



# The UPDATE



**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**

FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
Department of Surgery

## Winter 2020



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Departmental News



# Dr. David Kirkpatrick Head, Department of Surgery

AFP negotiations have concluded and we have internal agreement on allocation. With that behind us we now have a two year window to focus on other things that matter to us like research, education, quality, facility renewal and health system reorganization. Since the last update there have been developments that are cause for optimism.

**Dr. Brendan Carr** has recently started as the new CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. He has been CEO of both the Sir William Osler Health System in Greater Toronto Area and the Vancouver Island Health Authority where he had served as VP Medicine before becoming CEO. Many will remember that he was VP Medicine for the former Capital District Health Authority as well as a Halifax based ER Physician. He returns home with considerable experience in complex health system administration and a clinician's perspective.



**Dr. Kevin Orrell** of Sydney has been appointed Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness and will take up the post next month. He is an orthopedic surgeon and a long standing member of the Dalhousie University Department of Surgery. As Senior Medical Director of the Cape Breton Redevelopment Project he established a reputation as an able administrator and a compelling clinical leader.



**Dr. David Tang** is now our Chair of the Education Committee. On January 1st he succeeded Brock Vair who, by way of example provided persuasive leadership in surgical education for well over a decade. David has distinguished himself as an educator first by being named teacher of the year while a resident then later by leading the Foundations of Surgery Program and, later still as Director of the Plastic Surgery Residency Training Program. The dean has named him to the Faculty of Medicine Education Committee.



**Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy** is the NSHA Vice President of Research and Innovation and as part of the reorganization announced last December has had Learning added to her portfolio. Needless to say this is great news for Simulation and Skills education. She is working with Steve Miller from the FOM as well as department Heads and education directors to enhance the viability and future Growth of these important programs. Her involvement with QE11 redevelopment has thus far resulted in protection of and in some areas significant improvement in the planned academic infrastructure.



Over the next year the process to name my successor will begin. An internal department review has been conducted by a survey committee chaired by the Head of the Department of Emergency Medicine Kirk Magee. After his committees' report is submitted, two members of our department, Liane Johnson and Jason Williams will join the members of the survey committee and become the Department Head Search Committee. Before fall the dean will invite two current or former surgery department heads from other universities to conduct an external review. These two reports will serve to inform the FOM, the search committee and potential applicants as to the kind of leadership needed for the five or ten years after my tenure draws to a close on July 1, 2021.

## New Faculty

**Dr. Alison Wallace** is a surgeon-scientist who joined the Division of Thoracic Surgery this summer after completing her Fellowship in Thoracic Surgery at the University of Toronto. Her surgical interests include lung cancer, tracheal resections and mediastinal pathology. She is trained in minimally invasive as well as robotic thoracic surgery. As a scientist, her research focuses on the molecular epidemiology and biology of smoke induced lung disease, including cigarette and vaping-related lung damage, as well as the complex biology of lung cancer. Dr. Wallace greatly enjoys teaching medical trainees. As a surgeon-scientist, she encourages trainees to develop their clinical acumen and research skills to further advance the treatment and understanding of thoracic diseases. Welcome Dr. Wallace!



## Dr. Greg Hirsch Senior Director Perioperative Services NSHA



Dr. Greg Hirsch has been in this role for a just over a year, and continues to learn a great deal in that short period of time, both about the challenges we face given an aging and often over-capacity hospital network as well as the excellent work that is done by very dedicated health care professionals throughout the system. There are huge opportunities to build on this network and provide Nova Scotians with the best possible surgical care. NSQIP is a major piece of the work, allowing for the first time, arms-length and risk adjusted outcomes across 11 surgical sites in the province. Although only in our first few months of data, we are already in the midst of a couple of quality improvement cycles in both infection prevention and patient instructions. My co-lead, **Dr. Marcy Saxe-Braithwaiite** is a powerhouse administrator who has brought NSQIP to fruition and created a Nova Scotia-wide collaborative. We are supported by excellent staff both in terms of administration and data support.



