



MARCH 2025 NEWSLETTER

# PHYSIOLOGY and PHARMACOLOGY

## Message from the Chair

Hello all,

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Last week was one of the highlights of the year for me, the visit by the Honourable Dr. Kirsty Duncan. What a great conversation with Lisa Saksida, and what fantastic interactions before and after. Thank you Lisa, Jane, our EDID committee, and all for organizing. There is lots of work to be done.

In this context, and in the light of what is happening south of the border, I want to emphasize again that EVERYONE is welcome in our department. If you ever feel that this is not the case, please let me know.

Speaking of events in the US, you might have noticed (or not) that the departmental twitter (X) account has been very quiet. I cannot continue to use this platform given Musk's actions and words. My personal account switched to Bluesky, but we are still discussing whether we will create a Department Bluesky account. Feedback is always welcome.

Last week was also the latest CIHR deadline. I have seen lots of applications come through, good luck to everyone applying! The second term is also more than half way done, with finals just a few weeks away. And it is warming up outside, so maybe we can start thinking a bit of the upcoming spring and summer, with more time on our hands and a more relaxing schedule.

Thank you to everyone who provided their CVs for the IQAP reviews. We are collating information to prepare the reports, with external visits expected for the next academic year (one for undergraduate and one for graduate). It is not too late to provide names of potential reviewers from Canada or the US to Jane and me.

With that, happy March to all! My door and inbox are always open for your comments and suggestions.

*Frank*

## This issue:

Welcome

Congratulations

Thank You

Committee Updates:

Undergraduate

Graduate

Research

EDID

Health & Safety

Social

Graduate Student Council

Upcoming Events:

Department Meeting  
Mon, Mar 31st

Upcoming Seminars:

Mon, Mar 17-Opening Doors  
Mon, Mar 24  
Mon, Mar 31



## WELCOME

**COURTNEY BROOKS** – Research Technician with Dr. Chris Pin

## CONGRATULATIONS

**CIHR GRANT RECIPIENTS** – 2024 FALL COMPETITION:

DR. MARLYS KOSCHINSKY

DR. WATARU INOUE

DR. VANIA PRADO

**CIHR PRIORITY ANNOUNCEMENT**

DR. DAVID HESS

**To graduate students for the completion of their degrees:**

JUSTIN CLARK – PhD (Marlys Koschinsky)

MOHAMMED ELLAKANY – PhD (Don Welsh)

**RECIPIENTS OF THE 2025 EDWARD JAMES MIDDLETON BURSARY**

AMR ABDULLAH KAMEL MOUSA, PhD

EISHA BAQAI, MSc



Dr. Manpreet Oberoi was interviewed about the new Drug Safety and Pharmacovigilance Program offered by PhysPharm  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)



Dr. Don Welsh is involved in developing new technology to battle sepsis  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)





Congrats to Dr. Qingping Feng on the birth of his granddaughter, Serena Dhaliwal-Feng, born February 6th, weighing 8 lbs 1 oz. Mom and baby are doing well!

## Undergraduate Studies Update

We are winding down this semester with the last day of classes on April 4th. Final exams start on April 7th to April 30th. The final exam schedule has been released for our courses, which you can find on the Extranet under “Exam Schedule”. Please remember that final exam printing will need to be completed well before your exam, so watch for communications from Michele Grigg about that. Please also remember that your final grades will be due 7 days after your exam, so we ask that you mark your calendars.

Our department makeup exams will tentatively be held on May 8 or 9. As with all assessments, you will receive a notification for any students who missed an assessment or exam and submitted their information in the student absence portal. This can be viewed on Extranet under “SAP instructor”. Students will not be allowed to use undocumented absences for any final exams. Please make sure to approve or deny the requests in the portal as soon as possible and communicate with the student what the accommodation will be in the notes section.

