

# ResearchNews

## *in it for life* Research Fund awardees have been named

*How well do frail seniors function once home from a stay in acute care?*

*Can a falls intervention clinic reduce hip fractures in seniors?*

*Will sleep apnea therapy reduce the risks of cardiovascular disease?*

*Can we develop a simple blood test to detect early lung cancer allowing patients to receive treatment faster, before the cancer is able to spread and become incurable?*

These are the questions *in it for life* Research Fund 2004 awardees will be pursuing with their research grants. The *in it for life* Research Fund awards is a program of VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation. It is designed to support new clinical research projects with direct, immediate relevance to improving patient care, diagnosis, treatment, or disease prevention. Congratulations to Drs. Najib Ayas, Pierre Guy, Roger Wong, and John Yee.

The Foundation also funds *in it for life Investigator Awards*. Earlier this year, eight VCHRI investigators received awards in the categories of Scientist, Mentored Clinician Scientist, and Scholar (matching funds for the mentored Clinician Scientist awards is provided through the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Institutional Infrastructure fund).

Please visit our website at [www.vchri.ca](http://www.vchri.ca) for summaries of the investigators' projects and details of the next round of applications.



**Roger Wong**  
*Functional Performance in the Frail Elderly Population*



**Pierre Guy**  
*Cost-effectiveness Analysis of a Randomized Controlled Trial of a Dedicated Falls Clinic Intervention in Elderly Fallers Presenting to an Emergency Department*



**Najib Ayas**  
*The Impact of CPAP Therapy for Obstructive Sleep Apnea Hypopnea on Cardiovascular Risk Factors: A Randomised Crossover Trial*



**John Yee**  
*Detection of Early Lung Cancer by Serum Protein Expression Profiling*

## MORE Research \$\$\$ Announcing the 2005 VCHRI Interdisciplinary Research Grant Competition

Could \$10,000 help you launch a pilot project or new study? The 2005 VCHRI Interdisciplinary Research Grant Competition is underway. The purpose of this internal competition is to build health research capacity across VCH through a peer-reviewed competition to support the development of interdisciplinary teams collaborating on applied research projects.

Investigators from all Vancouver Coastal Health HSDAs (Richmond, Vancouver Acute, Vancouver Community, and North Shore/Coast Garibaldi) are eligible to

apply. Pilot projects are particularly suitable for this competition. Top-up funding for existing projects is not eligible for this competition, and funding will be provided to an investigator or to a project one time only.

Registration is required for this competition. The deadline for registration is 4:00 p.m. on Friday, October 22, 2004. Complete applications must be received in the VCHRI administration office by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, December 3, 2004. Notification of awards will be in March 2005.

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## More Research \$\$\$ *cont'd from p.1*

Guidelines, registration forms and application forms are available for download from the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI) website at:

[http://www.vchri.ca/s/Internal\\_Grants.asp](http://www.vchri.ca/s/Internal_Grants.asp).

For more information contact **Patricia Tait, Coordinator, Grants and Education** at [patait@vanhosp.bc.ca](mailto:patait@vanhosp.bc.ca)

## WINNERS from the 2004 Interdisciplinary Grants Competition were:

- **Jeffrey Brubacher**, Department of Medicine, Emergency Medicine, for his project titled *Outcome After Discharge of Emergency Department Patients with Substance Related Problems*;
- **Brian Conway**, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, for his project titled *Pender Assisted Therapy (PATH): Treatment of HCV*;
- **Thomas Elliott**, Department of Medicine, Endocrinology, for his project titled *Post-operative Glycemic Control in Surgical Patients (POGS) – A Feasibility Study to Determine the Frequency of Hypoglycemia when Principles of Intensive Insulin Therapy are Applied to Post-Operative Surgical Patients*;
- **John O’Kusky**, Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, for his project titled *Stereological Assessment of the Survival of Human Retinal Pigmented Epithelial Cells Implanted in a Rodent Model of Parkinson’s Disease*;
- **Jerilynn Prior**, Department of Medicine, Endocrinology, for her project titled *Community Pharmacists’ Knowledge about Progesterone: Knowledge Translation within the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority*;
- **Brian Westerberg**, Department of Surgery, Otolaryngology, for his project titled *Immunohistochemistry Analysis of Growth Factors in Vestibular Schwannoma*; and
- **Roger Wong**, Department of Medicine, Geriatric Medicine, for his project titled *Measurement Properties of a Novel Walk Test in a Frail Elderly Population*.