**Dr. Marcy Saxe-Braithwaiite**



*“It has been a pleasure serving as Director of Education for the Department of Surgery during the past several years. I extend best regards to my successor and the departmental faculty teaching staff in addressing and resolving educational challenges in the future“*

### **UNDERGRADUATE MEDICINE**

A significant expansion in the number of students admitted to the first year Medical School class has recently been announced by government. This is to begin in August of next year and will ultimately result in additional learners seeking electives within the Department of Surgery, rotating on surgical services and participating in our educational programs. It is anticipated that resident numbers will also expand as a consequence of this. With increasing demands from the medical school for educational contributions from faculty in the Department of Surgery creation of adequately funded, protected time away from clinical responsibilities will be required.

**Dr. Eddy Chedrawy**, Head of the Division of Cardiac Surgery, attended the C-CASE conference in September dedicated to educational issues relevant to both undergraduate and postgraduate learners in surgery. In his report to the Department Executive Committee he emphasized the quality of the presentations and the significant attendance by teaching faculty from surgical programs across Canada.

**Dr. Devin Piccott**, PGY4 from the Division of ENT/Head and Neck Surgery, also attended and presented his research related to the effects of the recent adoption of Competency by Design on caseloads for residents in his program. Surgical staff are encouraged to consider attending this annual event as it provides opportunities for updated educational based learning and networking.

### **RESIDENCY TRAINING**

Integration of competency based education into Surgical Foundations and residency programs in Cardiac and Neurosurgery is proceeding satisfactorily. ENT/Head and Neck Surgery is in its third year of competency based education, which has allowed them sufficient time to monitor and evaluate their Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs). The ENT Specialty Committee has met and agreed to reduce and modify many of their EPAs based on feedback nationally.

### **FELLOWSHIP TRAINING**

The Departmental Fellowship Committee is currently reviewing applications for the various Fellowship programs within the Department and dealing with individual program issues. As it has been five years since the committee was founded a review of the terms of reference will be carried out this year.

### **SIMULATION AND SKILLS PROGRAM**

The number of hours available for use of the Skills Center have been shortened over the past year as a result of insufficient funding for technical staff support. This has been a source of frustration for program facilitators and learners and has led to prolonged wait times for course booking. Discussions related to obtaining appropriate funding for additional staff involving the Faculty of Medicine and the NSHA are ongoing.

# Retirement: Dr. Brock Vair



Written by Dr. Sean Grondin, Chair of Surgery University of Calgary, and former Dalhousie Surgical Resident

As a former Dalhousie University surgical trainee, it is with great pleasure that I write this column honoring Dr. Brock Vair. Dr. Vair graduated from Dalhousie University Medical School and completed his training in general surgery at Dalhousie in 1981. Recognized early for his in depth knowledge of surgical diseases and his superior surgical skill, Dr. Vair was hired as attending staff at the Halifax Infirmary following completion of a fellowship in Gastrointestinal Surgery at the University of Florida (1983).

Over his 35+ year career at Dalhousie University, Dr. Vair has held many important leadership positions including Chief, Division of General Surgery, and Director of Education, Department of Surgery. He has also held numerous national leadership positions including serving on the Royal College Nucleus Committee and the Examination Committee for General Surgery.

When I think of Dr. Vair, many attributes come to mind. He is personable and charismatic, intelligent, hardworking, a master technician and a superb educator. Over his many years in practice, Dr. Vair has had a positive impact on the lives of countless patients and families. Through his exemplary clinical and educational leadership, Dr. Vair has motivated numerous trainees and colleagues to continually critically evaluate and improve their own quality of patient care. For his efforts in education, he has been formally recognized with numerous teaching awards including the Dalhousie University Undergraduate Outstanding Teacher Silver Shovel Award (1997, 2011, 2013), the Surgical Residents Award For Professor of the Year (1996, 2000, 2003), the Department of Surgery Excellence in Teaching Award (11 time recipient), and the Professional Association of Residents in the Maritime Provinces Excellence in Teaching Award (1996 – 1997).

Dr. Vair, on behalf of all of your colleagues who have enjoyed your collegiality and trainees who have been mentored by your teaching, I congratulate you on a truly distinguished career and wish you well in your retirement.

Pictured: Dr. Brock Vair second from left – Dalhousie Surgical Residency Training class 1981.



The **DMRF Dr. Reginald Yabsley Award in Orthopaedics** is presented to a Dalhousie University student who is participating in orthopaedic research and is currently enrolled in an academic program in the Faculties of Dentistry, Health or Medicine. The award is to be provided to the student who shows the most outstanding combination and balance of scientific medical knowledge, research acumen and interest in the area of orthopaedics. It is granted by the DMRF, based upon a recommendation from the Orthopaedic Undergraduate Education Committee..

