



DIVISION OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

Department of Medicine
University of Toronto

March 2021

Monthly update Newsletter

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1. Don't miss Faculty Research Day on April 9

We are very pleased to announce our upcoming Faculty Research Day agenda. This was very thoughtfully put together by Drs. Shannon MacDonald and Cathy Craven. It is an excellent agenda including a guest Keynote Speaker, Dr. Julie Silver from Harvard. We also have Dr. Michael Farkouh, Vice-Chair of Education for the Department of Medicine, as a Key Note Speaker. We encourage you to participate in as much of the day as you can and look forward to an excellent symposium. Please see the attached agenda.

2. Providence Update

We are pleased to hear from our colleagues at Providence who provided the update below. While we can't get together in-person for retreats and social events, we hope to stay abreast of progress amongst our colleagues with periodic updates.

Drs. Cheng, Journey, Nguyen, Joseph, and Lipson are excited that fundraising has been completed for an on-site radiology suite renovation and c-arm. This will enhance patient care as it will allow spinal injections and videofluoroscopic swallowing studies to occur on-site. Despite COVID-19-related setbacks, collaboration continues within the Unity Health Toronto network to enhance program development, care pathways, and hospital resources to improve our MS and stroke programs across all sites. In our outpatient amputee clinic, in addition to our already fantastic team of OT, PT, wound care nursing, psychiatry, and orthopaedic surgery, we have just added a social worker to the team.

3. Congratulations to Julio Furlan and Ainsley Kempenaar for Teaching Excellence Awards

We recently heard from the Department of Medicine that our own Julio Furlan and Ainsley Kempenaar received 2019-20 MD Program Teaching Excellence Awards from the Temerty Faculty of Medicine. These awards recognize faculty, residents, graduate student teachers and clinicians in the MD program who have attained teaching evaluation scores in the top 10% in one or more of the teaching activities to which they have contributed. Thanks are extended to our colleagues who are representing us well in the MD program. Julio may be reached at: julio.furlan@utoronto.ca. Ainsley may be reached at: ainsley.kempenaar@med.mail.utoronto.ca

4. Meiqi Guo welcomes second child

Meiqi welcomed the birth of kiddo #2, Everest, in February. Whether he will live up to his name remains to be seen, but he certainly has a voracious appetite so is well on his way to growing up to be a big boy. Here he is yawning (and dressed in a onesie originally from Auntie Rebecca Titman). Congratulation messages can be sent to meiqi.guo@uhn.ca, and she will read them during late night cluster feeding sessions when possible.





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5. Do you have a hyperactive hive mind?

Could you envision a world without email?

For those of you who are frequently overwhelmed by volumes of email, (who amongst us isn't?), I would encourage you to learn more from Cal Newport (PhD in computer science at Georgetown University). You could listen to Ezra Klein's interview of Cal Newport or obtain his book (see New York Times link and read partial transcript below). Essentially, the author argues that email arrived in the workplace in an unplanned manner and much of our work is devoted to handling the high volume of incoming email. He also argues that email has done little to improve efficiency and our human brains are not wired to handle this frequent switching of attention between subjects. There are some new workplaces that have done away completely with email and simply focused on getting the work done. A new approach would require a complete revision in how work is structured but it would ultimately allow us to be happier and more productive. Unfortunately, there seems to be no simple solutions to taming the email beast short of a structural change in how we do our work.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/podcasts/ezra-klein-podcast-cal-newport-transcript.html>

EZRA KLEIN: What is your evidence email and Slack are a disaster?

CAL NEWPORT: Well, I have two main threads. So the first thread of evidence is that it makes it essentially impossible to work. And essentially, the culprit here is network switching. Human brains take a long time to switch. If you're going to put your target of attention on one thing and then switch it to a new target, that takes a while, right? There's biological things going on here. You have to suppress some networks. You have to amplify other networks. It takes some time.

When you glance at an inbox or when you glance at a Slack channel, as is required that you do constantly, if back and forth messaging is how you organize most of your work, you begin to trigger all these network shifts, so all of these complex biological cascades initiate. And you see all these unresolved issues and things you can't get back to.

And then if you wrench your attention back to what you were trying to do, it creates this whole pile-up in your brain, which we experience as a loss of cognitive function. We also feel frustrated. We feel tired. We feel anxious. Because the human brain can't do it. And so essentially, the hyperactive hive mind, on paper, had this really good attribute, which is, it's flexible and it's easy and it's cheap. You just kind of figure things out on the fly. But the biological reality is it made us really bad at doing our work.

And then we have the second thread, which I think had been somewhat unexplored, which is this way of working makes us miserable. It just clashes with our fundamental human wiring to have this nonstop piling up of communication from our tribe members that we can't keep up with. And that hits all of these deeply rooted social networks in our brain to take this type of thing seriously. No matter how much the frontal cortex tells us it's OK, we don't have to answer these emails right away. There's a deeper part of our brain that's worried. And so it makes us miserable, and it makes us terrible at work. But other than that, though, it's been pretty good.

6. Larry Robinson highlighted in Shirley Ryan Ability Lab (Northwestern University) PMR On Point as an alumni influencer

Larry Robinson was recently interviewed by his residency institution for a section in their newsletter focusing on those alumni who have been influencers in the field. The story is in their newsletter in the link below (you have to scroll about half way down). They did not put in some of my favourite memories from residency. One was when my colleague, Kevin Means (now chairman at University of Arkansas) would modify his notes saying that the patient was admitted from "Elsewhere" to "St. Elsewhere". The other was when my colleague, on pediatrics and I went to our faculty member's house for dinner and we spent 30 minutes trying to figure out what it was that we had eaten because it was largely tasteless and unidentifiable. I guess they don't publish these memories on-line.

To our residents, please remember that your resident colleagues will be some of your closest friends throughout your career and to stay in touch with them.

<https://www.sralab.org/newsletter/pmr-point>



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7. Consume your peeps in liquid form

Many thanks to Shannon MacDonald who recognized our collective challenges in buying and consuming peeps during our pandemic. There is now a Peeps-flavoured soda for us to use in this time of need.

https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Food/pepsi-introduces-limited-edition-peeps-flavored-marshmallow-soda/story?id=76675900&cid=clicksource_4380645_18_comic_strip_sq_image

As always, let us know if you have stories of interest that you would like to have distributed.

Don't forget to connect with our Twitter site @UofT_Physiatry.

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