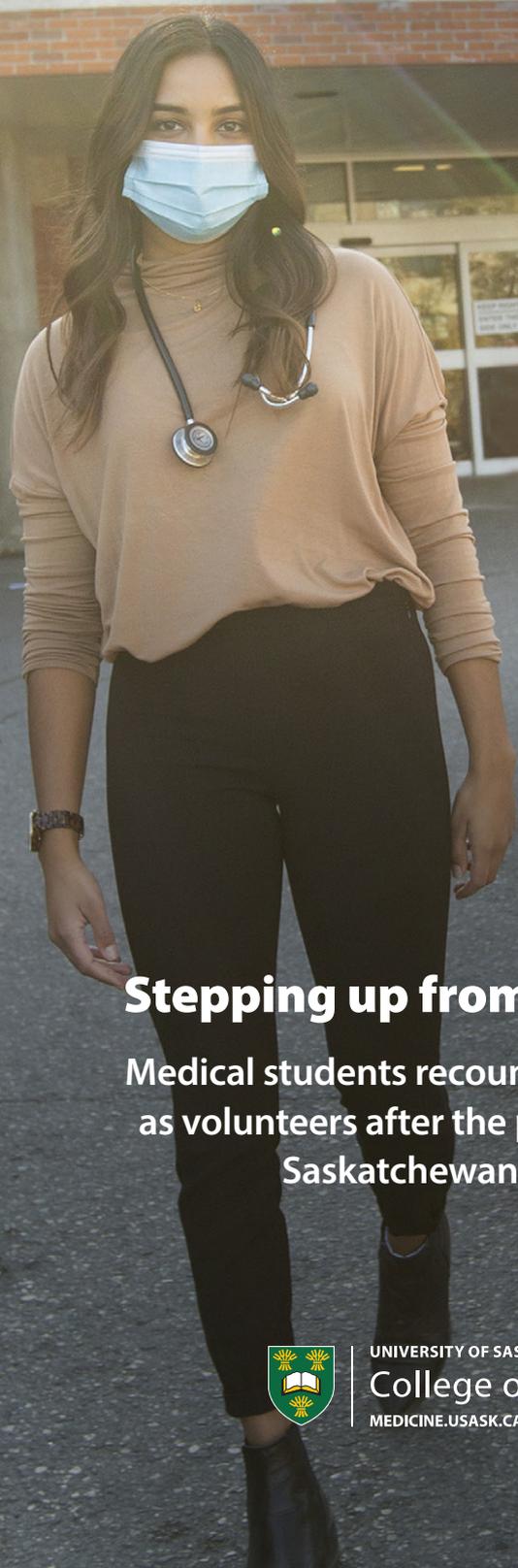


CONNECTIVE ISSUE



Stepping up from the sidelines

Medical students recount their experiences as volunteers after the pandemic reached Saskatchewan in March.





helping students and residents

EXPLORE their OPTIONS

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.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Host a Roadmap Tour in your community
- Welcome students to shadow in your rural/regional practice
- Become a preceptor

If you're interested, please contact us at:
roadmap@sma.sk.ca
 306.244.2196



SASKATCHEWAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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🌐 www.sma.sk.ca/roadmap

CONNECTIVE ISSUE

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ON THE COVER

Sehjal Bhargava and Jessica Froehlich, medical doctor students, outside the Regina General Hospital, where the College of Medicine Regina campus is located.

Cover photography: David Stobbe



12 — **Stepping up from the sidelines:**

Medical doctor students and pandemic volunteers
Kate Morrison (left) and Masooma Bhatti

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Send us your ideas

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

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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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This issue of our annual magazine focuses on work related to COVID-19, not surprisingly, and provides a roundup of other news. I encourage you to take a few minutes to read through our 2020 *Connective Issue*. I am sure you will be impressed, as I always am, with the breadth and significance of the work undertaken by your college.



While continuing their studies remotely, our undergraduate medical doctor learners developed an impressive array of volunteer initiatives that supported patients and healthcare workers. They helped gather PPE, they played a big role in contact tracing, they supported isolated senior citizens, and they fundraised for La Loche and other northern communities that were hit hard by the pandemic.

Very critically and fortunately, we were able to return our clerks to clinical learning by late May, ensuring they could progress towards graduation, and that our health system would not have a gap in the flow of medical learners and physicians into the workforce. Many postgraduate learners shifted to other areas of clinical learning and care to best support patients and the health system in Saskatchewan.

Many of our researchers in areas of public health and medical science shifted focus quickly, playing a key role in local, provincial, national and global work to fight the pandemic spread. Their work included advising public officials on the best public health measures for stemming the virus spread and engaging in science-based research to assist in care and treatments for patients with COVID-19.

In the following pages, you will learn more about these and other efforts of our college this past year. ♥

Dr. Preston Smith
Dean, College of Medicine



Our College of Medicine Alumni Association continues its important work, though we are certainly in a different world as we grapple with this pandemic and adjust accordingly.

However, we are all seeing how everyone can pull together and continue, despite these challenging times. The commitment of our association to the medical school remains.

Like so many, we look forward to the results of the important work toward a COVID-19 vaccine that our College of Medicine is playing an important part in. Until that time, I offer encouragement to all my fellow alumni and colleagues, our learners, our medical scientists and staff.

Certainly, the pandemic has impacted our social and professional interactions. We can't connect in the ways we are used to and most enjoy, but making that extra effort to stay connected virtually means a great deal. Maintain those important connections while maintaining safety, and we will wade through what's ahead together.

Our alumni association mandate does not change, even during a pandemic. Our philosophy of supporting the College of Medicine, our medical learners and our communities is unwavering. ♥

Dr. Terry Zlipko
President, College of Medicine Alumni Association

College of Medicine Alumni Association

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Dr. Veronica McKinney

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Dr. Manuela Valle-Castro

Provincial and department heads

Anesthesiology, Perioperative Medicine and Pain Management: Dr. Mateen Raazi

Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology: Dr. Thomas Fisher

Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology: Dr. Bill Roesler

Community Health and Epidemiology: Dr. Anne Leis

Emergency Medicine: Dr. James Stempien

Family Medicine: Dr. Kathy Lawrence

Medical Imaging: Dr. Sheldon Wiebe

Medicine: Dr. Haissam (Sam) Haddad

Obstetrics and Gynecology:

Dr. Joanne Sivertson (interim)

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine:

Dr. Fergall Magee

Pediatrics: Dr. Athena McConnell (interim)

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation:

Dr. Gary Linassi

Psychiatry: Dr. Malin Clarke (interim)

Surgery: Dr. Ivar Mendez

Saskatchewan Cancer Agency:

Dr. Shahid Ahmed (Division Head)

NOTE:

Due to COVID-19, the following alumni events are under review. Updates will be provided as we know more.

- 2021 Highlights in Medicine
- Alumni association annual general meeting
- Knuckle Cup: Alumni versus students hockey game
- Medsters Golf Tournament
- Alumni receptions

2020

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 17

CBD Competence Committee Virtual Workshop (Part B)

NOVEMBER 20-21

Saskatchewan Emergency Medicine Annual Conference (SEMAC)

2021

JANUARY

JANUARY 12

Resident Self-Assessment Virtual Workshop

JANUARY 21

CBD Competence Committee Virtual Workshop (Part A)

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 4

CBD Competence Committee Virtual Workshop (Part B)

FEBRUARY (DATE TBD)

Resident Awareness Week

APRIL

APRIL 9

SMSS Fall Formal (moved from Fall 2020 due to COVID-19)

APRIL 17-20

Canadian Conference on Medical Education (St. John's, Newfoundland)

APRIL 28-30

International Conference on Physician Health (London, England)

MAY

MAY (DATE TBD)

Resident Wellness Week

JUNE

JUNE 3

College of Medicine Convocation

JUNE (DATE TBD)

PGME Resident Research Day

JUNE (DATE TBD)

PGME Resident Boot Camp

JUNE 11

Medical Education Research and Scholarship Day

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER (DATE TBD)

PGME Celebration Night

OCTOBER

OCTOBER (DATE TBD)

White Coat Ceremony

OCTOBER 21-23

International Conference on Residency Education 2021 (Ottawa)

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER (DATE TBD)

Transition to Residency Symposia

College moving forward on anti-racism and EDI

The College of Medicine is committed to anti-racism and creating an environment of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

The deaths of individuals, including Joyce Echaquan in Quebec and George Floyd in Minnesota, keep the pressing need for change front and centre for everyone.

While a significant amount of work is taking place in the college, more will be done. The college is committed to staying focused on improvements towards truly being a place of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Efforts to date, which will continue and be informed and improved by new information, approaches and policies, include an EDI working group, which developed terms of reference and produced its first annual report last year. The college hired an EDI specialist to help focus and inform efforts in this area.

Students formed a Black Medical Students Association earlier this year, and this group has met with college executive leaders and the EDI specialist to discuss opportunities for improvements and change. Further work to improve admissions policies from an EDI lens are underway. The college continues to move forward with the new Division of Indigenous Health, where the work and achievements of Indigenous experts can be brought together for greater impact.

"This is, of course, only the beginning of all the work before us to combat racism and develop into a truly equitable, diverse and inclusive college," said Dr. Preston Smith, dean of medicine. "We will take a consultative approach to ensure we have the voices of real experience helping us chart the right path forward. Most importantly, this commitment is about a continuing emphasis and focus on anti-racism and EDI in our college."

Smith added, "We will take a slow, steady approach to ensure we get this right and embed it in how we work every day." ▀



Nazeem Muhajarine (right) and Daniel Adeyinka study worldwide stillbirth rates.