With the semester wrapping up, our Phys/Pharm 4980 students will showcase their research projects on March 31 at poster day. We hope you will drop by and support our students as this is a very exciting day for them. Our 4980 students will submit their thesis on Friday, April 4th and Dr. Easton will be in touch about thesis marking and lab grade submissions. I hope your last few weeks of the semester goes well!



Dr. Ed Lui was interviewed by  
CBC about his passion for  
ginseng  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)



Dr. Adrian Owen was interviewed  
by The Guardian about boosting  
brain power  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)

# THANK YOU FROM DR. BIRCEANU

Rotation 3 of the 3rd year Physiology and Pharmacology laboratory course (PP3000E) concluded right before the spring reading week. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the faculty who have participated and led innovative experiments for our students.

Drs. Adrian Owen and Taylor Schmitz took on the neuroscience challenge of the lab, by designing big-data experiments, challenging the students to explore novel questions in the realm of human emotion, brain function and muscle movement. Dr. Peter Stathopoulos introduced the students to the wonderful world of drug design, using bioinformatics approaches. While hesitant to sign up for this experiment at first, the students informally let me know that they have learned so much from Dr. Stathopoulos and were now able to integrate what they learned from the cell physiology course into a real-world application. Dr. Chris Pin led a cell-culture experiment that introduced the students to cellular stress and PCR, supporting their understanding of cell culture, experimental design and introducing them to novel techniques, such as cell collection and gel loading. Drs. Sean Gill and Ruud Veldhuizen led our spirometry experiment this rotation, challenging the students to think outside the box when designing an exercise experiment. They were firmly rooted in the “exercise corner” of the laboratory space. Last, but not least, Dr. Matt Grol led his first ever experiment in our laboratory course (woohoo!!), where he introduced students to factors that impact bone growth.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Grol, Beier and Séguin trainees who helped with the dissections, making our undergraduate student experience in the course that much more meaningful. We, in the lab course, see you and appreciate you all!

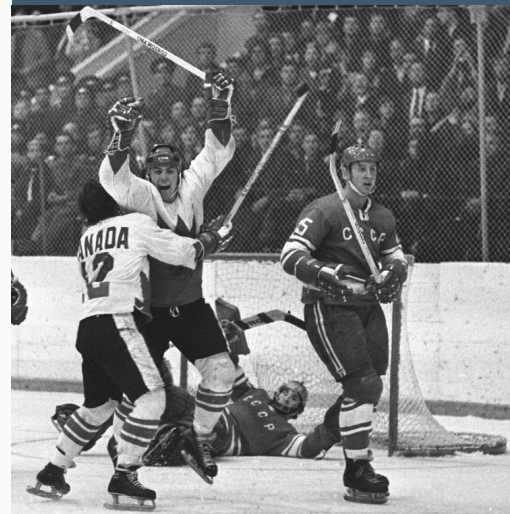
## Graduate Studies Update

The Graduate Program appreciates everyone who sent in their Faculty CVs for the IQAP review. If you haven't had a chance to complete and submit it, please feel free to forward it to Olga Krougly ([okrougly@uwo.ca](mailto:okrougly@uwo.ca)).

For the IQAP review, we are also looking for suggestions for External Reviewers from universities outside Ontario, and a list of five potential External Reviewers from Ontario universities. They should have a track record of academic scholarship (e.g., actively publishing, teaching, supervising, holding research grants etc.), and ideally should also have had academic administrative experience in such roles as Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Chair, Associate Dean, Dean, or other administrative leadership positions. Please feel free to send suggestions to Olga Krougly ([okrougly@uwo.ca](mailto:okrougly@uwo.ca)) or John Di Guglielmo ([jdigugli@uwo.ca](mailto:jdigugli@uwo.ca)).



The Department of Physiology and Pharmacology cell culture teaching facility





Finally, congratulations to the Amr Mousa and Eisha Baqai, the recipients of the 2025 Edward James Middleton Bursary! This bursary is a generous award from the Estate of Dr. Edward James Middleton and is awarded annually to graduate students enrolled in the Biochemistry or Physiology and Pharmacology programs. The next application date will be in the Fall, 2025.