# Around the VCHRI

## Increasing research development across VCH



The mandate of the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute is to develop research across the health authority. Historically, research activity has been concentrated in Vancouver Acute at VGH and UBCH, but VCHRI is implementing a plan to expand research development in the other three HSDAs. Part of the proposal includes the appointment of Institute assistant directors from Vancouver Community, Richmond, and North Shore Coast Garibaldi. Responsibilities of the assistant director include promoting and facilitating research by helping investigators navigate the ethics and organizational approval processes; providing information about VCHRI programs and

services; and serving as the contact point for investigators looking for information and assistance. The assistant directors also serve on the Research Advisory Committee of VCHRI. Dr. Jim Thorsteinson from Vancouver Community is the first to be appointed in this capacity. (Similar appointments are expected in Richmond and North Shore/Coast Garibaldi in the coming months.)

Vancouver Community already has 16 research projects that have been approved. They cover a range of interests, including evaluating the VCH Safe Babies Program; examining the prevalence and risk factors associated with HIV infection among refugees and new immigrants; and evaluating the impact of early childhood vaccination with Prevnar against invasive pneumococcal disease.

If you work in Vancouver Community, contact **Dr. Jim Thorsteinson** at **604 708-5221** or [jim.thorsteinson@vch.ca](mailto:jim.thorsteinson@vch.ca).

### Get your VCHRI lanyard

Due to increasing security concerns, staff and faculty are being asked to visibly wear their VCH/UBC ID tags. To facilitate this, VCHRI has purchased lanyards (in fashionable black) for all research faculty and staff. ID can be attached and worn around the neck. We are pleased to supply these to you and your groups free of charge. Pick them up in the reception area on the main floor of the research pavilion.

**We would appreciate it if you can make every effort to wear your ID tags while in VGH/VCH facilities.**

## New Certificate in Clinical Epidemiology coming to VCHRI

A growing number of clinicians in British Columbia have expressed interest in attaining better research skills, and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute's Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation (C2E2) is hoping a new certificate course will meet that need. Under the direction of Dr. Mark FitzGerald, the members of C2E2, the Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcome Sciences (CHEOS) and the Centre for Health Innovation and Improvement (CHII) have begun development of a series of workshops that will lead to a UBC Certificate in Clinical Epidemiology.

"The coursework is designed for clinicians and health professionals who have an interest in making better use of published evidence in their practice and in undertaking research projects of their own," says FitzGerald.

Material is divided into modules that will be offered once a month over a period of 10 months in the format of 1-1.5 day workshops. Participants will be expected to write a grant proposal on a topic of their choice as the final outcome. Topics of modules include the following: *Doing Systematic Reviews, Basic Research Design, Critical Appraisal of Medical Literature, and Program Evaluation.*

"Clinicians at academic health sciences

centres are often active researchers as well, and this certificate will give them an introduction to the skills they need to be more successful with their research projects" says Dr. FitzGerald.

The complete course will begin next fall and will be open to all clinicians in BC. This winter several of the topics will be offered as stand-alone workshops through the Research Education program at VCHRI, including "*Systematic Reviews: The Basics*" (see below). Information about these workshops will be posted on the Research Education page of the VCHRI web site when it is available.

Registration for the Certificate course will open in April 2005. Again, details will be available on the VCHRI website at that time.

### "Systematic Reviews: The Basics"

The Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation is offering an intensive half day course that will appeal to clinicians, investigators, allied health professionals and policy makers interested in gaining an understanding of the rationale for and process for completing a systematic review. The course will be on October 6th from 1300 to 1730.

Further details and registration information are available at [www.vchri.ca](http://www.vchri.ca).

## Prostate Awareness Week

September 19 – 25



Front:  
Dr. Larry Goldenberg,  
director, the Prostate  
Centre at VGH

Back, L-R:  
Drs. Paul Rennie, Martin  
Gleave, Colleen Nelson.

### The Facts

- One in every eight men may have to face the diagnosis of prostate cancer sometime during his remaining lifetime; beyond age 50 one in 28 will die of it.
- It will strike more than 16,500 Canadian men this year.
- Prostate cancer will kill over 4,000 Canadian men this year.
- It is the second leading cause of male cancer death after lung cancer, and is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Canadian men.
- BC has the highest per capita rate of prostate cancer diagnosis in the country.
- BC has the lowest mortality rate, due primarily to the leading edge treatment and care offered in this Province.
- The Prostate Centre at VGH is Canada's only comprehensive treatment, research and education centre focused exclusively on prostate disease. And now, thanks to a multimillion-dollar grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, and funding partners British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund and the VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation, the Centre will be able to speed up the process of finding better ways to diagnose and treat cancer. These new research dollars and the resulting infrastructure and new investigators will mean the Prostate Centre at VGH will be the world's most extensive prostate cancer research facility.