Photography: Daniel Hallen for USask

Stillbirth rates linked to gender inequality

College of Medicine researchers Nazeem Muhajarine and Daniel Adeyinka carried out the first comprehensive study mapping global patterns of stillbirth rates.

They found that pregnant women who are poor and have lower access to education and employment are more likely to experience a child's death at delivery. The model developed by the USask researchers shows that stillbirths are more likely in countries where gender inequality is high—where women experience financial challenges and have less access to education and employment opportunities compared to men.

The World Health Organization reports that almost three million children die before or at delivery every year and most of these deaths are preventable. ▀

Pediatrics residency in Regina

Saskatchewan has its first Regina-based pediatrics residency program.

In July 2019, two pediatric residents started their training at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) College of Medicine Regina campus, where roughly 30 per cent of all USask medical students train each year. The campus is located within the Regina General Hospital. There are about 450 residents across all programs in the province, with about 75 based in Regina as of March 2020. ▾



Dr. Alexandra King

Photography: David Stobbe

Range of health issues tackled with \$3.6M

Six College of Medicine and School of Rehabilitation Science researchers are involved in projects awarded nearly \$3.6 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to improve health and quality of life for children, mothers, seniors, Indigenous communities, and people in rural areas.

Cameco Chair in Indigenous Health and Wellness Dr. Alexandra King (MD) is part of a study to keep babies born with opioid withdrawal with their mothers in Sanctum 1.5, a supportive care environment. Sylvia van den Hurk (PhD) is leading research testing a new vaccine for a severe respiratory virus.

Nutrition researcher Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer (PhD) is leading a study looking at effects of healthy lunches on core curriculum elements in schools. Dr. Brenna Bath (PhD) and Dr. Stacey Lovo (PhD) are leading a team investigating access to chronic back pain treatment in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. Dr. Gary Groot (PhD) is leading a team evaluating how a care home, Sanctum 1.5, helps HIV-positive mothers and babies. Dr. Donna Goodridge (PhD) is working with a team to survey seniors and use the results to address loneliness and social isolation among senior citizens. ▾

Top-notch accreditation results

The College of Medicine earned top-notch accreditation results in 2020 for its undergraduate medical education program.

While the college achieved full accreditation in the wake of a complete onsite review in 2017, CACMS required some written reports as follow up once additional data could be collected that wasn't available at the time of the visit. The college submitted those reports in 2019 and has now earned the satisfaction of the accrediting body across all 93 areas of review. Two areas require time for more data to be collected and further reporting provided to CACMS, but were not flagged as being of concern. ▾



Dr. Stéphanie Madill

Photography: Kristen McEwen

Elevating patient-oriented research

School of Rehabilitation Science's Dr. Stéphanie Madill is leading a research team investigating ways to improve trans and gender-diverse individuals' experiences with health care.

Madill and the Trans Research and Navigation Saskatchewan (TRANS) team is one of 11 research teams that received Sprout Grant funding from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) and the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research (SCPOR). The TRANS team will establish peer navigator roles to support trans and gender-diverse people as they access the health system. ▾

Answering key questions

Webinars answering key questions about COVID-19 for healthcare workers, organized by the Division of Continuing Medical Education, have welcomed as many as 1,000 participants at a time.

While the majority have been from Saskatchewan, there were national and international attendees as well. Experts share information and answer questions from participants, filling an important need among healthcare providers. ▾



From left, USask researchers Dr. Caroline Tait and Simon Lambert with NEIHR partners Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) Health Minister Marg Friesen, Whitecap Dakota First Nation Chief Darcy Bear, and MN-S President Glen McCallum.

Photography: USask

Indigenous communities drive health research

USask researchers were awarded \$5 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to create a network of Indigenous research centres driven by and grounded in Indigenous communities.

The new 16-year national program, Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR), represents the largest-ever single investment in Indigenous health research in Canadian history and is led by the CoM's Dr. Carrie Bourassa, scientific director of the CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health, based at USask. The national co-ordinating centre, based at USask and led by Dr. Caroline Tait, will co-ordinate health research and training with the leads of the other NEIHR centres across Canada. The NEIHR coordinating centre is based at Station 20 West, in a core neighborhood of Saskatoon's west side. ▾



Dr. Paul Babyn (MD) and Dr. Carl Wesolowski (MD) of the College of Medicine, and Dr. Jane Alcorn (PhD) of the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition collaborated on a five-year research study.

Photography: Kristen McEwen

Discovery shows drugs linger

A discovery by a group of USask researchers may change the way we model how a human body processes drugs.

Carl Wesolowski (MD) is leading an interdisciplinary research team that published an article about their five-year study of why it takes longer than expected for certain drugs, like metformin, to completely leave the body. Metformin is often used to treat Type-2 diabetes. The study found that when metformin is delivered intravenously (IV), the drug builds up and stays in the body tissue for a lengthy period of time. ♥

Teamwork provides support

Through the initiative of Dr. Gene Marcoux, clinical professor of psychiatry at the College of Medicine, the Healthcare Heroes Helpline was born.

Marcoux talked with his pastor at Elim Church in Saskatoon, and the prayer line was set in motion. Medical professionals can reach out to local pastors for support through prayer during the pandemic. ♥



Dr. Sarah Donkers

Photography: submitted

Pandemic online support offered

During the COVID-19 pandemic, USask researchers in physiotherapy, rehabilitation science and neurology combined their expertise to provide a free online, virtual program to people with neurological conditions.

The program NeuroSask: Active and Connected will begin on April 23, 2020. It involves a twice-weekly videoconference consisting of a physiotherapist-guided movement class, followed by an interactive session with guest medical or wellness experts and local artists, or a social activity. The project is co-led by physiotherapist Dr. Sarah Donkers (PhD) and physical medicine and rehabilitation expert Dr. Katherine Knox (MD). ♥

Video sharing to dispel myths

Dr. Hassan Masri, associate professor of medicine with USask, has helped keep the public informed about the pandemic.

He posts weekly videos on Facebook to answer frequently asked questions about COVID-19, and to remind others to take care of their health and do their part to keep the virus from spreading. ♥



Dr. Carrie Bourassa

Photography: David Stobbe

Bourassa named national lead

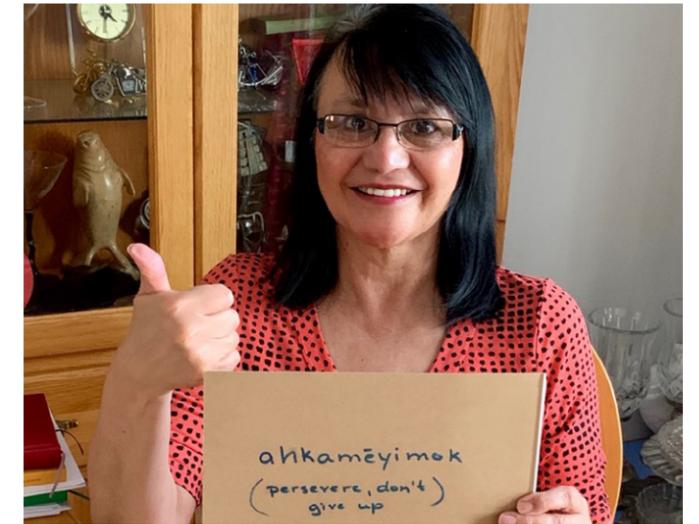
USask Indigenous health research leader Dr. Carrie Bourassa (PhD) was appointed the Indigenous Engagement Lead on the federal COVID-19 Immunity Task Force.

The leadership group will oversee national efforts to measure the scope and scale of SARS-CoV-2 immunity across Canada. Bourassa is the Scientific Director, Canadian Institutes of Indigenous Peoples' Health, and is on faculty in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology in the college. Separately, Dr. Bourassa is also a research lead at Morning Star Lodge, an Indigenous community-based health research lab in Regina, on informing Indigenous communities about the risks of COVID-19 infection and how to prevent its spread. ♥

Cree language training offered

The College of Medicine hosted a new Cree language training course, co-created by CoM Indigenous Coordinator Val Arnault-Pelletier and Randy Morin, a Cree language expert and professor in the USask Department of Indigenous Studies.

Cree is one of the most widely spoken Indigenous languages in the province. The course was well attended and received positive reviews. Planning is underway to offer it again in the current academic year. ♥



Val Arnault-Pelletier

Photography: submitted

Designing masks

In the early days of the pandemic, prior to mask use becoming more prevalent, Dr. Malcolm King, a professor in community health and epidemiology, helped design personal protective masks for pre-symptomatic COVID-19 patients.

The mask could be used to prevent early spread of the disease by those who had been in contact with someone with the disease but had no symptoms. ♥

Biomedical Sciences program revamped

Through a USask partnership of the College of Medicine and the College of Arts and Science, a revamped biomedical sciences degree is being offered starting May 2021.

Recent years have seen a number of changes to improve and enhance USask's undergraduate biomedical sciences program. These included the move from five biomedical sciences departments to just two: anatomy, physiology and pharmacology (APP) and biochemistry, microbiology and immunology (BMI) in 2018.

With these mergers, three new majors were approved: biochemistry, microbiology and immunology; cellular, physiological and pharmacological sciences; and biomedical neurosciences. As well, a new shared three-year major, called biomedical foundations, has been created to replace the three-year degrees of each of the former biomedical science majors. The creation of a new interdisciplinary biomedical sciences major was also approved, with the aim of providing students greater flexibility in course offerings across the biomedical sciences while maintaining the same standard of academic rigour. ♥



Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer

Food reclamation studied

What if unwanted food from grocery stores and restaurants could be repurposed to not only save money, but potentially create jobs?

