



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Surgery RESEARCH BULLETIN

FALL 2025

Welcome to the Fall 2025 Dalhousie University Department of Surgery Research Bulletin.

The Research Committee has approved its 2025/2026 budget. In addition to ongoing funding for Divisional research personnel and biostatistical support through the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, we are inviting faculty to apply for operating and bridge grant support, with applications for this year's competition due on **Friday, November 7**. You can find more details on our website at:

[https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/departments-sites/surgery/research/research-office/funding.html](https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/departments/sites/surgery/research/research-office/funding.html)



A subcommittee comprised of Drs. Katerina Neumann, Alison Wallace and Sam Jessula has completed work on an update of the Hirsch scoring system used to assess research productivity. The plan is to roll out the revised scoring system in parallel with the current scoring system in the upcoming fiscal year to see how it performs. Ultimately, I am hoping this revised scoring system can help the Research Committee identify researchers who, with some additional resources, would have the best chance of successful capturing Tri-Council funding.

Michael Bezuhly MD MSc SM FRCSC
Director of Research

Surgeon-Scientist Trainees

The Department of Surgery Research Office has a long history of supporting and mentoring the next generation of surgeon-scientists through the Royal College Clinician-Investigator Program (CIP). CIP alumni can be found here:

<https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/departments/sites/surgery/research/research-office/clinician-investigator-program.html>

The Department currently has **several residents** enrolled in the Clinician-Investigator Program for this academic year.

Dr. Katherine Tourigny (Division of Neurosurgery) is in the third year of her PhD in Neuroscience at Oxford University. Her thesis work involves evaluating signals and artifacts from devices in bioelectronic systems for closed loop neuromodulation. She was recently awarded both Killam and McLaughlin Awards.



Dr. Takhliq Amir (Division of Cardiac Surgery) is in the second year of her MSc in Community Health & Epidemiology and is developing a surveillance strategy for thoracic aortic aneurysms using cardiac CT scan. She is the recent recipient of a Killam Award.



Dr. Cameron Penny (Division of General Surgery) began his CIP journey this July. He enrolled in the MSc in Community Health & Epidemiology program. His project examines the influence of physical activity patterns on breast cancer incidence in Nova Scotia using the Atlantic Partnership for Tomorrow's Health (Atlantic PATH) dataset. Dr. Penny was recently awarded a CIHR Fellowship grant to support his work.

Dr. Joel Bierer (Division of Cardiac Surgery) has returned to clinical training and will be defending his PhD later this year. His research focus is determining an optimal ultrafiltration protocol for pediatric cardiac surgery.



Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

October 5: CIP Application letter of intent due

October 5: Call for Operational & Bridge Grants
Basic Science Collaborative support/presentation meeting
Fall Bulletin

NOVEMBER

November 7: Operational and Bridge Grants DUE
November 7: Divisional Research Support Reports DUE
Department of Surgery Research Committee meets

DECEMBER

Department of Surgery Research Committee meets
Department of Surgery Research Day planning committee meets

Department of Surgery Research Day 2026
Monday, May 11, 2026 - Halifax Convention Centre

Faculty of Medicine Resident Research Day Winners

BEST RESEARCH AWARD FOR A JUNIOR RESIDENT WHO HAS INCORPORATED RESEARCH INTO THEIR PRIMARY TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Kalpesh Hathi, Otolaryngology (PGY2)

Patient perspectives of quality compared to quantity of life regarding orbital exenteration: a mixed methods study.



BEST WORK IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT, MEDICAL EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP OR ADMINISTRATION WHO HAS INCORPORATED RESEARCH INTO THEIR PRIMARY TRAINING PROGRAM

Dr. Jenna Smith Forrester, Neurosurgery (PGY5)

Quality improvement in neurosurgery: the success of the spine assessment clinic in reducing post-op emergency department visits



Meet our Researchers

Dr. Alison Wallace is an Associate Professor in the Division of Thoracic Surgery. She completed a PhD and postdoctoral research fellowship before medical school and surgical training took her to the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto and Columbia University. This scientific training and surgical expertise shaped her commitment to advancing patient care and discovery in lung cancer.



Dr. Wallace specializes in minimally invasive surgery for lung disease, with a focus on lung cancer. Her research investigates how genetic factors and environmental exposures such as radon contribute to lung cancer risk in Atlantic Canada. She has also developed strategies to improve recovery and reduce complications after thoracic surgery, and leads and contributes to clinical trials. As the Principal Investigator for the AstraZeneca-funded Tropion-Lung12 trial, her team was the first globally to launch the study and the first in North America to enroll a patient.

Dr. Wallace serves as Divisional Research Director for Thoracic Surgery, Co-Director of the QEII Lung Tumour Bank, and a Board member of LungNSPEI. She is Vice Chair of Research for the Canadian Association of Thoracic Surgeons, a Board member of the Evict Radon National Study, and a member of the CIHR Institute Advisory Board for Cancer Research. Internationally, she sits on the Staging and Prognostic Factors Committee of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer and was selected as one of only 30 researchers worldwide to join the IASLC Academy which identifies the next generation of global leaders in lung cancer research and care.

Her work has been recognized nationally and internationally, with awards from the Lung Cancer Canada, Canadian Cancer Society, CIHR, American Thoracic Society, and European Respiratory Society. Through her clinical practice, research leadership, and advocacy, Dr. Wallace is driving change in lung cancer outcomes, ensuring that patients have a healthier future.



Dr. Elise Graham is a newly recruited Paediatric Otolaryngologist at the IWK. Dr. Graham completed her undergraduate medical and residency training at Dalhousie University followed by a fellowship in paediatric otolaryngology at the University of Utah. Prior to returning to Halifax, she was on faculty at the University of Western Ontario.

Dr. Graham received a Department of Surgery Establishment Grant to support her research program which focuses on airway, feeding, swallowing as well as breastfeeding and ankyloglossia. She is also spearheading research profiling and examining the experiences of women in surgery, particularly motherhood and lactation. Dr. Graham is the newly appointed Divisional Research Director for Otolaryngology and is a member of the Department of Surgery Research Committee.

Recent publications:

Alternative therapies for ankyloglossia-associated breastfeeding challenges: a systematic review. Chowdry R, Khoury S, Leroux J, Alsayegh R, Lawlor CM, **Graham ME**. *Breastfeed Med*. 2024; 7:497-504.

Global tonsillectomy practice patterns – a study of pediatric otolaryngologists. Spencer GM, Wilson CA, Davidson J, Strychowsky JE, Lawlor CM, Burns H Bhargava EK, Fowler J, **Graham ME**. *Int J Pediatr Otorhinolaryngol*. 2025 April; 191:112276.