

# Physiology and Pharmacology

## July 2022 Newsletter

### In This Issue

Welcome  
Congratulations  
Research Updates  
Undergraduate Updates  
Graduate Updates  
EDIAD Committee  
Updates  
Health and Safety  
Committee Updates

### Upcoming Seminars:

Monday, September 19  
Monday, September 26

### Stay Connected



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Hello everybody,

Hopefully you are all enjoying the summer and will take a well-deserved break. July 1 is the start of the new academic year, and usually comes with some changes. This year saw the retirement of Dr. Andy Watson after a long and productive career at Western. Thanks Andy for your many important contributions to our research, teaching, and service missions! And thanks to all who came out for our celebration of Andy at the Grad Club, and to Dan Hardy and Penny Sim for organizing this event.



At the same time, we are fortunate to be able to start recruiting into a new tenure track position in Drug Safety and Biopharmaceuticals:

[https://www.uwo.ca/facultyrelations/careers/pdf/AD.Schulich.PhysPharm\\_DrugSafety\\_2022.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/facultyrelations/careers/pdf/AD.Schulich.PhysPharm_DrugSafety_2022.pdf)

Please distribute the advertisement to your networks – selection of candidates will start August 1.

We are also starting to plan for our Seminar Series for the upcoming year. If you have speaker suggestions, please forward them to [okrougly@uwo.ca](mailto:okrougly@uwo.ca) and [rramach@uwo.ca](mailto:rramach@uwo.ca) by July 29. Last year's lineup with a focus on early stage investigators and members on under-represented groups was fantastic, and I encourage you to keep the same principles in mind. A reminder that we are hoping to include speakers on EDID issues and educational research.

With that, have a great summer and feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments!

*Frank*

## Welcome

- ✧ Qi Qi – Post Doctoral Associate with Taylor Schmitz
- ✧ Hugh Samson – Graduate Student Assistant with Christine Bell
- ✧ To all our summer research students

To our new graduate students:

- ✧ Jasleen Grewal, MSc (Frank Beier)
- ✧ Agnes Terek, MSc (David Hess)
- ✧ Mehreen Tufail, MSc (Qingping Feng)

## Congratulations

To our Graduate Students for the completion of their degrees:

- ✧ Roaa Jaradat, MSc (Donglin Bai)
- ✧ Shelby Oke, PhD (Dan Hardy)
- ✧ Luigi Del Sordo, MSc (Tom Appleton)

To Kevin Barr on his retirement:



It is with mixed emotions that I write this note regarding Kevin Barr's retirement from Western in June. Kevin began his long research career at Western working for Dr. John Wiebe on testicular steroids and gonadotropins from 1979-1992. After a lateral move within the Department of Zoology, he joined the research group of Dr. Jerry Kidder where he began to study gap junctions and sodium potassium ATPase in the context of early development, infertility, and both male and female reproduction. Under Jerry's tutelage, and after they moved to the Department of Physiology in 1996, Kevin added genetically-modified mouse studies to his extensive skill set which was instrumental in characterizing the first ever connexin knockout mouse. Kevin became a foundational member of the Gap Junction Group that formed in 2002 that centralized the laboratories of Drs. Jerry Kidder, Martin Sandig, Donglin Bai, me, and the late Dan Belliveau. In the following years, Kevin's research focused extensively on mice as the group collectively

employed many acquired connexin strains. In time new pannexin knockout mice were introduced to the collection in large part due to Kevin's strategic breeding strategies. As Dr. Kidder transitioned into retirement, I was fortunate to acquire a bigger share of Kevin's time and vast skillset. Starting in 2013, there emerged an opportunity for Kevin to share his expertise with Drs. Kat Willmore and Silvia Penuela who were starting laboratories of their own in connexin and pannexin biology, respectively, as well as with Dr. Lina Dagnino who has a vibrant research program on skin homeostasis and cancer. Kevin was instrumental in fostering the development and expansion of mouse models that were central to their respective research programs. In the most recent years, Kevin expanded his wealth of knowledge by becoming the Director of the Confocal Microscopy Facility which is housed in the Dental Science Building and has serviced the imaging needs of over 15 laboratories and dozens of trainees.

Kevin's research career at Western is a testament of commitment, dedication, and success. Interestingly, Kevin has amassed an *h-index* of 24, has co-authored 73 publications and has amassed over 2200 citations (Web of Science), rivaling the careers of many successful investigators. During his illustrious career, he has touched the lives of dozens of principal investigators and hundreds of trainees. On a personal note, I have been extremely fortunate to have had Kevin as part of my research team and he is someone I consider a friend. Over the years I have been blessed to get to know his wife, Christine, and their three lovely daughters. Future plans for Kevin include spending time with his family and developing even more skills in woodworking and building model railroads, a process that entails 3D printing.

We wish Kevin well in the next season of life!