This is one of the potential interventions a USask-led research team is studying as part of a food reclamation project, which could save 13,000 tonnes of food and up to \$138,000 in disposal fees at the City of Saskatoon landfill. Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer (PhD), an associate professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at USask, is co-leading the project and working with the City of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Food Council. ♥

Funding awarded for mental health, addictions, MS

Three College of Medicine researchers received a total of \$358,000 in funding through the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) to lead new health research programs.

Epidemiologist Dr. Maureen Anderson (PhD) will use 'big data' to better understand mental health and addictions. Psychiatry researcher Dr. Rohit Lodhi (PhD, MD) will study a range of factors and their impact on drop-out rates in opioid use disorder treatment. Neurological rehabilitation expert Dr. Sarah Donkers (PhD) will promote multiple sclerosis neurorecovery through physical rehabilitation. ♥

Supporting data-driven decisions

Public adherence to health guidelines are crucial to keeping COVID-19 in check until vaccines or therapeutics become available.

For this reason, Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine (PhD) is leading one of the first studies of its kind on the global pandemic. His team in the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU) is surveying provincial residents each month in the Social Contours and COVID-19 research project, sharing results of public perceptions of pandemic policies and how many people are following prevention measures. ♥



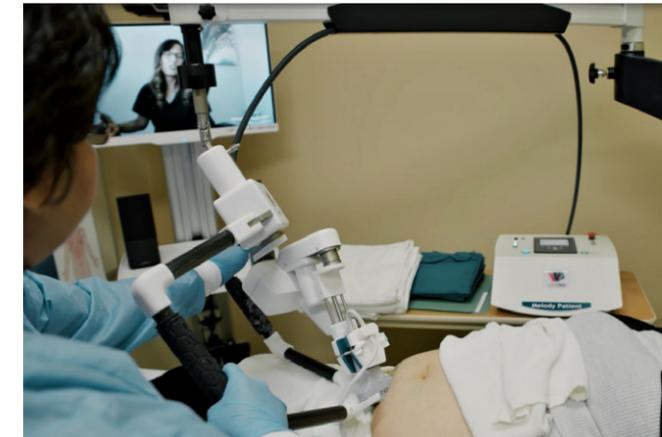
Anesthesiology resident Anine Yu is shown using point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) in an operating room as part of her training.

Photography: submitted

Researching ultrasound skills development

New research is being used to measure how anesthesiology residents develop ultrasound skills, supporting development of new curriculum being offered in this area.

Point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) is a safe, non-invasive tool for physicians to optimize many types of care at the bedside, from a heart examination to lessening the pain of a total joint knee replacement. Adequate supervised training and ongoing practice are both needed to learn the technical skills as well as the appropriate indications, pitfalls and limitations of the technology. ♥



Telerobotic ultrasound

Photography: Remote Presence Program

Virtual care delivered during pandemic

For more than 30 women in need of prenatal ultrasounds during a pandemic lockdown in the remote, northern Saskatchewan community of La Loche, a prenatal tele-robotic ultrasound system was the answer to their care needs.

A USask team found a way to utilize this existing technology to provide the diagnostic services needed, with care provided locally. The technology is the result of research led by Dr. Ivar Mendez, provincial department head of surgery. ♥

Tracking public health responses

A USask team of researchers are the first in the world to track public health responses to an ongoing pandemic, using new World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for tracking interventions.

Dr. Cory Neudorf, professor of community health and epidemiology and medical director of surveillance and health status assessment/reporting for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, leads the team. Their goal is to provide recommendations on preparing for the next wave of COVID-19 and for future pandemics. ♥



STEPPING UP FROM THE SIDELINES

From raising tens of thousands of dollars for needed supplies in La Loche, to helping health care workers from the sidelines, medical students felt called to help Saskatchewan communities during a global pandemic—the same communities they are being trained to serve as physicians.

Third-year Regina medical students Jessica Froehlich (left) and Sehjal Bhargava were key student organizers as the pandemic hit Saskatchewan in early March. From child care and grocery runs, to contact tracing, medical students were busy helping any way they could.

Photography: David Stobbe

KRISTEN McEWEN

As COVID-19 arrived in Saskatchewan in March 2020, lives were put on hold while people across the province joined the world in trying to figure out the novel coronavirus.

Medical students at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) were no exception as their clinical education came to a sudden halt. While students continued with remote learning and returned to clinical learning by late May, third-year students momentarily found themselves on the sidelines as their teachers and mentors battled the virus.

“It just felt really crazy to have school put on hold,” said current third-year medical student Jessica Froehlich. “If you had asked me before (COVID-19), I would have had trouble coming up with any reason, or catastrophe, to cause our medical school curriculum to be on hold.”

At the time, Froehlich was a second-year medical student based in Regina. Two of her favourite things about medical school were seeing patients and participating in extracurricular activities—both of which were not allowed during the initial months of the pandemic.

“I think I was trying to keep my head above water and navigate this,” she said.

As it became clear that COVID-19 was here to stay, gaps within communities began to appear. The closure of businesses and organizations—some temporary, some permanent—meant loss for many, including access to community centres, restaurants and stores.

“Many of us started thinking about the things we could do to make a meaningful difference to support people in the pandemic, as medical students,” Froehlich said. “With the restrictions caused by COVID-19, we were starting to see a lot of needs and we were wanting to be responsive to our communities.”

Students take the initiative

One of the first student volunteer initiatives in response to the pandemic came about because of the increased demand on health care providers as they worked through COVID-19. A group of medical students formed Students 4 HCPs (Health Care Professionals) so they could support their mentors and teachers ethically and safely.

The group of about 80 students volunteered their time to help in any way they could—from child and pet care to pharmacy and grocery runs. This was largely inspired by other medical student movements to support physician leaders across Canada. The USask team was run by Sehjal Bhargava, Jessica Froehlich, Sarah White, Alexa McEwen, Tayyaba Bhatti and Colten Molnar.

As cases rose in Saskatchewan, calls to HealthLine 811 grew as people wondered what symptoms to look for and if they should be tested.

About 200 USask health science students began volunteering their time with Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert. They formed the Saskatchewan Public Health Student Task Force, led by medical students Sehjal Bhargava, Kate Morrison, Amira Muftah, Samuel Simonson and Jessica Froehlich.

“I think working with Public Health really hit home for me,” Bhargava said. “It was a way for us to help out without getting in the way. Lots of people were worried about the virus and the hotlines were off-the-charts busy.”

About 160 medical students from across Saskatchewan volunteered to work overtime to answer 811 calls, log symptoms, schedule testing, and deliver negative test results back to patients. Dr. Jasmine Hasselback coordinated the volunteer medical students for HealthLine 811.

Freeing up public health professionals to work on the front lines also resulted in an educational experience for medical students, Bhargava explained.

“We learned about the virus itself, learned about what people were most concerned about, what it takes to run a pandemic response and the collaboration and importance of communication,” she said.

While helping with contact tracing, about 15 students also began collecting personal protective equipment for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, as a PPE shortage was becoming a concern. Students were on the ground, soliciting businesses and individuals to donate any spare PPE they had. They picked up and dropped off equipment, and even stored PPE at their houses until it could be delivered to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, where it could be distributed to whichever community needed it the most.

“We find these gaps in the community and address them,” Bhargava said. “That’s the power of medical students—a little bit of passion, a little bit of creativity.”



Donations for La Loche

Starting in late April, communities in northern Saskatchewan were seeing a high number of cases of COVID-19. To prevent spread of the disease, the Government of Saskatchewan ordered travel restrictions for northern communities. This impacted access to resources for many in these communities, including cleaning supplies and PPE.

Medical student Kate Morrison worked with Dr. Kendra Morrow, a Saskatoon physician and assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine, to raise funds for the community of La Loche, which experienced an outbreak at the end of April.

On May 7, several medical students put the call out through social media to raise money to purchase supplies. About 30 active medical student volunteers soon set out to shop for supplies and packed boxes for families in La Loche and surrounding areas, located about 600 kilometres northwest of Saskatoon.

In the span of two weeks, the group raised more than \$50,000, which resulted in two transport trucks travelling to La Loche and area to deliver supplies. Medical students worked with local organizers and northern community leaders to ensure that the correct supplies were purchased before being sent.

“Looking back, it was incredible to see how quickly and willing everyone was to donate—there was a lot of people supporting it,” Morrison said. “Everyone got together around the idea of supporting the north during the outbreak. It was amazing to see everyone come together.”

“Social isolation is one of the most prevalent issues faced by older adults today,” Bhatti said. “It can result in negative health outcomes for older adults, including higher incidence of chronic diseases, mortality rates and negative mental health outcomes.””

MASOOMA BHATTI



Combating social isolation

While then third-year student Masooma Bhatti was volunteering with contact tracing, she found that it was sometimes difficult to end phone calls immediately after delivering results and necessary information to older adult patients. In light of the pandemic, some older adults had their face-to-face interactions cut off as people were encouraged to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus.

“It became quite evident to me how much fear was out there and how lonely it can feel,” Bhatti said. “I actually remember speaking to this one older adult in particular, and it was heartbreaking to hear she was no longer able to visit with her grandkids. She just wanted to talk.”

Bhatti came across an initiative that originally began in Toronto, the Student-Senior Isolation Prevention Program (SSIPP). She reached out to the organization and offered to start a chapter in Saskatchewan.