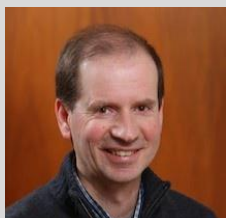
This year's recipients are **Madeline Stevens**, MSc Clinical Health and Epidemiology and **Malik Ali**, MD Candidate 2020. Congratulations to Madeline and Malik.



# Dr. Michael Dunbar Director of Research

This past year, the Dos Research Office had two calls for funding and received over 22 submissions. Vigorous peer review identified the following grants awarded to our faculty. Our research committee members are the primary evaluators of applications, and they have the required experience and expertise to assess the quality, the potential impact of all proposed research, and how it ultimately stimulates and supports our research culture. We would like to thank other members of our community who took on review assignments to help us adjudicate these departmental funds.

Name	Division	Award	Research
Bezuhly	Plastic Surgery	\$50,000.00 Operational	Compound 21, an Angiotensin II Type 2 Receptor Agonist for the Prevention of Capsular Contracture
Christie	Neurosurgery	\$49,122.00 Operational	Neuronal Protection Following Spinal Cord Injury Through Inhibition of the Mitochondrial Calcium Uniporter
Ellsmere	General	\$49,999.00 Seed	Optimal Management of Extreme Obesity and Severe Knee Osteoarthritis (OMEOSKO) Feasibility Trial
French	Thoracic	\$34,607.00 Seed	Defining a Pulmonary Air Leak Using Digitally Measured Airflow
Gala Lopez	MOTP	\$50,000.00 Seed	Ameliorating Tubular Injury in Kidneys from Donation after Circulatory Death
Herman	Cardiac	\$34,500.00 Operational	COMMENCE Trial- Mild vs Moderate Hypothermia on Patient Outcomes in Aortic Hemiarch Surgery with Anterograde Cerebral Perfusion
Hirsch	Cardiac	\$24,890.00 Match	Establishing Shared Decision Making Among Vulnerable Patients Referred for Cardiac Surgery, A Maritime-Wide Initiative
Hirsch	Cardiac	\$35,626.00 Operational	Identifying the Barriers and Facilitators to Good Function Recovery 6 months Following Cardiac Surgery among Older NS Patients Living with Frailty
Horne	Cardiac	\$50,000.00 Seed	The Optimal Ultrafiltration Protocol in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery
Richardson	Orthopaedics	\$32,000.00 Operational	Can Preoperative Knee Kinematics Predict Total Knee Arthroplasty Outcomes?
Rigby	ENT	\$50,000.00 Operational	Intraoperative Primary Tumour Identification and Margin Assessment in Head and Neck Unknown Primary Tumours
Weise	Neurosurgery	\$49,539.00 Seed	Optimizing Deep Brain Stimulation Targeting Using Motor Evoked Potentials
Wong	Orthopaedics	\$50,000.00 Operational	Arthroscopic Treatment of Anterior Shoulder Instability



Our Clinician Scientists will see another generous influx of funding to their programmes. **Dr. Jim Fawcett**, our Basic Science Liaison will again lead an equitable process to allocate earmarked funds as part of our re-growth and re-investment into the basic sciences mandate. Thank you Dr. Fawcett..

## Clinical Investigator Program:

**Dr. Michael Bezuhly** is the DOS Research Committee Liaison for the Clinical Investigator Programme. Dr. Bezuhly is dedicated to mentoring, supporting and guiding all young investigators in the Department of Surgery. All residents wishing to pursue a graduate degree are to contact Elaine Marsh in the Research.

Congratulations to **Dr. Joel Brierer**, Cardiac Surgery PGY 2 who will start his CIP training in July. His project, “The Optimal Ultrafiltration Protocol in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery” is supervised by Dr. David Horne.

**Dr. Claudia Cote** and **Dr. Rakesh Gudimella** will be entering their second year of CIP, both are progressing towards obtaining their Master’s degree, and both have been successful in obtaining external grant monies

**Dr. Catherine Deshaise** returned to clinical duties from her PhD work at the Universite de Montreal and she will be defending her PhD thesis “Pulmonary Valve Replacement in Tetralogy of Fallot” in the next few months.