*Dale Laird*

## Research Committee Update

- ✧ Tiffany Zhao (undergraduate student) will continue her work updating faculty biographies over the summer term. If you would like your bio updated right away, please let Peter Stathopoulos know, and he will arrange for Tiffany to contact you.
- ✧ Many thanks to Dr. Kathleen Hill and Adrian Yung (Department of Biology) for their June Lunch and Learn presentation on biological applications of machine learning. If you have suggestions for future Lunch and Learn sessions, please forward them by email to Peter Stathopoulos and Penny Sim.



Our James A. F. Stevenson Distinguished Lecture will be held on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, and our speaker will be Dr. Tak Mak from the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Dr. Mak is the director of the Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research, senior scientist at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and a Professor at the University of Toronto in the Departments of Medical Biophysics and Immunology.

## Undergraduate Studies Update

We would like to congratulate our Department's undergraduate award winners that were celebrated at the gold medal ceremony on June 16<sup>th</sup>, and to congratulate all of our students who graduated this past year.

- ✧ The gold medal for a major in Physiology: **Jessie Tu**
- ✧ The gold medal for a major in Pharmacology: **Mehraj Singh Randhawa**
- ✧ J. A. F Stevenson medal (HSP in Physiology): **Elizabeth Yijia Wei** (supervisor Dr. Tom Appleton)
- ✧ The gold medal for the Honours Specialization in Physiology and Pharmacology: **Irina Petrovic** (supervisor Dr. Marlys Koschinsky & Dr. Mike Boffa)
- ✧ Hugh B. Anderson Award in Physiology: **Neha Kamath** (supervisor Dr. Andrew Watson)



We'd also like to welcome our new summer student digital media intern, Meghan Frampton. She is going into her fourth year and will be working closely with Anita and Michele to assist with OWL course site building. If you have an additional project that you'd like help with related to your course, please reach out to Anita or Michele and they will connect you with Meghan, if they feel that is something that she could help out with and/or if she has time available.

For our course managers, please submit your completed syllabus to Michele by July 22<sup>nd</sup> (for first term half courses, or full year courses). OWL sites will be updated in the order that these are submitted. For course managers of second term courses, we are looking for your syllabi by August 5<sup>th</sup>. Anita and Meghan will be reviewing these syllabi to ensure all details of your courses have been covered properly and to read for clarity to help reduce any confusion for our new classes.

Lastly, registration for fourth year students began on Monday July 4<sup>th</sup>. If students contact you for special permission to add your course without the stated prerequisites and you think it is a reasonable request, and/or would like to discuss if it is a reasonable request, please touch base with Angela Beye ([abeye2@uwo.ca](mailto:abeye2@uwo.ca)), who will be serving as the Undergraduate Chair designate until July 15<sup>th</sup>. We would like to ensure that the process of special permissions is fair, and that a student will still be successful despite not having the stated prerequisite. If appropriate, the student special permission will be placed on the student's behalf by Michele.

## Graduate Studies Update

- ✧ The Opportunity Scholarship competition for 2023 is open now. Details on the scholarship and the application process can be found here:  
[https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/graduate/graduate\\_awards.html](https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/graduate/graduate_awards.html)

## EDID Committee Updates

- ✧ The Department and the EDID Committee have developed a new EDID website: ([https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/about\\_us/equity\\_diversity\\_inclusion\\_%20and%20decolonization.html](https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/about_us/equity_diversity_inclusion_%20and%20decolonization.html)). The site provides updates, general information, and resources to all Department personnel. Thanks to Christie for her assistance in creating the new web page!
- ✧ Analysis of responses from the January 2022 survey has been concluded. A part of the analysis results were included in the Departmental Self Study Report. A full report with recommendations has been completed and will be distributed.
- ✧ To work on the Recommendations generated from Departmental Self Study Report, the EDID committee is working to form focus groups on specific action items.
- ✧ The EDID Committee will work with the Seminars Committee to host a yearly seminar specifically focused on EDID-related matters. Suggestions and input are welcome.

## Health and Safety Committee Updates

Some friendly health and safety reminders:

- ✧ As the weather gets warm please keep in mind that in our labs we still need to wear long pants, closed toed shoes and all our PPE.
- ✧ Please remember that lab gloves should not be worn in the hallways or common spaces.
- ✧ Please only place non-liquid biohazardous materials into the biohazard bags for autoclaving. We continue to find items that cannot be autoclaved and will cause harm to those of us doing the autoclaving. Information on waste streams at Western can be found [here](#)

Masking update: As per Western's communication on June 29<sup>th</sup>, indoor masking is no longer required at Western. There are several scenarios that do require masking including; if you are symptomatic and seeking health care at Student or Staff and Faculty Family Practice Clinic, or for 10 days following symptom onset or a positive covid test. For more details please see the communication [here](#).