SSIPP partners student health professionals with older adults in the community, offering regular weekly visits over the phone, and sometimes virtually, while also distributing critical information about COVID-19.

“During the past couple of months we have made calls on a weekly basis to offer some support, hope, encouragement and most importantly, friendship,” Bhatti said.

About 40 USask medical students signed up for this initiative at the beginning of the pandemic, prepared to connect with older adults. Since then, pairings came to a natural end as families were able to reunite in person. Currently, there are about nine active pairings that



Medical student Sarah White purchases supplies for families in La Loche and surrounding communities facing travel restrictions in May 2020.

Photography: submitted



Medical student Trevor Poole was one of more than 160 College of Medicine students who assisted with contact tracing throughout the province.

Photography: submitted

continue their weekly visits virtually and over the phone.

“Social isolation is one of the most prevalent issues faced by older adults today,” Bhatti said. “It can result in negative health outcomes for older adults, including higher incidence of chronic diseases, mortality rates and negative mental health outcomes.”

How will the pandemic impact the future?

While curriculum, classes and clerkships are moving forward once more in the fall 2020 semester with limitations, the first months of the virus were “uncharted territory,” Froehlich said.

“What we did, I don’t think was anything too out of the ordinary for students who were in the health sciences,” she added. “In Saskatchewan, we have such strong communities and we just want to help each other.”

While the pandemic put a hold on aspects of their medical education, it also reaffirmed other aspects of their medical careers. Now a third-year student, Bhargava has always advocated that medical students be engaged in their communities.

“Without having a sense of purpose (during the pandemic), I would have felt so helpless,” she said. “Being able to coordinate and rally,

knowing we were giving back in whatever small way we could, helped me get through the pandemic. It was really affirming that this was the work I wanted to do.”

Bhatti noted that the volunteer initiatives she participated in, as well as establishing SSIPP, allowed her to work with vulnerable populations she will be working with as a physician.

“It’s quite eye opening to be introduced to working with these populations (during a pandemic),” she said. “No matter which field of medicine I decide to work in, I’m going to be interacting with older adults and learn about resources available and how it affects them.”

When faced with the pandemic seeping into their communities, medical students searched for ways to help from the sidelines, while also bringing some normalcy and control back into their lives.

“Personally, I think it was a really nice way to be involved in the community that we work in normally, but not directly in a clinical context,” Morrison said. “And it was a reminder for myself—wanting to stay involved in the community in ways other than medical practice.”

“It’ll be an interesting time to look back on,” she added. “Not many people will go through medical school and also respond to a pandemic.”

MEDICAL RESEARCHERS FIGHT COVID-19



Dr. Scott Napper
Photography: Debra Marshall, VIDO-Intervac



Dr. Kerry Lavender
Photography: Amanda Woroniuk



Dr. Joyce Wilson
Photography: Kristen McEwen

“(Science) is about passion, imagination, and looking to solve the problems facing humanity.”

DR. SCOTT NAPPER

AMANDA WORONIUK

With COVID-19 ravaging the globe, the race is on to accelerate therapeutics research and find effective treatment options. Researchers in the College of Medicine are hoping their leadership and work does just that.

One of those leaders is Dr. Scott Napper (BSc’94, PhD’99), a professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology, and the interim director of research at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization – International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac).

Napper stepped into the position earlier this spring, which became vacant when Dr. Volker Gerdtz (DVM) moved to the role of VIDO-InterVac director and CEO.

“This role, in this situation, was a career-defining challenge requiring reorganization of internal resources and processes, oversight of

vaccine development and testing, negotiations with federal and provincial governments to secure funding, ongoing dialogue with the WHO and federal safety councils, formation of international partnerships for vaccine production, and organizing trials with dozens of facility users,” said Napper.

Leadership is nothing new for Napper. He led the undergraduate biomedical sciences programs reorganization—a partnership between the College of Medicine and the College of Arts and Science that unifies the existing biomedical sciences departments.

“The new biomedical science program builds upon the strong foundation of our previous program with increased emphasis on interdisciplinary training and experiential learning,” said Napper. “Students will have the opportunity to receive training that ideally prepares them for a range of careers in science as well as for entry in the health-based professional colleges.”

At USask, Napper has been honoured for his commitment to teaching. He is a four-time recipient of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) Teaching Excellence Award – most recently in 2020. Selected by students, this award honours outstanding contributions to teaching and learning.

“Many students struggle with the question of what they are going to do for their careers. The advice I offer to them is to look for moments of certainty. For me, my first time teaching was a moment of absolute certainty of how I wanted to spend my career,” said Napper.

“Teaching is now my greatest source of professional joy; if I had one day left to live and I got to choose how I would spend it, giving a last lecture would certainly be very high on the list,” he added. “To receive this award for teaching, in particular that it comes from the students, means the world to me.”

Outside of the university, Napper continues to share his passion for science with the next generation of learners. He gives talks at provincial high schools to help students to develop an interest in science and consider scientific career paths.

Napper’s talks are meant to expose students to the idea that science is more than just facts and formulas.

“(Science) is about passion, imagination, and looking to solve the problems facing humanity,” said Napper.

“Hopefully (I can) inspire students towards the opportunities that are available through a career in science. The secondary purpose is to instill an appreciation of the scientific method; to highlight the power and importance for individuals and societies to engage in fact-based decision making.”

Dr. Kerry Lavender (PhD) and Dr. Joyce Wilson (PhD) are principal investigators of projects that received Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) rapid response funding. The funding initiative contributes to the national research response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lavender’s project is rapidly evaluating some highly promising therapeutics against COVID-19, using a humanized mouse model.

“We normally make what we call a human immune system mouse. We do that all the time for our work with HIV,” said Lavender. “But with COVID-19 coming along, we needed to be able to study that virus and our normal model doesn’t support that. So on top of the human immune system, we now also give the mouse a little human lung transplant.”

By implanting human lung tissue into the mice, the team can study the effects of the virus and the human immune response to it inside of a mouse instead of patients.

Lavender said the team is focused on end-stage therapeutics that could get into a clinic quickly. “We are trying to get things done as fast as possible,” said Lavender. “So we’re going to the end stage therapeutics—things that either have already shown great promise in a lab or things that have already been used in the clinic for other diseases. Since we know how it works, it could work for COVID-19 as well.”

Meanwhile, Wilson is leading a team investigating the repurposing of currently approved drugs to treat COVID-19. The team is working with collaborators Drs. Franco Vizeacoumar (PhD) and Darryl Falzarano (PhD) from VIDO-InterVac.

“When viruses infect a cell, they go in and hijack things. They don’t actually bring in a lot of their own machinery,” said Wilson. “The virus borrows cellular factors that are often disrupted in other diseases, including cancer. That suggests that there actually may be drugs out there that have been developed and possibly used in humans, that in addition to treating whatever they were designed to do, they may also inhibit this virus.”

Wilson’s lab will be making a reporter virus to screen the drugs. This process duplicates how the actual virus works, but without infectious particles.

“The reporter virus is a rapid screening tool to analyze drugs to see if they are inhibitors of the virus,” explained Wilson.

“We actually insert a gene and engineer the virus to not only express all the stuff the virus needs, but it also expresses a protein that we can measure really easily. We can then design a very rapid assay where we infect cells and can rapidly assess how that drug is affecting the virus.”

Once they figure out what the virus is using, the team will use a genetic tool known as a CRISPR screen to narrow down the list of potential drugs, which will be done by Vizeacoumar’s lab.

According to Wilson, this “combines virology with cancer research in a cool way.” When the team is ready to test the drugs against the actual virus, they will work with Falzarano’s team.

Wilson appreciates the collaboration amongst USask researchers on COVID-19.

“I think it shows the strength of the research at the University of Saskatchewan these days, and the College of Medicine,” said Wilson. “We have the skills that we can put together in fairly complex projects to solve problems that need to be solved.”

MAKING SENSE OF MASKS

Three experts in the College of Medicine all agree that mask use makes so much sense in fighting COVID-19 that it should not be a point of debate at all.

KATE BLAU

“We know it’s effective, so we have to get past that discussion,” said Dr. Cory Neudorf, a professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology.

“It really does work. Let’s just do it. And wearing a mask is not that big of a deal. It takes a bit of getting used to at first, that’s all.”

He hopes that the adoption of mask use among the general public continues to increase through a combination of education and individuals choosing to wear them. “Making it mandatory can create resistance. If case numbers rise, it may have to be made mandatory. But it’s far better if people adopt mask use and willingly work together to stop the spread of the disease.”

“The most important things we need to ensure mask acceptance,” said Dr. Erika Penz, associate professor of respirology in the Department of Medicine, “is ongoing awareness and public discussion of the role of masks in containing the spread of COVID-19, and mandatory requirements for masking in settings where the spread is likely, such as schools, and where there is high risk of severe illness from an outbreak, such as senior care homes.”

Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine, professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, thinks mask use should be made mandatory. “It’s a simple, effective, inexpensive strategy to control the spread of the virus, when practiced with other mitigating strategies.”

All three experts are seeing positive signs with regard to mask adoption.

Muhajarine leads an ongoing research study, Social Contours and COVID-19, which included surveying people in the province. Questions about mask use formed part of



Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine



Dr. Cory Neudorf



Dr. Erika Penz

the survey. “My observation is—and the data we have from the Social Contours study backs it up—that more people are wearing masks than they were earlier in the summer,” Muhajarine said.

Neudorf said, “Not that long ago it was something you saw people from other countries do, and now it does not seem strange here at all, but totally rational. We’ve made that adaptation quickly.”

