Day in Research at the TTI Summer Student Program

Author: George Li

The Toronto Transplant Institute (TTI) held its first annual Day in Research event for trainees in its TTI Summer Student Program this past summer. This event was held to allow student trainees from across the TTI to showcase their summer research work in the form of an abstract competition. Trainees from a variety of hospitals including St. Michael’s, Sunnybrook, SickKids, Mt. Sinai, Toronto Western and Toronto General were encouraged to submit their abstracts. The day started off with a presentation from Dr. Atul Humar, director of the TTI, about the future of transplantation. Following this, students were able to present their research work to the audience, who rated each presentation. After a series of excellent presentations, the votes were tallied and the winner of the abstract competition was found to be Farid Faroutan (pictured above receiving his award from Dr. Humar), who explained his work on the applicability of the INTERMACS score in heart transplant recipients, followed closely by Magdalene Au, who presented her work on the costs associated with early hospital readmissions. The day also included an intense debate on public solicitation for organ donation, lead by UHN bioethicist Dr. Daniel Buchman. The day was educational and thought-provoking for all who attended.

Engaging the Community: University Seminar for High School Students

Author: Michelle Liu

Choosing which university to attend is a stressful and difficult decision that many high school students go through. The MOTSRTP hosted its first University Seminar for High School Students last July to help with their choice. High school students from around the GTA filled the Astellas Conference Room at Toronto General Hospital, and MOTSRTP student and alumni representatives from Harvard, the University of Toronto, McMaster, Western, Queens, and York hosted the seminar. The evening commenced with each university giving a short presentation on their academics, social life, and any extra tips they had to offer. High school students then had the chance to ask any questions and network with the guest speakers. This exciting and informative seminar proved to be a formidable and useful event having achieved its goal in shaping the minds of the next set of university candidates.
In this issue’s Mentor Spotlight we introduce Naz Nour, an Occupational Therapist (OT) who is currently working with the Multi-Organ Transplant program. Naz started her journey to becoming an OT during the summer of 3rd year of her double Specialist in Pharmacology and Toxicology at U of T, when she volunteered at Toronto Rehab's Rumsey site, but also in a pharmacology lab. Through her experiences she learned that she enjoyed contributing to the wellness of individuals, but preferred the more immediate approach OT offered as opposed to the long-term gains of research. In addition, she appreciated the holistic view OT took on patient recovery, which considered more than just physical health, and included aspects such as psychosocial wellbeing. As an Occupational Therapist, her role is broadly divided into categories which include assessment, consultation and treatment. The aim includes to determine what can be done to limit a post-transplant patient’s hospital stay and ensure that they can be discharged from acute care to an immediately safe environment and normal quality of life, wherein their abilities for self-care are appropriate for the environment they are released to. The process to achieve this is highly variable, with interventions ranging from providing wheelchairs to prevent pressure ulcers, to adapting complex medication instructions for patients with challenged cognition and executive function.

Having worked as an OT on transplant for roughly a decade, Naz believes more research needs to be done on chronic diseases with the transplant within that group. She believes increased patient lifespan has resulted in patients being admitted with chronic co-morbidities possibly related to their transplant, and such patients should benefit from chronic disease resources. She is also working on the topic of work integration to learn how to facilitate post-transplant recipients' regaining of fulfillment in their lives.

ASPIRE: A Research Opportunity for High School Students

Author: Nikita Gupta

A offshoot program of MOTSRTP, the Advanced Student Placement in Research Education (ASPIRE) program provides grade 11/12 students an enriched experience in the field of multi-organ transplantation. Students attend seminars and workshops led by senior trainees to learn about topics related to organ transplantation and clinical research practices. These skills form the foundation for students’ contributions to conjunct projects with senior trainees. ASPIRE students also gain practical exposure to clinical practice through clinic and allied health observations.

Graduates of the program agree that senior trainees are an invaluable resource for advice related to career development and post-secondary education. The 2014-2015 ASPIRE students are attending the following universities: Harvard University (Cha Cha Yang), MIT (Christina Chen), and Western University (Evie Devenyi).
STUDENTS IN THE MOTSRTP...

ACHIEVEMENTS

LUCY CHING CHAU
Lucy is now studying at the Wayne State University School of Medicine.

ROBERT LAM
Robert is now studying at Thomas Jefferson University Medical School.

PRISCILLA YUNG
Priscilla is now studying at the McMaster Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine.

JULIET SHAO
Juliet is now a student at the University of Toronto Medical School.

SPOTLIGHT

ERIK FRIESEN, MSC CANDIDATE
Erik Friesen graduated last November with an HBSc. degree in Neuroscience from University of Toronto. A student of the MOTSRTP since September 2014, Erik worked on numerous research projects primarily focusing on outcomes in heart transplantation. One of his notable projects includes assessing a patient stratification system for heart transplant patients, of which the manuscript for this study will be submitted for internal review. An aspiring scientist, Erik is now pursuing a Masters degree in Pathobiology at U of T.

STEPHANIE LEWIS, JD CANDIDATE
Stephanie completed her HBSc. from the University of Western Ontario and is currently in her first year of law school at the University of Toronto. As an MOTSRTP trainee, Stephanie worked closely with the former Director of Bioethics at UHN, Linda Wright, on the topic of non-financial incentives for organ donation. Stephanie states that her involvement at the MOTSRTP led her to explore various career opportunities and had a great influence on her decision to pursue a career in law.

MYRA CABALLERO, DDS CANDIDATE
Myra completed her HBSc. from the University of Toronto and is currently in her first year of dentistry at the University of Toronto. As an MOTSRTP trainee, Myra visited transplant clinic patients regularly and distributed surveys to evaluate their quality of life. Through these surveys, Myra recalls how patients’ quality of life can be affected by their oral health and the look of their smile. Myra states that her experiences at the MOTSRTP affirmed her interest in dentistry and inspired her to try and be the best she could be.
LINKS TO THE COMMUNITY:
Organ Donation Awareness in High Schools

The need for organ and tissue donor awareness is unprecedented and warrants the creation of initiatives aimed at transplantation goals and improving the quality of life of Canadians and their families. The Trillium Gift of Life Network is one such program, aimed at the promotion of this issue to Ontarians of all ages and occupations. Among their many initiatives, the High School Outreach Initiative (HSOI) a collaborative initiative with the Toronto Transplant Institute, targets the future ambassadors of organ donation: secondary school students.

The High School Outreach Initiative (HSOI) started 5 years ago as a unique partnership with the Trillium-Gift-of-Life Network (TGLN) and Health Care Professionals (HCP’s) from the Toronto Transplant Institute (Sick Kids, UHN, St. Mike’s) towards an overall objective of providing education and awareness of transplantation and organ donation to youth in Toronto high schools. The overarching goal is to increase donor registration in the Greater Toronto Area. Since the initiative began, 265 presentations have been provided to more than 17,000 GTA high school students.

A multi-disciplinary team, consisting of world-renowned health care professionals in transplant and recipients and donor families provide engaging presentations to inspire youth to spread awareness. Youth are a uniquely important target and, as both the future of Canada and the agents of social media, they have the capacity to exponentially spread the cause.

For more details on the HSOI, please contact Anna Cocco - Toronto Transplant Institute Education Coordinator at anna.cocco@uhn.ca or (416) 340-4800 extension 6315.

Author: Alyssa Cannitelli
In speaking with: Andrea Norgate

2015-2016 MOTSRTP Photos

For questions about any of the content, or applications, please contact us at: motsrtp@uhn.ca.

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