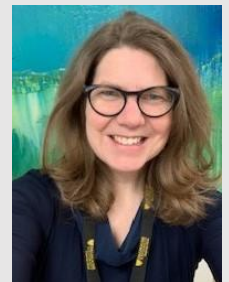
**Dr. Philippe Tremblay** is presently setting a date for his Master’s defense “LVAD implantation as measured through right heart catheterization”

## Department of Surgery – Data Driven Projects

The Department of Surgery has hired two data professionals to help build our data centric projects: Joanne Douglas and Lynn Lethbridge.

Utilizing administrative health data sourced from the Statistics Canada’s Atlantic Research Data Centre, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health Authority, the Department of Surgery research staff is collaborating with surgical staff, residents and students from seven DOS divisions on 17 projects.

The projects include provincial comparisons of surgical rates for various procedures across the country as well as surgical access across ethnicity groups using a unique dataset which links the Long Form Census to hospital data at a nation level. Short and long term patient outcomes following surgery including mortality, infection and re-admissions are also a focus of the research team both nationally and across Nova Scotia. The team has also piloted a partnership between the DOS and the Big Data Institute at Dalhousie’s Computer Science Department to apply machine learning techniques to study associations between wait times and hospital length of stay.

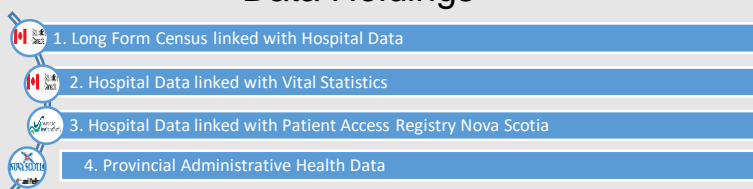


Joanne Douglas,  
Data Manger



Lynn  
Lethbridge  
Data Analyst

## Data Holdings



# Faculty Spotlight

## Dr. Gwynedd Pickett

### Division of Neurosurgery



Gwynedd Pickett obtained her MD at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and completed her neurosurgical residency at the University of Western Ontario. She undertook a two year fellowship in cerebrovascular neurosurgery and interventional neuroradiology at the Greater Manchester Neurosciences Centre, Salford, UK, and subsequently became the first neurosurgeon in the UK to have a combined surgical and endovascular practice. In 2008, she returned home to Halifax where she lives with her husband Andrew, an opera singer, and their two sons. She is an Associate Professor in the Division of Neurosurgery, the Director of Cerebrovascular Surgery, and has recently taken on the role of Neurosurgery Residency Program Director. Her clinical work focuses on both open surgical repair and minimally invasive endovascular treatment of cerebrovascular disorders, as well as treatment of spinal disorders, trigeminal neuralgia, and tumors.



Away from work, she enjoys knitting, choral singing, reading (primarily fantasy and sciencefiction), scuba diving and skiing. She is a part-time Scout leader and loves retreating to the backwoods of Kejimikujik every summer with her family to canoe, hike and briefly unplug. She has been an award-winning poet, an archer, and competitive Scottish dancer

In my journey of international medical training, I have travelled to many countries and encountered many individuals and mentors who collectively left lasting positive impressions. I have admired them and always felt that I owed them for their dedication and commitment towards education and their clinical duties towards their patients. Some were perfect technical surgeons, and others were popular among their patients and colleagues because of their charismatic personality and social skills. Dr. Pickett is my mentor who has it all: not only a meticulous and excellent surgeon, but also a great human being, a dedicated teacher and, above all, a caring mother and wife with a beautiful family. She is simply a “Wonder Woman” and I am very proud to have trained under her and now consider her a mentor, teacher, friend and colleague.

Dr. Gwynedd Pickett is simply my hero neurosurgeon. She manages the challenging responsibility of being Dalhousie’s Neurosurgery Program Director, and also runs a very busy surgical practice of cerebrovascular neurosurgery. I have known Dr. Pickett for about 8 years, phoned her numerous times in the middle of the night to run urgent consults with her and assisted her in the operating room during many tough surgical cases. I have never seen someone as calm as Dr. Pickett especially during stressful times when managing life-threatening neurosurgical emergencies. Residents and medical students have loved working with her, and our residents have strived to be in her operating room. Indeed, Dr. Pickett has given a lot of her time and energy to her students and residents, with a serious commitment for teaching the next generation of neurosurgeons.