Penz points to our children’s important role in mask adoption. “I see the consistent use of masks by children and youth at school to be a great opportunity for the wider acceptance of masks in society. Once children accept masks as part of their daily life at school, and adopt using them, I believe that more and more adults will follow their lead. Children are our future, as well as adopters of change, and so I do believe they will help lead us in adopting mask usage on a wider scale.”

When asked if masks are the number one measure for stopping the spread of the virus, all three experts agreed vehemently that masks are needed together with other important public health measures.

“Masking needs to be done in concert with other behaviours, specifically, hand hygiene, physical distancing and staying home/isolation if you have symptoms,” Muhajarine said.

Having more and more people wearing masks is an important element of reducing the spread of COVID-19.

“New information suggests that we can significantly impact virus spread if 80 per cent of the population adopts mask use in public,” Neudorf said.

And the benefits of mask use are now believed to be two-way.

“As we are learning more about mask wearing, based on studies, we are understanding that the wearer of a mask is also protected from droplets that may contain the virus, and the mask affords protection by minimizing the dose of virus that the wearer is exposed to,” Muhajarine explained. “Put one on when you can’t physically distance from others. It may save your life and protect others’ lives.”

“New information suggests that we can significantly impact virus spread if 80 per cent of the population adopts mask use in public.”

DR. CORY NEUDORF

Does each have a preferred mask?

MUHAJARINE: I have several masks that I wear—all made by my partner, Kathryn Green, using the hybrid cloth mask design from Iris Luckhaus from Germany. It is two-way with an option for an insert.

NEUDORF: I’m used to the blue surgical masks when in the health care setting. Away from that, I have cotton ones with two layers that offer space for an added filter that you can purchase separately. I prefer a mask that secures behind the head rather than around the ears for longer timeframes for comfort reasons.

PENZ: When I am not working in the hospital, I prefer to wear a mask made of cotton. I have purchased these masks from different stores across the city. I like the masks that have adjustable straps because it allows me to ensure a better fit on my face. It also allows our family to choose among a variety of clean cloth masks we have in the house and they can adjust the straps to fit each of their faces.

GIVING BACK

Dr. Gary Groot (MD'82, PhD'11) knew early on that he wanted to make a difference in people's lives. Now, a highly regarded surgical oncologist and researcher, Groot's work is driving health services research and improving patient care in the province.

"Medicine is not a job, it's a profession. It flourishes when there are strong mentors. I was shaped by mentors. Part of my responsibility is to give back to the next generation. It's a pleasure to mentor individuals—both current and future colleagues."

DR. GARY GROOT (MD'82, PHD'11)



Dr. Gary Groot (MD'82, PhD'11) is a College of Medicine alumnus, researcher, professor, mentor and donor.

Photography: submitted

AMANDA WORONIUK

"With surgery, you have an opportunity to walk with one person and improve one person's life; when you improve a system, you improve something for hundreds or thousands of people," Groot said.

The College of Medicine alumnus wears many hats in his career at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) and within the Saskatchewan health care system.

Groot is the director of surgical oncology at USask; clinical professor of surgery and associate professor in the Department

of surgery deepened as I realized I liked the technical aspect as well as being able to think through a problem, and create a good outcome," he added. "That attraction grew through my intern year as I prepared myself to go to Africa – which I did for two years."

Upon completing his medical education, Groot was able to immediately apply his skills. He travelled to Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), where he was one of two physicians in a city the size of Saskatoon. Groot credits his education with preparing him for this overseas role.

"The College of Medicine training allowed me to do what I did in Africa. There are very few programs that would have provided me the breadth of clinical skills needed," said Groot. "I could not have done without it. I also give credit to my mentors at St. Paul's Hospital."

Groot returned to Canada to complete residency training at USask, before pursuing a surgical oncology fellowship at the University of Manitoba. He returned to Saskatoon in 1991 and has practiced as a surgical oncologist since.

He served for six years as head of surgery for the former Saskatoon Health Region (now the SHA). As Groot was nearing the end of his appointed term, he made the decision to return to the classroom to pursue a PhD degree in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology.

"I was fortunate to go back and do community health and epidemiology," said Groot. "I left Africa somewhat disillusioned and feeling like I had failed to make the sort of difference I had set out to make. I am grateful to the professors in CH&E who helped me understand that the system level impact that I struggled to achieve requires the concerted effort of many people moving in the same direction and careful attention to the social determinants of health."

Groot recalls some of the highlights of his

time in the College of Medicine, citing one of his professors as a positive influence. "Dr. Stuart Houston, his commitment to students and ability navigate the system. He was an amazing mentor and professor. I was grateful to know him."

Inspired by the mentorship received from Dr. Houston, Groot is a mentor now. He considers mentorship a responsibility and privilege.

"Medicine is not a job, it's a profession. It flourishes when there are strong mentors. I was shaped by mentors. Part of my responsibility is to give back to the next generation. It's a pleasure to mentor individuals—both current and future colleagues," he said.

Giving to the college is something that is also close to Groot's heart. He is an annual contributor to the College of Medicine and is passionate about supporting patient-oriented research. He hopes to inspire others to show their support for the college.

"Part of it is giving back financially, in addition to giving of my time and energy. I choose to donate to causes I care about. I give to the college because I believe that research is an important part of an academic medical college's contribution to the health and well-being of society. Helping our college become an excellent research facility and fulfill its research mandate is important."

Groot remains humble when discussing his accomplishments and views giving as an opportunity to show his gratitude.

"I feel that I have been given so much by society and the College of Medicine. It's an opportunity to give back a little of what have been given to me," he said. "I accept that I have privilege and believe that with privilege comes responsibility—a responsibility to do my part to improve the system in which we work and move the system towards more equitable and just care thus slowly advancing the medical profession for the next generation." ■

You know the importance of having educated health professionals, groundbreaking research and reliable clinical care.

By supporting the College of Medicine, you are ensuring that education, research and clinical care services continue to be improved and advanced.

Giving to the College of Medicine is more important than ever. As the province's only medical school, your support is helping to train the next generation of physicians and therapists, discover cutting-edge treatment for diseases, and improve the health and well-being of our communities.

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 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 schools prepare 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

Your Alumni Association membership supports medical students

The College of Medicine has a rich tradition of alumni support and generosity. When you renew your annual membership or choose to become a lifetime member, your fees not only support the many activities and programs for you and your fellow alumni, but also current College of Medicine students. The lifetime membership fee is \$750 or an annual membership is \$100.

Your membership helps:

- Sponsor a variety of student-run activities and fundraisers, such as integration weekend, Miles for Smiles, Global Health Conference, and many more.
- Fund the Spirit of the Class and Spirit of the College awards.
- Subsidize the annual Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion.
- Support the Honorary Alumni Lecture at Highlights in Medicine.
- Provide operations and administrative support for the Alumni Association.

To purchase your membership, please call 306-966-8864 or visit medicine.usask.ca/alumni/membership.php

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New cancer research chair established at USask

An endowment created by the late Jean E. Murray—daughter of USask's first President, Walter C. Murray—will help build cancer research capacity in the College of Medicine and improve outcomes for cancer patients in Saskatchewan.

We are grateful for donors like Jean E. Murray, for leaving a bequest that will enhance cancer research. The Jean E. Murray Chair in Cancer Research will carry out cancer research to advance the understanding of the causes and possible new therapies for cancer. The Chair position was established through a generous donation from the Murray Medical and Cancer Trust.

Cancer research is a top research priority at the College of Medicine. This initiative represents a unique partnership between the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA), and will further strengthen collaborations between the two organizations. The partnership will also highlight the value of cancer research in health care by engaging key stakeholders in cancer research.

The Division of Oncology is proud to welcome and congratulate Dr. Amitava Sengupta on his five-year appointment as the inaugural Jean E. Murray Chair in Cancer Research. He will join the college on April 1, 2021.

Sengupta is an associate professor and senior scientist at the Cancer Biology Division, Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata, where he is actively working on identifying molecular epigenetic vulnerabilities of myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) and acute myeloid leukemia (AML).

He received his Masters' of Science degree in biochemistry from the University of Calcutta, India and doctor of philosophy (PhD) in chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) and gene therapy from Jadavpur University, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, India. Sengupta then completed his postdoctoral fellowship in hematopoietic stem cell and leukemia from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati, Ohio. ♥

The Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan (SMSS) executive is very excited to welcome the Class of 2024 to our college.

Congratulations to all students for making it through another year in medical school, and welcome to the Class of 2024! The SMSS is proud to represent you and work with our wonderful college in these challenging times.

We are strongly committed to bringing students together, even though we are more distanced than we ever have been. We were very excited to start the year off with a socially distanced drive-in movie night, which was a favourite of students and a huge success overall. We also hosted the 17th annual Miles for Smiles run in an asynchronous virtual format this year! All proceeds went to Prairie Harm Reduction and AIDS Program South Saskatchewan. Please be sure to keep an eye out for virtual wellness and social events coming through the pipeline later this year.

Our college at USask has always been one of the most involved nationally, and this year is no exception. The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) Annual General Meeting was hosted virtually this year, and ours was the largest delegation at the event. Twenty-two students logged into the conference over an entire weekend to represent Saskatchewan nationally, including our two sitting CFMS board members. The SMSS is very proud that our college has so many students who advocate



strongly for issues relevant to us and medical students nationally.

The Class of 2024 has officially been welcomed into our college at their White Coat Ceremony. Though it was certainly a different format than in the past, it is an opportunity for students to reflect on their journey to this point, and the path that lies ahead of them. This ceremony, and others like it, are essential in building our community within the college, and would not be possible without the generous support of the College of Medicine Alumni Association.

