

Physiology and Pharmacology Newsletter

September/October 2021

Hello everyone,

We made it through the first weeks of the new term! Thank you all for your hard work and diligence. It has been a challenging and unsettling time for many reasons – lots of work to be done by all of us to make Western a safe, respectful, welcoming place for all students, staff, and faculty.

As we settle into more normal operations, we also have to return to planning for the future. For example, we will return to the preparation of a new strategic plan for the Department – more to come. As the BMSc program will continue to grow, this brings challenges but also opportunities for recruitment and refocusing. At the same time, we have to start preparing a self-study, as a first step towards a review of the department that coincides with the end of my current term as Chair (in 2023). You will hear about both of these initiatives over the coming months and will be asked to provide input and data.

But for now, I hope you had some rest over the long weekend and get to enjoy the fall! As always, feel free to get in touch with any questions, comments, or concerns!

Frank

Congratulations!!!

- To our graduate students for the completion of their degrees:
 - Carlene Cihosky, MSc (Tim Regnault)
 - Daniel Lam-Sidum, MSc (Nica Borradaile)
 - Christian Sirko, MSc (Peter Stathopoulos)
 - Grace Dionne, MSc (Andy Watson/Dean Betts)
 - Zuleika Leung, MSc (Andy Watson/Dean Betts)
 - Brandon Baer, PhD (Ruud Veldhuizen/Cory Yamashita)

- To our Graduate Student Award Winners:

Graduate Opportunity Scholarship Award:

- Arine Pawakian (Peter Stathopoulos)

OB/GYN Scholarship Award:

- Virginia Wolfe (Andy Watson/Dean Betts)

Arthritis Society Scholarship Award:

- Jeffrey Hutchinson (Cheryle Seguin)

Paediatrics Scholarship Award:

- Kyra Keer (Michael Rieder)

Welcome

- Hailey Hunter, Department Technician
- Yeri Bohorquez, Undergraduate Lab Technician
- Carrie Chen, Research Technician with Nica Borradaile
- Arundhasa Chandrabalan, Post Doctoral Associate with Qingping Feng and Peter Stathopoulos
- To all our new graduate students:
 - Danielle Colussi (MSc) – Peter Stathopoulos
 - Chen Jun Gao (MSc) – Rithwik Ramachandran/Liena Zhao
 - Emma Graham (MSc) – Ruud Veldhuizen
 - Qinli Guo(MSc) – Tom Appleton
 - Karly Masse (MSc) – Van Lu
 - Manroop Minhas (MSc) – Qingping Feng
 - Jinwoo Park (MSc) – Samuel Asfaha
 - Taylor Shelton (MSc) – Cheryle Seguin
 - Aswin Sureshkumar (MSc) – Chris Pin
 - Daniel Taylor(MSc) – Ute Schwarz/Aze Wilson
 - Robert Wong (MSc) – Donglin Bai
 - Xiao Wen (Kelly) Zhou (MSc) – Rithwik Ramachandran
 - Xin Yue (Sharon)Xie (MSc) –David Hess
 - Akasham Rajagopaul(MSc) – Tim Regnault/Barbara de Vrijer

Undergraduate Studies Updates

- Along with our undergraduate courses, we are happy to welcome 73 honours thesis project students to the department. Thank-you to all of you who participated in interviews and agreeing to supervise students in your research labs. Students have been instructed to follow up with each of you to discuss the expectations of working within your labs (please go through the expectations document together). Communication is always essential, but particularly this year as students integrate back to in person learning, providing preferred ways for students to access supervisors, or lab members for support will be helpful to our students' progress through the thesis course.
- The add/drop period for the first semester is completed and our overall enrollment in our fourth-year courses has increased by 100 student seats. Thank you for agreeing to increase your course enrollments and the work by course managers, Chris Pin and Frank Beier, for launching courses new to our department this year. Similarly, we have seen an increase in the demand for our third-year lab course. Thanks to Oana Birceanu, along with the aid/support of Angela Beye, Christina Vanderboor and Hailey Hunter for strategizing how to increase our lab capacity to accommodate as many students as possible with our current lab structure.
- In addition to the many faculty members who are not named here for their exceptional work in our undergraduate program, we also want to acknowledge the large support our courses receive from our teaching assistants. We have an enormous number of students to train, and we are grateful for the role our graduate students play in assisting our department with its mission for education. Thank-you for your efforts in helping to teach the undergraduate students.
- Despite the year just beginning, we are already looking ahead to upcoming changes that will be coming to the BMSc program, and to the even larger class sizes that will come our way starting next year. We are already planning to increase capacity in our third-year lab course for 2022-2023 and are looking for creative ways to increase capacity in our other course offerings to accommodate the increased enrollment. Please expect to be asked to participate in the 3rd year lab course if not currently involved this academic year.
- Lastly, as we hopefully move beyond pandemic teaching, we will be organizing meetings with course managers to discuss ways to continue offering your courses and any changes that you may wish to implement for the subsequent academic year.

