

# The Tinkler

## Bringing Robotic Assisted Surgery to the Maritimes – *Drs. R. Mason & R. Rendon*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Bringing Robotic Assisted Surgery to the Maritimes	1
The India Bladder Exstrophy Workshop	2
Welcome Dr. Skinner!	3
Dalhousie Medical Alumnus of the Year	3
Putting A Face to the Name	3
Meet Our New Residents	4

### Congratulations Dr. Ross Mason!

The Department was thrilled to learn that Dr. Mason was awarded the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) Culture Changers Champion award for excellence in clerkship teaching and creating a positive environment for a medical student. Congratulations Ross!

It's been over one year since Dr. Ricardo Rendon performed the first robotic assisted surgery in Atlantic Canada, marking the beginning of a new era in urologic surgery at Dalhousie. It's been quite the year! To date, we have performed over 100 urologic surgeries here in Halifax. Initially starting with radical prostatectomy, we have expanded the utilization of robotics to include partial nephrectomy, pyeloplasty, nephroureterectomy, simple prostatectomy, and distal ureterectomy. In addition, we were the first Centre in Canada to operate with the new Da Vinci 'X' robot.

We've come a long way over the past year, from robotics cases being 'novel' to now being just another routine operation. Spearheaded by our robotics coordinator, Tony Blinkhorn, our operating room team has adapted to this new technology. As expected, they continue to be the best nursing team in the city.

The year has not been without its challenges, both in terms of moving along the robotic learning curve and the logistics of coordinating robotics cases. However, as a team we have risen to these challenges and continue to improve every day. In

addition, we are still in the process of fundraising for our robotics program to ensure we can keep this technology for the future.

The QEII foundation has done an excellent job to date in this regard. As time goes on, we look forward to continue growth of our robotics program to offer state-of-the-art care to our patients.

To view a video showcasing the robotis program at the QEII Health Centre please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/tbrtqkq>

To make a donation to the Robotics campaign through the QEII Foundation please go to: <https://tinyurl.com/https-ge2foundation-ca-curre>



## The India Bladder Exstrophy Workshop

--Dr. Rodrigo Romao, Associate Professor, Departments of Pediatric Surgery & Urology



A few years ago, while looking after complex patients with bladder and cloacal exstrophy at the IWK, I reached out to my mentor, Dr. Pippi Salle, for advice. He said "you need to come to India with us". The India Bladder Exstrophy Collaborative Workshop has been in existence for 12 years. For 7 days, internationally renowned pediatric urologists and other surgeons with an interest in this disease from all parts of the world land in Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat to take part in a transformative personal and professional experience. The collaboration is under the unremitting leadership of Dr. Rakesh Joshi from Ahmedabad and Dr. Aseem Shukla, from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; I have been fortunate to be part of it for 3 out of the last 4 years.

The pediatric surgeons at Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad, one of the largest public hospitals in Asia, prepare tirelessly for the workshop and patients come from all over India. For the first two days (Saturday and Sunday), local and visiting surgeons see more than 100 patients in clinic, both new referrals and postoperative follow-ups from previous years. The following 5 days are spent in the operating room, where roughly 20-30 cases of bladder exstrophy / epispadias (both primary and redos) are performed jointly by the team.

Experiences like this are invaluable at multiple levels. Professionally, it is remarkable to see what our Indian colleagues can accomplish in a low-resource setting with a case volume that is 10-fold higher (if not more!) compared to what we see in Canada. The friendship created by the exchange of knowledge and experiences crosses borders and cultures. As the only Canadian

involved in the collaboration so far, I am lucky to bring home to Nova Scotia a fraction of the knowledge and wisdom from some of the top pediatric urologists and exstrophy surgeons in the world; the academic fulfilment brought from the participation in efforts to improve our field through thoughtful collaborative research is unparalleled. On a personal level, the ability to help serve those in need, some of them extremely poor and ostracized due to their condition, is astonishing. The flight back from India is always filled with awe, inspiration, cultural insight, new ideas, some fatigue and renewed energy, which blend together bringing the certainty that we have to continue to work hard on our mission to improve the lives of children born with complex congenital malformations, at home and abroad.