The SMSS and students are extremely grateful for the commitment of our alumni in continuously improving the student experience in our college. To recognize every contribution would be impossible, but please know that we sincerely appreciate your involvement in both the college and the SMSS.

In the past, we had looked forward to meeting you through our events, including the Alumni-Student Hockey Game in April. Unfortunately, many of these events are currently unconfirmed and tentatively being planned. Please feel free to reach out to our Vice-President External (vpexternal.smss@gmail.com) or check our calendar at saskmedstudents.com if you have questions about events that you had attended in the past. We are still looking into opportunities to connect students with our alumni and you will be invited to any events that are planned through the college's alumni relations officer.

Thank you for reading this update from our students and we look forward to continuing to work with you all on behalf of students and having the opportunity to connect soon. ♥

Sincerely,
Shayan Shirazi, SMSS President



Photography: David Stobbe

Froehlich earns CMHF award

Third-year medical student Jessica Froehlich was named as one of the 2020 Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF) award recipients.

Raised in Moose Jaw, Sask., Froehlich was actively engaged in advocacy as a medical student during her first two years of medical school. She served as co-chair of the Health Innovation and Public Policy Conference, which engages students in learning about health access, trauma-informed care, harm reduction and environmental justice. During these experiences, Froehlich has realized there is more to health and healing than what takes place in the hospital. ♥

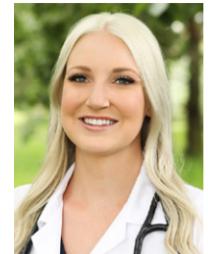


Indigenous medical student recognized

Elektra Laxdal received the USask Indigenous Student Achievement Award for Leadership in February 2020.

The award was presented during USask Indigenous Achievement Week, which celebrates the successes and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff and faculty. Laxdal is a Woodland Cree medical student from Lac La Ronge Indian Band. During her undergraduate studies in kinesiology, she competed with the Huskies track and field team for five years. Laxdal volunteered as a coach with Running Wild Athletics, a track and field club focused on Indigenous athletes, and with the Saskatoon Community Health Clinic. In addition to medicine, she is taking courses in global Indigenous health and Plains Cree language. ♥

Photos submitted unless otherwise stated.



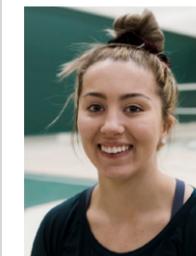
Celebrating MD degree on family farm

As the pandemic prevented the USask spring convocation from taking place, Métis student Lacey Jurke celebrated her degree at home on her family farm.

Completing her final year of medical school remotely, after eight years of university, left Jurke feeling a lack of closure, while hoping to celebrate the milestone when safe to do so in the future.

Reflecting on her medical school experience, Jurke enjoyed the opportunity to be a mentor for younger students in the College of Medicine. "I'm really proud to be an Indigenous student," Jurke said. "The College of Medicine does a fantastic job supporting Indigenous applicants and current students. The more Indigenous students we have, the more we can help the Indigenous community and give back."

Jurke was also the recipient of the Lawrence and Penny Clein Scholarship in Palliative Care during convocation. ♥



Photography: Carey Shaw

Community engagement earns recognition

Master's of Physical Therapy student Kaili Gilroy received the USask Indigenous Student Achievement Award for Community Engagement in February 2020.

Gilroy knew since high school that she wanted to pursue a career in physical therapy, stemming from her own experiences with injuries. Growing up in rural Manitoba, she said, "without volunteers, a small town will not thrive." After graduation, Gilroy planned to return to her home in Swan River to help her community and their health care needs. She received the award during Indigenous Achievement Week, which celebrates the successes and contributions of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff and faculty. ♥

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.



From left, USask medical students Ashley Tshala (Year 4), Joshua Onasanya (Year 3), Nafisa Absher (Year 2) and George Mutwiri (Year 3) attended the inaugural Black Medical Students AGM event in Toronto in March 2020.

WHY WE NEED A BLACK MEDICAL STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Fourth-year MD student Ashley Tshala wrote about her experience growing up and attending medical school in Saskatchewan, noting there were times where medical student learning could be improved from a lens of diversity.

When it came to learning how to diagnose and treat conditions such as hypertension or dermatological exams, there was no mention about how these conditions present differently in Black populations or patients of colour.

Tshala also noted her experience when she attended the inaugural AGM for the Black Medical Students Association of Canada (BMSAC) in Toronto. ▀

Since Tshala's post, the USask Black Medical Students Association was formed. Follow them on social media:

🐦 @BMSAUSask 📷 @usaskbmsa

EXCERPT:

"It offers a sense of community to people like me and our allies. To be surrounded by people of one's own culture and background, to share and reflect on common experiences, to learn from one another and grow as a community, and to support each other through hardships are invaluable experiences to me.

These experiences also caused me to wonder if there was more that I could do to support my own colleagues back home or to foster a learning environment that addresses diversity in medicine."

ASHLEY TSHALA



EXCERPT:

"The woman, representing a medical student, faces head on, as if posing for a hospital identification photo. However, her expression signals uncertainty; she has spent the majority of her time thinking, living, and breathing medicine, and now, her role is a shadow of what it used to be."

HELEN TANG

All four of Helen Tang's images can be viewed via the #MyMD blog or on Instagram at [@usaskmed](https://www.instagram.com/usaskmed)

THE STUDENT VOICES OF COVID-19

In the early days of the pandemic, third-year medical student Helen Tang used her artistic skills to create four images based on four common themes she and her fellow students were experiencing.

The image "Singularity" described the loss of identity medical students felt during the beginning of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. ▀

All photos submitted.

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



Second-year medical student Shayan Shirazi writes about the ongoing drug crisis in Canada.

WHILE WE LEARN, THEY DIE: WHY WE NEED IMMEDIATE ACTION IN THE DRUG CRISIS

During the September long weekend, Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan (SMSS) president and second-year student Shayan Shirazi unexpectedly had a conversation with his father about an ongoing issue in the province: the drug crisis.

Shirazi emphasized the importance of taking action in order to prevent deaths due to the drug crisis and how to approach a "pandemic during a pandemic." ▾

EXCERPT:

"I've always been told to never discuss politics with family. I broke that rule unwittingly when I went back home during the September long weekend and my dad shared that one of his friends overdosed due to cocaine cut with fentanyl."

His death is a tragedy, but not an isolated one; a record-high 179 Saskatchewanians have died of overdose this year so far, just over seven times the amount of COVID-19 deaths in our province."

SHAYAN SHIRAZI

EXCERPT:

"Over the past two years, I have realized how valuable leadership and administrative experience can be to a physician's career and the impact they can have. To make the most significant impact I can in my career, I need to continually improve myself and learn from others who are more knowledgeable than me."

LUCAS KING



Lucas King pursues a MD/MBA degree from home.

WHY DID I CHOOSE THE MD/MBA PROGRAM?

Medical student Lucas King writes about how he made the decision to hit pause on his medical school journey to also pursue an MBA through the Edwards School of Business at USask.

With a newborn son, and the ability to work from home were both incentives to complete the MBA degree now, though ultimately King is choosing the dual degree for a reason: to make an impact on the world through the work he does. ▾

All photos submitted.

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

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

LEARNERS

Undergraduate medical education

2020 Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF) Award:
Jessica Froehlich

2020 USask Indigenous Student Achievement Award:
Elektra Laxdal

Department of Pediatrics Prize:
Hisham Elshoni

Dr. Beattie Award in Psychiatry (Regina):
Alixé Dick

Dr. Eric Lepp Memorial Award in Medicine:
Kyle Anderson

Dr. Ernest McBrien — Department of Family Medicine:
Olivia Robertson

Dr. Karl E. Oberdieck Prize:
Sarah Larmour

Dr. R. Murray Undergraduate Award in Medicine:
Isabel Hedayat

Dr. Walter J. Hader Scholarship in Medicine:
Madeleine Hucl

Emergency Medicine Award (Saskatoon):
Mac Russell

Emergency Medicine Award (Regina):
Megan Spafford

Epstein/Schnurr Award in Integrative Medicine:
Jenelle Clark

Governor General's Nominee:
Astrid Lang

Henry and Cheryl Kloppenburg Prize — Department of Psychiatry:
Huyen Vu

Hilliard Silver Medal — Department of Family Medicine:
Samantha Bird

Hugh McLean Prize and Silver Medal — Department of Surgery:
Nicole Pendleton

Internal Medicine Achievement Award (In-Province):
Jacob Towris

Internal Medicine Achievement Award (Out-of-Province):
Adrianna Gunton

Ivan Jen and Suzanne Yip Award:
Samantha Bird

J.W. Gerrard Award in Pediatrics:
Astrid Lang

Lawrence and Penny Clein Scholarship in Palliative Care:
Lacey Jurke

Lindsay Gold Medal:
Astrid Lang

MacLeod Silver Medal:
Lindsay Richels

Obstetrics and Gynecology Silver Medal:
Astrid Lang

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Award:
Matthew Peachey/Shayne Wiegors

Professor's Popkin Prize in Obstetrics and Gynecology:
Tatiana Frás

Professor's Prize in Surgery:
Samantha Bird

Reuben Brant Scholarship in Medicine — O/A:
Astrid Lang

Reuben Brant Scholarship in Medicine — PhD:
Brooke Hoffman

Saskatchewan Psychiatric Association Award:
Huyen Vu

Saskatoon Plainsmen Club Award in Family Medicine:
Averi Kurtenbach

Senior Stick:
Jeff Elder

Spirit of the Class Award:
Odell Tan

Vince Matthews Award — Department of Community Health and Epidemiology:
Samantha Bird