Graduate Studies Updates

- Graduate students and supervisors, please keep in mind the national and provincial scholarship application processes that happen throughout the Fall term. You will hear directly from SGPS about the opening and closing dates for these applications, and you can also find this information here: https://grad.uwo.ca/finances/external_funding/index.html
- It's also time to submit nominations for the Mogenson Trust Physiology and Pharmacology Graduate Awards, to be presented at the end of the Research Day. The nomination process will be streamlined this year, only requiring students to submit their **current CV** and a **letter of nomination from the Supervisor**. Details on eligibility for each award can be found here: https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/graduate/graduate_awards.html. The only exception to the new process is for the George W. Stavaraky Teaching Award, which will follow the original guidelines described at the above link. Please submit your nomination packages to Olga Krougly okrougly@uwo.ca by **October 15, 2021**.

Research Update

- **2021 Research Day:** Only ~1 month to go until the 2021 Physiology and Pharmacology Virtual Research Day and Charles W. Gowdey Distinguished Lecture. We are excited to announce our trainee speaker will be Dr. Hiroyuki Igarashi from Dr. W. Inoue's lab. The Charles W. Gowdey distinguished lecture will be presented by 2012 Nobel Laureate, Dr. Brian Kobilka from Stanford University School of Medicine. The title of Dr. Kobilka's keynote lecture is "*Structural insights into the dynamic process of G protein coupled receptor activation.*" Instructions for registration and abstract submission will be coming soon. We are looking forward to seeing everyone (virtually) on Tuesday, November 2, 2021 for what promises to be an outstanding day of science!
- **Lunch and Learn:** Mark your calendars; our first "Lunch and Learn" seminar of the season will take place virtually on Thursday, October 14, 2021 from 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm. Drs Taylor Schmitz and Jonathan Thiessen will tell us about the PET/MRI facilities at Western. Watch for the poster emails/zoom coming soon with more specific learning objectives. Also, please let us know if there are any other "Lunch and Learn" topics you would like included in this workshop series.
- **NSERC RTI:** The Research Committee will be submitting an NSERC Research Tools and Instrument application in the 2021 competition for a Milo Single-Cell western platform. If you currently hold or are applying for an NSERC Discovery

Grant and would like to be a co-applicant on this RTI submission, please email Peter Stathopoulos at pstatho@uwo.ca.

- **Biographies - Departmental Website:** Tiffany Zhao will continue working with Faculty to update biographies on the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology website during the fall and winter terms. If you would like your biography updated immediately, please email Tiffany at tzhao229@uwo.ca to set up a meeting and get the process started.

Health and Safety Update

- There is not a lot to report here, please ensure that you continue to fill out your western University-Daily symptom Check before coming onto campus and wear a 3-ply non-medical mask. You may see our safety ambassadors around now, who will be ensuring that we are all wearing masks.
- Pandemic supplies purchases will continue to be placed monthly.
- As 4th year students and new grad students are getting settled into the lab, please ensure that they have completed all necessary health and safety training, (<https://www.uwo.ca/hr/learning/required/index.html>), including the COVID-19 training in OWL. Please be reminded, that undergraduate students should not be on campus after hours without proper supervision.

Calendar

- November 2, 2021- Gowdey Lecture and Research Day (Zoom Webinar)
- Upcoming Physiology and Pharmacology Seminars (3:00 pm via Zoom)
 - Oct. 18– Dr. Karl Iremonger, University of Otago: “Illuminating stress circuit function”
 - Oct. 25 – Zachary Easton, PhD Candidate, Western University: “The Impacts of Dietary Nutrients on Placental Trophoblast Metabolic Function”
- The full list of seminars can be viewed at:

https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm/about_us/seminar_schedule.html