabetic a few years ago, I went back to the literature and learned that a Whole Food Plant-based Diet (WFPB) was markedly more effective than the American Diabetes Association diet for diabetes; also that a similar lifestyle based intervention can reverse the narrowing of coronary arteries from atherosclerosis. I am now US certified in Lifestyle Medicine and have a Food as Medicine website. and run a clinic to prevent/reverse chronic medical conditions with diet. I did training in Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology and then a Masters in Health Research Methodology from McMaster. Eithna and I also have a daughter (Sonya, 26yo) and own the cutest dog in Hamilton (Indy).

Dr. Jeffrey Schaefer (MD’91): After 30 years at the University of Calgary, Department of Medicine as a General Internist, I'm taking a sabbatical year starting July 2021. My interests have been medical education, clinical informatics, and integrative medicine. I've served as Internal Medicine Program Director, Head of General Internal Medicine. I have been Interim Zone Clinical Department Head and Senior Medical Director of the Medicine Strategic Clinical Network of Alberta Health Services. Clinically, I'm almost exclusively working on the acute care Medical Teaching Units (including COVID Teams) at Foothills Medical Centre. My wife Gwen is doing well (semi-retired), and my daughter Heidi is entering her third year of Engineering at the University of Calgary (Software Engineering). I've taken up motorcycling and have enjoyed multi-day trips in Western Canada and the US. And despite the various struggles, life has been very good, and I'm forever grateful for what I have, my experiences, and most importantly, all the people in my life. I owe much to the USask and fondly reflect on my time there with you. Wishing everyone well.

Let us remember those who have walked through our doors and have since passed on.

Names are listed by decade of receipt of their first medical degree.

1970s

Wayne Smandych
MD’70 — d. Aug. 18, 2021

Harvey Gerein
MD’71 — d. Nov. 18, 2020

Robert Tokaryk
MD’71 — d. Sept. 16, 2020

David Clarke
MD’72 — d. Aug. 4, 2021

Douglas Tubman
MD’75 — d. Aug. 13, 2020

John Shewchuk
MD’76 — d. March 13, 2021

1950s

Theodore Siwak
MED’51 — d. Oct. 1, 2019

Isadore Kreel
MED’50 — d. May 15, 2019

Michael Krochak
MED’57 — d. March 11, 2021

Lorne Vinge
MD’58 — d. March 16, 2021

Marian Hill
MD’58 — d. Nov. 4, 2020

1980s

Enid Edwards
MD’81 — d. Jan. 24, 2021

1960s

Robert Bridge
MD’60 — d. Sept. 21, 2019

James Edwards
MD’66 — d. Oct. 12, 2019

Lucille Petrich
MD’66 — d. Sept. 28, 2020

1990s

Todd Owatz
MD’96 — d. Oct. 15, 2020



The College of Medicine is a leader in improving the health and well-being of the people of Saskatchewan and the world.

As a socially accountable organization, we improve health through innovative and interdisciplinary research and education, leadership, community engagement, and the development of culturally competent, skilled clinicians and scientists. Collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities are central to our mission.

USask is one of the top research-intensive, medical doctoral universities in Canada, and is home to world-leading research in areas of global importance, such as water and food security and infectious diseases. Study and discovery is enhanced by our outstanding facilities, including the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, VIDO-InterVac, the Global Institute for Food Security, the Global Institute for Water Security and the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation.

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