## Research Committee Update

### SIS Grant Success

Congratulations to Emily Day (PI) and co-applicants (Oana Birceanu, Lina Dagnino, Peter Stathopoulos and Rithwik Ramachandran) on their success in obtaining a Schulich Infrastructure Support grant to purchase an EVOS imaging system for the department core lab.

### Lunch and Learn

Please mark your calendars for our upcoming Lunch and Learn session on March 27th, 2025. Noldus Technologies will deliver a presentation on innovative Methods and Tools for Behavioral Research.

### Research Day

The 2025 Gowdey Distinguished Lecture and Research Day is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4th, 2025. We are honored to welcome Dr. Hans Clevers as our distinguished lecturer. Dr. Clevers serves as Head of Pharma, Research and Early Development at Roche and is a Scientist in Molecular Genetics at the University of Utrecht (Hubrecht Institute). Renowned for his pioneering work in developing and utilizing organoids to study molecular mechanisms of tissue and cancer development, Dr. Clevers' lecture will coincide with an Organoid Symposium at Western during the same week, organized by Van Lu and Chris Pin. Additional details will follow soon.

In preparation for future events, we have distributed a survey seeking nominations for the 2026 James A.F. Stevenson memorial lecture speaker. Please complete the survey and submit your recommendations.

### Faculty Biographies

Our work study student, Merna Saleem, is available to help update faculty biographies. Merna will be reaching out to schedule interviews to update biographies on the Department Website. If you would like your update expedited, please contact Merna (msalee29@uwo.ca) and Rithwik Ramachandran (rramach@uwo.ca) to set up a meeting. Please also let us know if you would like to highlight any research related stories on the department website news feed and Merna can help develop these publications. You can view a recently published story [here](#).





## EDID Committee Update

On March 3rd, the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology, in collaboration with BrainsCAN, hosted the honorable Dr. Kirsty Duncan on our campus. This event was part of our Department Seminar Series, and focused on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID) topics.



The event was hosted by Dr. Lisa Saksida. Following the format of a fireside talk, Drs. Saksida and Duncan engaged in discussions focused on the challenges faced by women and equity deserving groups in academia. Drawing from her own personal, professional, and political experiences, Dr. Duncan discussed what academic departments and leaders can do to create an inclusive and supportive environment for colleagues and trainees. Re-assessing the definition of excellence in academia through a more comprehensive lens other than the traditional paper and grant metrics was one of the main take-aways. Science advocacy and support for EDID initiatives were two topics that were at the heart of the conversation.







The event was attended by more than 100 participants, online and in person, followed by one-on-one discussions and a book signing by Dr. Duncan. A heart-felt THANK YOU! goes out to our very own Jane Jacob, who along with BrainsCAN, was at the heart of organizing this event. Thanks to Jane, the bookstore now has copies on hand of Dr. Duncan's most recent book: *The Exclusion Effect: How the Sciences Discourage Girls & Women & What To Do About It*.



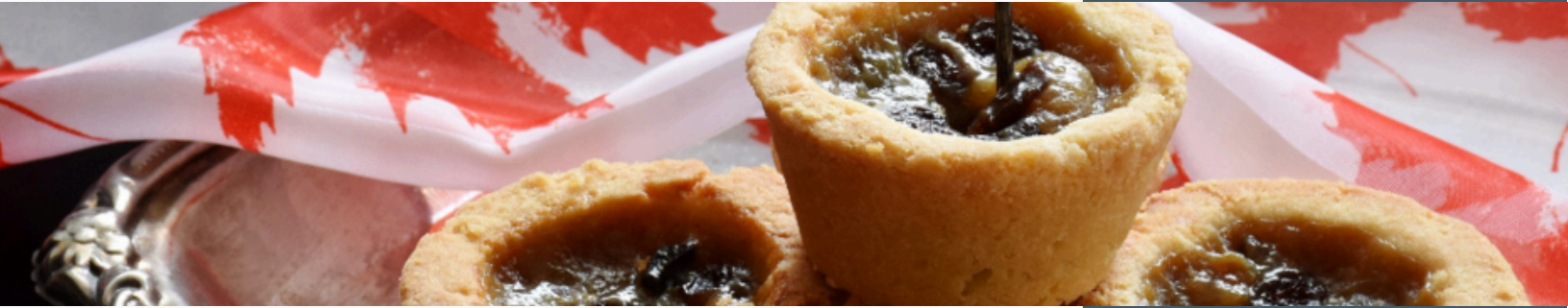
Please note, Dr. Kirsty Duncan's previous book, "Hunting the 1918 Flu: One Scientist's Search for a Killer Virus" is available through the Western Library system.