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship:
Dr. Scott Adams (Diagnostic Radiology)

Resident Research Day Awards:
Top Poster Awards – Clinical

- 1st: Dr. Zarrukh Baig and Dr. Abu Omar
- 2nd: Dr. Tara Swami
- 3rd: Dr. Raza Naqvi

- Top Poster Awards – What Works
- 1st: Dr. Brian Nocon
 - 2nd: Dr. Tim He
 - 3rd: Dr. Alex Stathakis

Postgraduate medical education

Exemplary Resident Award:
Dr. Ryan Verity, Neurology, resident

CanMEDS Collaborator:
Dr. Susan McLellan (Family Medicine - Regina); Dr. Nasim Zamir (Internal Medicine – Saskatoon)

CanMEDS Communicator:
Dr. Stephanie Ballendine (Neurology)

CanMEDS Health Advocate:
Dr. Justin Koh (Emergency Medicine)

CanMEDS Leader:
Dr. Sarah Smith (Obstetrics and Gynecology - Regina)

Resident Teacher Award:
Dr. Leah Karnes (Family Medicine - Saskatoon); Dr. Amit Persad, Neurosurgery)

CSCI-CIHR Research Award:
Dr. Scott Adams (Diagnostic Radiology)

Graduate students

2020 USask Indigenous Student Achievement Award:
Kaili Gilroy (School of Rehabilitation Science)

Graduate Research Fellowship:
Stefany Cornea (MSc candidate, Health Sciences)

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Dean's Scholarship:
Kamiar Ghoseiri (PhD candidate, SRS supervisor)

Graduate Research Fellowships:
Greg Guenther (MSc candidate, toxicology graduate program); David Livingston (MSc candidate); Mackenzie MacAuley (MSc candidate)

STAFF

Employee commitment recognized

Kathy Evans, Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, was awarded the 2019 Sydney Inskip Award.

For the past 12 years, Evans has worked at the College of Medicine, where she contributes to a welcoming community environment.

Evans was selected for her positive impact on faculty, student and staff lives. The award recognizes extraordinary commitment and service to the college.



Postgraduate Medical Education Program Administrative Assistants of the Year:

- Darlene Stadnyk, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology (Regina)
- Heidi Brown, Department of Family Medicine (Prince Albert)

2020 Spirit of Kindness Award, Canadian Association of Research Administrators:

Karen Mosier, Department of Surgery

FACULTY

2019 College of Medicine Excellence in Teaching Award:

Dr. Trustin Domes, MD (Department of Surgery and CoM admissions director); Dr. Sarah Oosman, PhD (School of Rehabilitation Science)

2020 USask Students' Union Teaching Excellence Award:

Dr. Scott Napper, PhD (Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology)

Program Director of the Year, USask Postgraduate Medical Education:

Dr. Lissa Peeling, MD (Department of Surgery, neurosurgery)

Award for Excellence in Enhancing Resident Learning, USask Postgraduate Medical Education:

Dr. Brent Thoma (MD), Department of Emergency Medicine

2020 Louis Horlick Spirit of the College of Medicine Award:

Dr. Kathy Lawrence, MD'94 (Department of Family Medicine – Regina)

2020 Provost's College Award for Outstanding Teaching:

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

2020 Distinguished Researcher Award, USask Fall Convocation:

Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine, PhD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology)

2020 Excellence in Teaching Award, Resident Doctors of Saskatchewan:

Dr. Derek Fladeland (Department of Medical Imaging, RUH); Dr. Hassan Masri, (Department of Medicine, intensive care, RUH)

2020 Physician Leader of the Year Award, Saskatchewan Medical Association:

Dr. Julie Kryzanowski, MD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology)

Dr. Dennis A. Kendel Distinguished Service Award, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan:

Dr. Bruce Cload, MD, PhD (Department of Emergency Medicine)

2020 Family Physician of the Year, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Paula Schwann, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Dr. Michael Krochak Award, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Alanna Danilkewich, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Awards of Excellence, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Carla Holinaty, MD (Department of Family Medicine); Dr. Stan Oleksinski, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Dr. Keith Ogle Award for Teaching in Family Medicine, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Aaron Prystupa, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 My Family Doc Rocks Award, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians:

Dr. Allison Adamus, MD (Department of Family Medicine); Dr. Dawne Pierce, MD (Department of Family Medicine); Dr. Marc Viger, MD (Department of Family Medicine); Dr. Susan Wagner, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Researcher of the Year Award, College of Family Physicians of Canada:

Dr. Vivian Ramsden, PhD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Canadian Certified Physician Executive Award, Canadian Society of Physician Leaders:

Dr. Haissam Haddad, MD (Department of Medicine); Dr. Kent Stobart, MD (vice-dean education; Department of Pediatrics); Dr. Kevin Wasko, MD (Department of Family Medicine)

2020 Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences:

Dr. Marek Radomski (MD, PhD), vice dean research; Department of Anatomy,

Physiology and Pharmacology

2019 Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences:

Dr. John Gordon (PhD), Department of Medicine

2020 Certificate of Merit, Canadian Association for Medical Education (CAME):

Dr. Nigel Rawlings, MD (Department of Ophthalmology)

2019 Lifetime Achievement in Family Medicine Research Award, Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine:

Dr. James Irvine, MD (College of Medicine professor emeritus, Department of Family Medicine)

National New Investigator Award, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada:

Dr. Scott Widenmaier, PhD (Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)

2020-21 McDonald Scholarship, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada:

Dr. Scott Widenmaier, PhD (Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology)

Excellence in Research Awards, Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation:

Dr. Francisco Cayabyab, PhD (Department of Surgery); Dr. David Kingston, PhD (Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture [CCHSA]); Dr. Kerry Lavender, PhD (Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology); Dr. Paul Mick, MD (Department of Surgery); Dr. Juan Nicolás Peña-Sánchez, MD, PhD (Department of Community Health and Epidemiology)

2020 Culture Changer, Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS):

Dr. Kent Stobart, MD (vice dean education; Department of Pediatrics)

2019 Science, Technology Innovation and Collaboration Project Award, Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority:

Dr. Michael Levin, MD (Saskatchewan Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Research Chair; Department of Medicine – neurology), for "first-ever discovery of stress granules in brain tissue of multiple sclerosis patients."

2019 Honoured Supporter Award, National Philanthropy Day Celebration Luncheon (Saskatoon):

Dr. Robert Skomro, MD (Department of Medicine, nominated by the Saskatchewan Lung Association)

ALUMNI

2020 Saskatchewan Order of Merit:

Donald Greve, MD'60

2019 Honoured Supporter Award, Association of Fundraising Professionals – Saskatoon Chapter:

Robert Skomro, MD'93

2019 Silver Shovel Award, USask Department of Surgery:

Paul Hayes, MD'94

2019 Gold Scalpel Award for Pre-clerkship Education:

Steven Bharadwaj, MD'04

2019 Gold Scalpel Award for Residency Education:

Ian Lutz, MD'09

2019 Lifetime Achievement Award, Canadian Society of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery:

Murray Morrison, MD'66

2019 Lifetime Service Award, American Board of Radiology; 2019 Fellow, Canadian Association of Radiologists:

Carl Zylak, MD'62

2018 Member of the Order of Canada:

John Conly, MD'78

2018 President, Canadian Society of Pharmacology and Therapeutics:

Michael Rieder, MD'80

2018 Member, Humboldt Broncos Memorial Fund Advisory Board:

Co-Chair, Royal College International, KUWAIT

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Fellowship Exams:

Peter Spafford, MD'87

2016 Saskatchewan Medical Association Physician of the Year:

Crystal Litwin, MD'93

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*.

1950s

Dr. Eric Paetkau (MD'57): I practiced "frontier" medicine (surgery) for 55 years. Did three tours with Doctors without Borders, was an accreditation surveyor for 14 years, published a book, *The Docs Side*, and have five children—one of whom is a doctor.

Dr. Thomas Hourigan (MD'59): I remain retired and very active with golf, woodworking and travelling.

1960s

Dr. Bennett Horner (MD'60): Doing well, and enjoying travel, grandchildren, golf and bridge.

Dr. David Klaassen (MD'61): I lost my beloved wife of 58 years from acute leukemia in June 2019. I am fine and enjoying life in Vancouver.

Dr. Garth Wagner (MD'64): We have three great grandchildren now. I work three mornings each week.

Dr. Patrick Djan (MD'64): I am retired with my wife of 56 years. I am now her assistant in all domestic affairs.

Dr. Murray Morrison (MD'66): I am a professor emeritus at UBC.

Dr. Duane Mayhew (MD'66): I send my congratulations to Dr. Horlick, one of our finest professors. Maureen and I look forward to Highlights in Medicine 2021.

Dr. Pat Marshall (MD'67): Medical director of Victoria Lipid Clinic.

Dr. Craig Hubbard (MD'68): I recently completed two years as President of the Alumni Association and found it great to meet so many old and new students in the College of Medicine. Margaret and I continue to curl, golf and ballroom dance to avoid going to the gym. I continue to paint and do sculptures from soapstone.

1970s

Dr. John Donaldson (MD'70): I had planned to attend my 50th class gathering, but before I knew the date I accepted a teaching engagement on Pediatric Airway Management which couldn't be rescheduled. My regards to my classmates, and hopefully we will all be around for our 55th reunion. I spent my 75th birthday giving a four-hour course on the Pediatric Airway for anesthesia departments, doctors and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. I had retired, but came back to work after my mate

died and am enjoying life practicing medicine with zero administrative responsibility for the first time in fifty years.