Dr. Rodrigo Romao and Dr Joshi, Head of Pediatric Surgery at Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad



India has an extremely high birth rate and a disproportionately elevated prevalence of these complex congenital malformations compared to other

As the only Canadian



Welcome reception for pediatric urologists from different parts of the world to the India Exstrophy Collaborative Workshop

## Welcome Dr. Tom Skinner

- *Dr. Tom Skinner, Assistant Professor, Department of Urology*

I am thrilled to announce my arrival as the newest member of Dalhousie Urology. I was fortunate to complete my medical school in Halifax, so my first taste of clinical Urology took place between the famed walls of the VG. It's an honour to return to work with many of the mentors that inspired me to become an Urologist, and while little has changed within the VG itself (we still can't drink the water) a lot is changing in the Department!

After completing my Urology training at Queen's, I pursued a two-year clinical fellowship in Ottawa in renal transplantation and robotic surgery. My training focused on all aspects of kidney transplantation and renal replacement surgery, in addition to laparoscopic, robotic and endourologic surgery.

I moved to Halifax in June with my wife Haley and we welcomed our first child (Jack) a month later. I began my practice in August and am settling into my new role, working closely with Dr. Lawen to help grow the transplant Urology footprint in Atlantic Canada.

In addition to my clinical practice I have an interest in Quality Improvement and am pursuing this both within our Department, as well as provincially through the NSHA peri-op quality committee. I have been warmly welcomed into the Urology family at Dalhousie and am continually impressed at the quality of our staff, and trainees. I look forward to carrying transplant Urology into the roaring 20's and hope we can continue to grow our involvement in this area.



### Putting a Face to the Name

The Department of Urology recently acquired picture buttons of staff so patients can recognize a face while they are wearing PPE. Thanks to graphic artist Peter Young for supplying these buttons for us. The patients love them! Anyone interested in ordering please email [pjyoung@dal.ca](mailto:pjyoung@dal.ca)



### Dalhousie Medical Alumni Association Alumnus of the Year 2020

The Department was thrilled recently to learn that alumnus **Dr. Robin Roberts**, Director & Senior Lecturer, UWI School of Clinical Medicine & Research, The Bahamas, was recently awarded the 2020 Dalhousie Medical Alumnus of the Year! Congratulations Robin on this well-deserved award from all of us!



## Meet Our New Residents!



**Charlie Gillis**

Hello everyone!  
I was born and raised an Islander in the big city of Kensington, PEI. After graduating high school, I was lucky enough to spend a few years living in Halifax studying philosophy before coming to the realization that my life required a bit more direction. Following this, I completed a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy at MUN in Newfoundland, and subsequently transitioned into studying medicine, also in Newfoundland. While at MUN, I was fortunate enough to work with several Dalhousie

Urology alumni who piqued my interest in both urology as a specialty and the training program in Halifax. I'm thrilled to be able to continue my training on the East Coast with Dalhousie Urology.

Outside of medicine, there is a decent chance you will find me in the gym. I also enjoy reading, playing guitar, travelling, and more recently, snowboarding. For me, doing the national CaRMS elective tour and spending two weeks with Dal Urology confirmed my suspicions that Dal would be an unparalleled place to train, close to home, with

an amazing team and excellent surgical exposure. I'm really looking forward to what the following five years has in store and can't wait to join the team in July!

*Welcome*

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*See us at:*

**Web site address**

**<http://urology.medicine.dal.ca>**

Hi Everyone! My name is Jesse, though most refer to me as "Spoons" or "Spoooner", given my last name of... Spooner. I am a British Columbia boy, born and raised in Campbell River, BC (opposite end of Canada from Halifax). I spent most of my life playing competitive hockey and kept it up through a Microbiology degree at the University of Victoria. I was the guy at the back of the bus studying during long road trips with my team. I may not have been considered the 'coolest' of teammates at these times. After my undergraduate studies, I attended the UBC Island Medical Program in Victoria, BC. As one can see, I have spent my entire life on the West Coast and couldn't be more excited to spend the next 5 years on the East Coast, indulging in that sweet Atlantic lobster.

Outside of medicine and hockey, I have a passion for music and play the guitar and piano. I also spent the past few years training Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and learned that I should highly consider flight instead of fight in any future interactions.

Urology captured my interest during my surgical clerkship. I appreciated it for the breadth of surgical procedures and ability to medically manage patients outside the OR. Urologic medicine is not only extremely enticing, but the people within Urology made my choice to go into this specialty an easy one. I look forward to the next 5 years with a great crew in Halifax!



**Jesse Spooner**