To watch the seminar with Drs. Kirsty Duncan and Lisa Saksida, please click on the following:  
[LINK TO VIDEO](#)







## Social Committee Update

This reading week, the social committee took the snow head on by organizing the department's first snow tubing social event. It was an evening full of fun as faculty members, graduate students, friends, and family conquered the cold and slid down the slopes and hills at Boler mountain while shouting "PHYSIOLOGY AND PHARMACOLOGY". We would like to thank all those who came out and contributed to making it a fun event!

The social committee hopes to put on another event in April. If you have suggestions for an activity or event, please send your suggestions to one of the committee co-chairs (Faraj Haddad [fhaddad2@uwo.ca](mailto:fhaddad2@uwo.ca) , Ruud Veldhuizen [rveldhui@uwo.ca](mailto:rveldhui@uwo.ca)).







## Health and Safety Committee Update

This month we would like to review best practises for dispensing and working with liquid nitrogen. This cold fluid can burn you but it will also damage floors, sinks and counter tops if not used properly. Always wear the proper PPE including gloves that protect against the cold and a face shield when dispensing liquid nitrogen. Always use a receptacle that is made to contain liquid nitrogen. When removing racks and boxes from a cryo-tank, let the liquid nitrogen drain into the tank before setting the rack down. Place the rack on a protective surface. Never discard liquid nitrogen by pouring it out onto the floor or down a sink, allow it to evaporate in a fume hood.

## Graduate Student Council Update

The PhysPharm intramural volleyball team is back in action for the winter term! With just a few games left before the playoffs, we wish our players the best of luck! Stay tuned for updates if you're interested in joining intramurals for the summer term. Last summer, we took on Ultimate Frisbee, if you have any suggestions for which sport we should sign up for this summer, reach out to our Sports Rep, Aswin (asuresh6@uwo.ca).



# Upcoming Seminars

## The Department of Physiology and Pharmacology 2025 Winter/Spring Series

All lectures held at 3:00 p.m. in MSB 384 and on Zoom unless otherwise noted



**Date: Monday, March 17**

**Grad Student Council Event: Opening Doors to Exciting Careers**

**Speakers: Patrick Stockwell, VP, Science & Regulatory, Klick Health**

**John Woldemariam, VP, Science & Regulatory, Klick Health**

**Melina Rodrigues Bellini, Science Communicator, Diagnostics Biochem Canada and Professor, Fanshawe College**

Host: PPGSC



**Date: Monday, March 24**

**Speaker: Karnig Kazazian, PhD  
Western University**

"Detecting consciousness in unconscious patients"

Host: Dr. Adrian Owen



**Date: Monday, March 31**

**Speaker: Ute Schwartz, PhD  
Western University**

"OATP uptake transporters in pancreatic islets and potential relevance to statin drug therapy"

Host: Dr. Chris Pin

## Upcoming Symposium featuring Dr. Christine Bell



The Canadian Society of Pharmacology & Therapeutics Education Committee (CSPT) is having a symposium on

Thursday, May 15th. Register at:

[PharmacologyCanada.org/events](https://PharmacologyCanada.org/events)