Dr. Wayne Smandych (MD'70): I am retired and reside in Saskatoon.

Dr. Harry Clarke (MD'72): I retired in 2013 after 42 years of being an MD. Have gone to Palm Springs, CA in winters for two months for 20 years, and have dined with the USask president. I go every five years to my class reunion. Only seven of 26 of us were there last time.

Dr. Len Roy (MD'74): Cheryl retired from her anthropology/archeology position at Vancouver Island University in 2016. She keeps in touch with her many friends in Belgium where she took summer students for many years. I followed her and retired in 2017. We now enjoy sailing BC waters and travelling both in North America and abroad. Time does fly.

Dr. Bradley Johnson (MD'75): Fully retired Dec. 2017 after 10 years as Director of Imaging at Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla WA. I plan to remain in Walla Walla. Healthy, happy and loving retirement.

Dr. Marta Kazymyra (MD'77): We are nearing the end of our 40-year career in Blaine, WA, and are looking forward to some free time to include catching up with friends, family, travel and hobbies. It has been a great ride and we thank USask for a great career in family medicine.

Dr. Florence Wardell (MD'78): Still farming, and all three kids and seven grandchildren live in Saskatoon. Busy with work, farm and kids. On a recent trip to France for our 40th wedding anniversary we met a USask College of Medicine alumnus from Calgary on the cruise ship. Go figure!

Dr. John Conly (MD'78): My wife Patricia and I were delighted to attend the 33rd annual Highlights in Medicine in Saskatoon in June 2018 and help celebrate our 49th year since graduation in 1978. On June 29, 2018, it was announced that I was awarded the Order of Canada in recognition of national and international contributions to antimicrobial resistance and infection control and dedication to innovation in healthcare, including the founding of the W21C Program. Proud to say it all began at USask College of Medicine.

Dr. Magdalena Kuhn (MD'78): I continue to explore the world on bike, including Europe, North America, South Africa and Vietnam. In 2019 I visited and toured the Galápagos Islands. I continue to enjoy birding and nature.

Dr. Bernie Wiebe (MD'78): I retired in 2019 after 40 years of family practice in Rosetown, Labrador, Melfort and Bluffton, Indiana, and 23 years as

Medical Director of Family Hospice in several counties of northeast Indiana. I loved my career in family medicine, with obstetrics and anesthesia practice in the first half, and a particular love for end-of-life care. Grateful for a satisfying career. I am retired in Madison, WI. Marie and I are loving the new vocation of Oma and Opa! Grateful also for a great medical education at USask and the deep and wide grounding in family medicine in rural Saskatchewan.

Dr. Marilyn Caughlin (MD'79): New proud granny of six grandchildren, still working a little with surgical assists and for the college as a supervisor/assessor for IMGs. Travelling lots.

Dr. Norman Juell (MD'79): Retired and living in Saskatoon.

1980s

Dr. Michael Rieder (MD'80): I continue to live in London, Ontario where I am a professor at Western.

Dr. Suzanne Eder (MD'83): Retired family physician.

Dr. Paul Fedoroff (MD'83): Evelyn and I were engaged to be married June 27, 2019. I am just finishing a book for Oxford Press on the assessment and treatment of paraphilias.

Dr. Kevin Dautremont (MD'83): I'm pleased to announce that my first novel has recently been published. *Scars* is a medical suspense novel and is available from Word Alive Press, Indigo/Chapters and Amazon. I also have had short stories previously published in the anthologies, *A Second Cup of Hot Apple Cider*, and *Christmas with Hot Apple Cider*.

Dr. Marvin Klingler (MD'84): I continue to provide primary care in St. Croix County (since 1995), where I am a partner in a private practice, Hudson Physicians. I have six children that now live away from home. Empty nest. Seven grandchildren keep us busy. Looking forward to returning to Highlights in Medicine Conference and Reunion. Cannot wait to catch up with old friends. Thirty-five years—where did the time go?

Dr. Warren Dufour (MD'88): Dr. Warren Dufour was the lead member of the 2019 Saskatchewan Roughriders Medical team.

1990s

Dr. Crystal Litwin (MD'93): Continue to practice rural family medicine in Wynyard. Two children, Sarah and Drew.

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.

1980s

Christine Nesdaoly
MD'80
Dartmouth, NS
d. May 2, 2020

1970s

Robert Tokaryk
MD'71
Saskatoon, SK
d. Sept. 16, 2020

Valerie Godsalve
MD'75
Saskatoon, SK
d. June 15, 2019

Walter Blahey
MD'73
Calgary, AB
d. Sept. 14, 2019

Steven Gader
MD'78
Tucson, AZ
d. Sept. 15, 2019

Geoffrey Taylor
MD'77
Canmore, AB
d. July 17, 2020

1990s

Todd Mainprize
MD'96
Toronto, ON
d. June 9, 2020

1940s

Mary Morris (Harrington)
MED'54
Ottawa, ON
d. March 24, 2015

Kathleen Fullerton
MED'51
Thornhill, ON
d. March 26, 2020

1960s

Irene Evans (Puetz)
MD'63
Vancouver, BC
d. Oct. 30, 2019

Glen Jonat
MD'63
Vernon, BC
d. Dec. 19, 2019

Frank Buckle
MD'67
Pasadena, CA
d. March 16, 2020

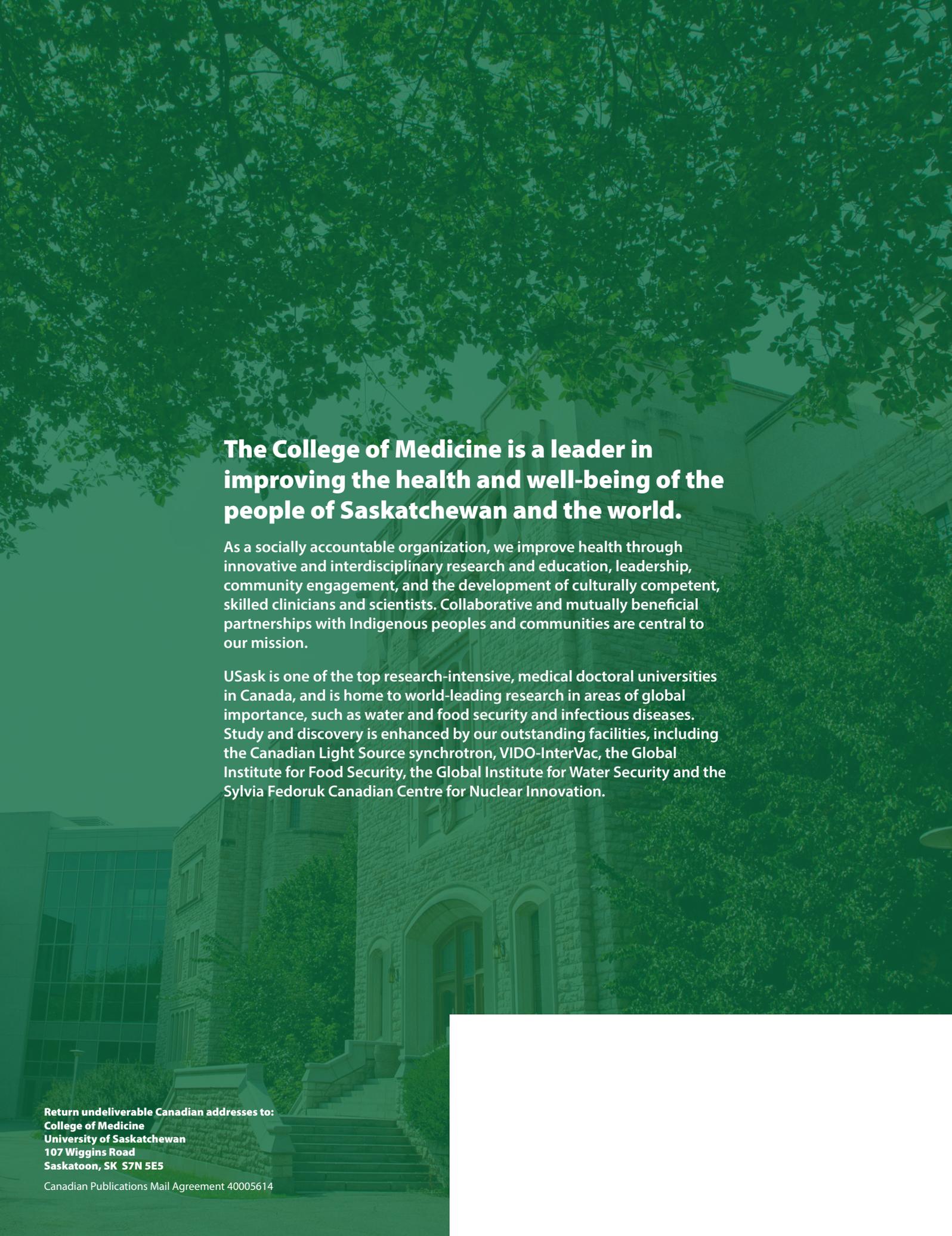
1950s

Norma McMahon
MD'62
Altadena, CA
d. June 17, 2019

Edward Nykiforuk
MD'58
Saskatoon, SK
d. Jan. 9, 2020

Robert Haslam
MD'60
Okotoks, AB
d. March 30, 2020

William Silver
MED'53
Regina, SK
d. May 5, 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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