In September 2013, MOTSRTP students Lucy Chau, Maya Deeb, Johnny Huang, Roman Zyla and Barbara Marzario initiated The Multi-Organ Transplant Insight, Outreach, & Networking Society (MOTIONS) student group, which is officially recognized by ULife and the University of Toronto Students’ Union (UTSU), at the University of Toronto. This student club aims to encourage awareness of organ failure and transplantation among the student community while providing students with networking opportunities with experienced healthcare professionals.

Information and recruiting sessions at university wide events, including Orientation Week Club’s Day in September and the Student Buddy’s Annual Volunteer Fair in November, served to introduce MOTIONS U of T to the student community and provided opportunities for students to learn more about the club’s mandate and become registered members. To date, over 200 students have joined MOTIONS.

MOTIONS U of T hosted its inaugural Speaker Series Event on Thursday October 4th 2013: Ethical Issues around Organ Donation and Transplantation. The group was honoured to welcome Ms. Linda Wright, who is the Director of Bioethics and Palliative Care at UHN, an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Medicine and a member of the Joint Centre for Bioethics at U of T, as the keynote speaker. Linda provides clinical and organizational ethics consultation and has research expertise in organ transplantation ethics.

Issues surrounding organ donation rates, altruistic and non-altruistic organ donation, and determining who and in what order those on the recipient wait list receive an organ were only a few of ethical considerations that were actively raised and debated by more than 60 enthusiastic student attendees at the event. Immediately following Linda Wright’s presentation, there was an opportunity for a question and answer period as well as open floor networking.

MOTIONS U of T looks forward to hosting regular community volunteer initiatives and networking sessions in the future, as well as expanding its current member base. Check out the club’s website at http://motions.sa.utoronto.ca/ or like the FaceBook Page at https://www.facebook.com/MOTIONS.UofT to learn more about MOTIONS U of T and how you can get involved today.
Margot Mitchell is a registered social worker who joined the Multi-Organ Transplant Program in 2001 after working at Princess Margaret Hospital with the Oncology Department for over 20 years. She completed her Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Social Work at McMaster University in 1981, and earned her Masters of Social Work from the same institution in 1998.

At the MOT, Margot has worked with the liver and kidney teams. She has an interest in the challenges young adults with transplant face, and is part of the University Health Network/Hospital for Sick Children research consortium to help young people learn self-management skills. Margot has also mentored student research projects in the MOTSRTP, and is currently working on a needs assessment for post transplant recipients regarding the feasibility of post transplant specific support groups. In her free time, Margot enjoys sailing and gardening during the summers.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

CL: What were your main responsibilities/tasks in our program?
My main responsibilities were analyzing, organizing, and entering data from cardiovascular tests. I was also assigned several administrative tasks.

CL: What skills did you develop from your placement?
I developed data management skills and also significantly improved my time-management and organizing skills.

CL: How did our program help you in terms of academics and/or career development?
To be honest, MOSRTP was my very first working experience. Through this program I learned quite a few skills that helped me during my time there as a research clerk. In terms of academics, I learned a lot about how the kidney works, immunology, bacteria and how kidney failure happens. The seminars were very informative.

CL: Any last comments regarding your placement?
I hope this program will continue to help many more high school and university students, especially those who want to pursue the life sciences/human biology field. This program was certainly an eye-opener for me and I’m really thankful for the opportunities and skills that I’ve gained. These will surely help me to build my career and will come in good use as I complete my studies in Financial Economics at Brock University.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

EMILY XU
Emily is a student in the ASPIRE program for high school students who has been working primarily on a comprehensive review of cardiovascular tests for transplant recipients. Currently a grade 12 student in the gifted program at Northern Secondary School, she plans to continue her studies in science with a focus on biology, and perhaps clinical research. Emily credits “the many excellent learning opportunities and the support of members of the MOTSRTP” for fostering an environment of mentorship and academic excellence.

ESTHER KIM
Esther has been a student in the MOTSRTP since 2011, and is currently working towards a Masters in Public Health with a focus on Epidemiology at the University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health. As part of the MOTSRTP, she has been involved in numerous projects, such as examining uric acid as an independent risk factor for graft failure, and the relationship between post-transplant anemia and graft failure. In the future, she plans to conduct impactful and high quality research as a public health professional.

JOHNNY HUANG
Johnny is a fourth year student at U of T, pursuing a double major in physiology and human biology and a minor in mathematics. As a Work-Study research student, he is investigating hypomagnesemia as a novel risk factor for the development of new-onset diabetes mellitus after kidney transplantation. Johnny says “the MOTSRTP has exposed [him] to important knowledge in basic science research, bioethics and clinical epidemiology that went beyond the scope of undergraduate education.” He plans to pursue a career in healthcare where he can provide patient care and simultaneously conduct clinical research.
With the winter festivities marking the end of another successful year at the MOTSRTP, students of the program gathered to celebrate the season at the annual Holiday Party. Trainees past and present became fast friends as they savored the opportunity to interact outside of the workplace, joining in games and a sumptuous feast.

In addition to the party festivities, awards were presented to recognize outstanding contributions by current MOTSRTP students. Program co-director Segun Famure recognized Alainna Jamal and Heebah Sultan for their dedication as senior student mentors, Lucy Chau, Farid Foroutan and Roman Zyla for their exceptional performance as team leaders, Christie Liang and Barbara Marzario for embodying the ideals of the MOTSRTP, and Emily Xu for her outstanding effort as an ASPIRE trainee.

The Holiday Party concluded on a high note with the revelation of the winning team in the annual Dragon’s Den Competition, with Team 2 taking home the prize. The Holiday Party allowed students to reflect on their experiences in the MOTSRTP and look forward to exciting challenges in the upcoming year. The MOTSRTP would like to thank the Social Committee (Farid Foroutan, Myra Caballero and Esther Kim) for their hard work in planning this year’s Holiday Party.

Since the start of the Fall semester, the four teams of the MOTSRTP were tasked with devising a solution to a health services related problem. Before an audience of seasoned healthcare professionals, the teams delivered engaging presentations that were evaluated based on their innovation and viability. In the end, the judges deemed Team 2 (Lucy Chau, Alainna Jamal, Christie Liang, Imindu Liyanage, Barbara Marzario, Negar Mohammadi, Julie Van, Kristiana Xhima, Linlei Ye, Emily Xu and Michelle Yeung) as the winners for their proposal for a comprehensive UHN Division of Nephrology Website. Other interesting proposals included the use of technology to integrate research education in the clinical practice of nurses and allied health care professionals, a model to integrate research into the transplant evaluation process, and a database containing basic information on all patients associated with UHN’s Division of Nephrology.