Besides being a busy cerebrovascular neurosurgeon, Dr. Pickett is a mother and wife. She multitasks between her busy household and career striking that fine balance to excel in both.

She’s a great role model for everyone to follow, and a great example that life isn’t just about work, but also family and friends. I believe I can speak on behalf of my fellow co-residents that we all owe Dr. Pickett, thanks for always teaching, supporting and mentoring us as we progressed in our training.

*Submitted by Dr. Ayoub Dakson, Neurosurgery trainee graduate*



# Strides for Obesity



In 2016, the bariatric clinic at the QE2 Health Sciences Centre, the Halifax Obesity Network (HON), hosted its first ever obesity awareness walk called **Strides for Obesity (SFO)**. Dr James Ellsmere, Surgical Director of the

Weight Loss Program, recruited his sister, Leslee Ellsmere, BscPh, CDE, CBE and his niece, Sophie Jobin, MAHN, to create this event to start the conversation about obesity, its impact on health, and to offer support for individuals affected by obesity.

One of the biggest hurdles in the fight against obesity is the misunderstanding of the disease itself and that it is not a personal choice. It is now recognized that obesity is the result of disordered weight regulation owing to a number of factors including genetics, current food environment, the brain's hormonal control of appetite, medical conditions and medications, emotions, stress and poor sleep, to name a few. Obesity is a chronic, complex medical condition including a number of other obesity-related conditions which often leads to a decreased quality of health and life of those affected.



Leslee Ellsmere, Sophie Jobin and Dr. Jim Ellsmere

The field of obesity medicine has grown greatly over the last decade and there is still have much to learn but newer treatments for obesity have emerged and new technology has made bariatric surgery safer than ever. Countless studies have demonstrated that weight-loss, whether medical or surgical, improves health, quality of life, and the life span of patients having obesity. But, sadly, these treatments still remain out of reach for most people living Nova Scotia who are suffering with obesity.

SFO is committed to removing the stigma surrounding obesity, bringing positivity and respect to those affected, advocating for better patient resources and increased access to treatment. Through this commitment, it has successfully hosted four annual walks since 2016 and helped raise over \$60,000 for HON, in partnership with the QE2 Foundation. In addition, HON took the opportunity to further health professionals' education and added a Professional Obesity Education Day in conjunction with the 2017 walk and again in 2019.

Dr. Thomas Ransom, the endocrinologist with HON, in an interview with the Chronicle Herald:

### Ransom highlights three key outcomes of the walk:

1. For people with obesity, it is a moment to feel accepted and part of a group.
2. The walk also creates an awareness of the disease the community.
3. The walk is a fundraiser to provide more resources and programs necessary to fight obesity.



L: Jenna Crown PDt, Drs. Jim Ellsmere and Tom Ransom and Diana Lawlor, NP.

Asked what, if anything, he is most surprised by as he looks back, Ransom says it is the patients. "It's so surprising how much the walk means to the patients; it just means so much to them."

# BRA DAY



Noelle Brown, Patient Advocate

When Noelle Brown was diagnosed with Lobular Carcinoma in Situ 14 years ago, she underwent a double mastectomy and reconstruction. During this time Noelle navigated through her care and recovery and realized there was a lost resource for patients of breast cancer. She found there was a lack of information available to patients on post cancer mastectomy reconstruction options. Noelle did the initial hard work, and engaged the Plastic Surgery team here to help bring BRA DAY to Halifax.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual BRA Day was held this past October. The panel of Dal Surgery Plastic Surgeons; Drs. Margie Wheelock, Steve Morris, Jason Williams and Marty LeBlanc were scheduled to present the different breast reconstruction options available to post mastectomy patients followed by a panel Q & A, emceed by VP Paula Bond.

Bra Day was started in 2011 by Dr Mitch Brown, a Toronto based Plastic Surgeon, who saw the urgent need to improve breast reconstruction education, awareness and access. The goal was to educate the patients about their choices for reconstruction when undergoing mastectomy and to ensure adequate access for reconstruction surgery. Within two years the Bra Day movement had spread to over 30 countries.