Look for information on the Prostate Centre at VGH posted near the hospital cafeteria and visit [www.prostatecentre.com](http://www.prostatecentre.com) for more information during Prostate Awareness Week.

## Commercialize your Technology



Thinking of a new medical device? Have you discovered a new target that may be useful in a diagnostic or as a therapeutic target?

Then Brad Wheeler is your contact. Brad is the newly minted UILO Technology Transfer Manager with responsibility for VCHRI. He is the point of initial contact for all VCHRI researchers who have novel technologies that they feel could be commercialized. If your intent is

to commercialize, you should talk to Brad BEFORE the idea or supporting evidence is publicly disclosed via presentations, posters, or papers. This is because patenting is not permitted once an idea has been publicly disclosed (Canada and the US are unique—they have a 1 year grace period to patent after the public disclosure).

Brad joined the UILO in 2002 and has 10 years experience in managing the growth of new ventures, formulating business plans, developing commercialization strategies, and securing seed financing for new technology companies. Brad holds a B.Sc. in biochemistry from the University of Waterloo and an M.B.A. from the Executive M.B.A. Program at Simon Fraser University.

For more information, including invention disclosure forms, please visit <http://www.uilo.ubc.ca/>.

## “Christopher Reeve” technology comes to Vancouver



Imagine what it would be like to live life tethered to a 55-pound machine. A machine that impairs your sense of taste and smell, obstructs your ability to speak and hear, yet is absolutely necessary to keep you alive. This is the experience of many people with severe spinal cord injuries. Their nerves that signal the diaphragm to expand and contract, drawing air in and out of the lungs, cannot receive impulses from the brainstem telling them to breathe.

Traditionally when such impairment occurs, a ventilator is required to survive. But a new procedure that implants a pace making device directly on the diaphragm and stimulates it to expand and contract mechanically is enabling a better quality of life. First piloted in Cleveland at University Hospitals and Case Western University and performed on actor Christopher Reeve in 2003, the diaphragm pacing implant research program will soon be adopted by the Respiratory and Critical Care team at VGH.

Dr. Jeremy Road, a respirologist at VGH with the Respiratory and Critical Care research group, and medical director of the VCH Respiratory Outreach Program,

became familiar with the technique when one of his patients, Mike Renaud, had it performed in Cleveland. Six months later, Mike lives life free from his ventilator 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Impressed, Dr. Road began seeking to bring the surgery to Vancouver.

“With our renown spinal cord injury program at VGH and GF Strong, ICORD (International Collaboration On Repair Discoveries Centre) and the Rick Hansen Foundation, as well as the work of our investigators in the area of respiration, this research area is a natural fit for us,” says Dr. Road. “Collaboration between respiratory, the spinal cord team, and VGH’s minimally invasive surgeons will be elements of the program,” adds Road, who says the program will also explore whether the diaphragm pacer can have applications with other illnesses such as Muscular Dystrophy and ALS.

The diaphragm pacer is an economical option in terms of health care delivery. The procedure costs roughly as much as a ventilator (patients would still need a back-up ventilator, but only one instead of the usual two) and far less than an alternative procedure on the phrenic nerve.

For information on the diaphragm pacer, contact **Dr. Jeremy Road** at [jroad@vanhosp.bc.ca](mailto:jroad@vanhosp.bc.ca).



*\*The diaphragm-pacing project does not yet have FDA approval and is a clinical trial program at University Hospitals in Cleveland. At VGH, this would also be considered a research program.*



The Research Education Program at VCHRI was started 5 years ago with the primary objective of enhancing research capacity. This objective remains the same, and we continue to explore and offer various formats and topics that will most effectively address this objective.

In 2003-4 we offered over 75 research education workshops and inservices to participants from across and outside of VCH. Topics included literature searching, presentation skills, statistics, and grantscrafting, and we were pleased to host a new session in March 2004 called “Obtaining Informed Consent and Assent from Research Subjects” for which we had a large waiting list beyond our maximum capacity of 99 people.

Many investigators and others gave their time to instruct these workshops and we extend our gratitude to all those who gave their time. The success of this program relies on these individuals giving their time and sharing their expertise.

## What’s NEW?

The fall is upon us, so research education at VCHRI is starting up again. A highlight of this coming year will be the “Research Ethics Education Series” which will run over the course of the year and include both previous successful workshops as well as new topics. Watch for it!

Check out our website at [www.vchri.ca/workshops.asp](http://www.vchri.ca/workshops.asp) regularly for details about upcoming workshops and how to register.

**Vancouver Coastal Health**  
**Research Institute**

*Healthier lives through discovery*



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