## BRA DAY OBJECTIVES

- EDUCATE** women on their breast reconstruction options
- PROVIDE** an opportunity to see possible outcomes of breast reconstruction surgery
- CONNECT** women with others who have been through it
- EMPOWER** women to make the choices that are right for them



Drs. Jason William, Steve Morris Margie Wheelock and Marty Leblanc with Noelle Brown

***“Halifax is indebted to Noelle, whose tenacity and fortitude in bringing an information forum to the breast cancer community has been beneficial; providing community support, a safe place to have questions answered, and allowing breast cancer patients autonomy and confidence in pursuing the best treatment for them.”***  
**Dr. Jason Williams**

Bra day is held annually on the third Wednesday in October. This Event has three main components:

**Educational presentations** – Leading Plastic Surgeons from the QE11 educate patients on the reconstruction options available.

**Show and Tell Lounge** – A private space is made available where volunteers who have had breast reconstruction can show their results. The goal is to help women understand the advantages and disadvantages, as well as potential risks associated with reconstruction so they may develop realistic expectations of the outcomes.

**Exhibitor’s Area** – A space for related service providers such as Mastectomy boutiques and services, physiotherapists; massage therapists; Pharmaceutical Companies etc.

# President- Canadian Orthopaedic Association: Dr. Mark Glazebrook



Congratulations to **Dr. Mark Glazebrook** on becoming the 74<sup>th</sup> President of the Canadian Orthopaedic Association. He delivered his President Elect address at the recent Annual Meeting; emphasizing the importance and impact of member engagement.

As president of the COA, Dr. Glazebrook will be the Canadian Representative of the **Carousel Compendium**. Each president from all seven English speaking orthopaedic organizations comprise the membership of the Carousel Compendium. Each association was presented an engraved jewel of office in 1952 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. The Carousel Compendium is an international think tank to help respective member societies by promoting shared values.

## The Carousel Compendium

The Orthopaedic Carousel is composed of sitting Presidents or Presidential designees of the seven English-speaking Orthopaedic organisations:

The American Orthopaedic Association; American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; Australian Orthopaedic Association; British Orthopaedic Association; Canadian Orthopaedic Association; New Zealand Orthopaedic Association and the South African Orthopaedic Association



Each association was presented an engraved jewel of office in June 1952 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. The Carousel is not an incorporated or legally recognized body with staff or budget and is not a deliberative or policy making organization.



**Mission:** Promote sharing of orthopaedic clinical, research, and advocacy /policy knowledge among the member organizations.

**Vision:** To serve as an international think tank to help respective member societies learn from international experience as they confront issues that challenge the care of musculoskeletal patients and the future of orthopaedic surgery and to identify common critical issues that may benefit from continued international collaboration.

- **Collaboration** – seek to identify and discuss common critical issues affecting Orthopaedics
- **Diversity** – learn from different socioeconomic and cultural platforms
- **Respect** – provide equal time to each association to raise/discuss issues
- **Academic/critical issue exchange** – enrich each other's annual association meeting programs
- **Social exchange** – encourage long-lasting international collaborations and friendship.

**The Beacon UPDATE  
Winter 2020**

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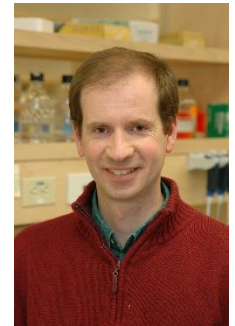
Head, Dr. Madeline Plourde

Congratulations to **Dr. Michael Bezhuly**, who has recently been named The Faculty of Medicine – PGME Director of the Clinical Investigator Program and Medical Research Graduate Program.



Congratulations to **Theresa Halliday**, our Finance Administrator. She has qualified for the 2020 Ironman 70.3 World Championships in New Zealand later this year.

Congratulations to **Dr. Jim Fawcett** who was recently named a Co-Associated Dean of Research and Development in the Faculty of Medicine.



**Dr. Sean Christie** has been named as the Chair of the Faculty of Medicine Dean's Research Council for the academic 20-21 year. Congrats Dr. Christie!

Congratulations to **Dr. Michael Dunbar** on receiving a \$2 million ACOA investment to support a NSHA Orthopaedic Innovation project, in partnership with Kinduct Technologies Inc., Emovi Inc., and OrthoMX Technologies Inc. The integrated orthopaedic patient engagement and remote monitoring project includes three technologies, which will allow clinicians to provide educational material and exercises tailored to patient specific needs and the ability to monitor the progress of the patient remotely.



Next issue: Summer 2020 story ideas to Elaine Marsh  
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