

# PhysioLINK

March 26, 2020

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Chair
- Honours & Awards
- Faculty In the News
- U of T – Karolinska International Exchange Program
- A Physiology First!

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you to all of our faculty, staff, and students for your resilience and compassion during this unprecedented crisis period. The shifts to online course delivery and year end planning have gone smoothly, and your efforts to wind down any non-critical research efforts on very short notice have been commendable. Most of our departmental business operations are now being effectively managed via remote workstations and we are identifying new strategies to make our workflow even more efficient in the future. As we look for ways to adapt to this ever-changing landscape we will be grateful to receive for your comments and suggestions.



Connecting via Zoom!

**Scott P. Heximer, PhD**

Ernest B. and Leonard B. Smith Chair, Department of Physiology

## HONOURS & AWARDS

Congratulations to **Drs. Denise Belsham, Carin Wittnich, Doug Tweed and Nohjin Kee** on receiving an Undergraduate Teaching Award (2019-2020) from the Faculty of Medicine.

- Undergraduate Teaching Award Winner: [Douglas Tweed](#)
- Undergraduate Laboratory Teaching Award Winner: [Nohjin Kee](#)
- Linking Undergraduate Teaching to Research Winner: [Denise Belsham](#)
- Sustained Excellence and Innovation in Life Sciences Education Winner: [Carin Wittnich](#)

The purpose of these awards is to honour outstanding and sustained contributions by faculty members to undergraduate Arts and Science teaching and the undergraduate experience in Life Sciences. The awards carry a cash value of \$1,000 each and will be presented at the Faculty of Medicine Annual Education Achievement Celebration (date: TBA). **It was a clean sweep for Physiology winning ALL CATEGORIES!** [All details here.](#)

Congratulations to **Dr. Anita McGahan** on being one of Five U of T professors recently named University Professors, honoured for their distinguished scholarly achievement and pre-eminence in their fields.



Chancellor Rose Patten, Professor Anita McGahan, President Meric Gertler, Professor Prabhat Jha, Dr. Frances Shepherd, Vice-President and Provost Cheryl Regehr and Professor James Retallack (front). Absent: Elizabeth Edwards. Photo by Nick Iwanyshyn

## FACULTY IN THE NEWS

### Dr. Joe Fisher in the News

March 25, 2020 - *The Bulletin Brief*



Joe Fisher, a U of T professor and staff anesthesiologist at Toronto General Hospital, co-founded Thornhill Medical in 2004. Photo by Nick Iwanyshyn

The U of T research community is responding in a variety of ways to assist in understanding the COVID-19 virus and treating patients. One example is Thornhill Medical, a company founded in 2004 by two U of T researchers – **Dr. Joe Fisher** (Physiology cross-appointee) and Dr. Ludwik Fedorko. The company will be manufacturing a portable ventilator that could help Canadian patients with COVID-19.

Originally developed to treat members of the military who had been critically injured and were in need of transport, the technology will now be used to assist patients who need life support due to the current global pandemic, according to Dr. Joe Fisher.

[Read full story here](#)

\***Dr. Jim Duffin**, Physiology cross-appointee, was also one of the founding group members. [Read all about Thornhill Medical here](#)

## Dr. Michael Tymianski in the News

Feb 21, 2020



Congratulations to **Dr. Michael Tymianski**, Physiology cross-appointee and neurosurgeon and senior scientist at the Toronto Western Hospital's Krembil Research Institute. The Toronto Star featured Dr. Tymianski's recent clinical trial of a drug that could lead to significantly better outcomes for stroke patients. "'To my knowledge, this is the **first time in the history of man** that a trial has shown that (a brain-protecting drug) may improve the functional outcome of people with devastating strokes,' says Dr. Michael Tymianski, who created the compound and has been its staunch and often lonely champion for more than two decades.

'That is **a real scientific milestone**,' says Tymianski.... [Keep reading](#)

## Dr. Phyllis Billia in Toronto Life

Mar 10, 2020



Congratulations to **Dr. Phyllis Billia**, Physiology cross-appointee and Director of Research at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre and Co-Director of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre biobank who was profiled in Toronto Life earlier this month.



"The **motivation behind all of my research are my patients**—those with end-stage heart failure. They are among the sickest and most complex patient populations. My goal is to improve not simply their quantity, but their quality of life. My research is focused on **how we can use regenerated heart cells to help the heart repair itself** following a heart attack...and therefore stop the onset of heart failure."

[Read the whole article here.](#)

## Dr. Ren-Ke Li in the News - Closing the Gap



*New conductive biomaterial helps damaged hearts beat normally by reconnecting healthy tissue.*



*Heart muscle cells known as cardiomyocytes (illustrated above) are responsible for heart contractions. They are arranged side-to-side and are tightly connected to each other.*

Like the arms of spectators rising and falling in unison during a 'stadium wave' at a game, the muscles in the heart contract in unison across the heart. This concerted contraction efficiently pumps blood throughout the body.

However, after a heart attack, regions of the heart can become damaged and lose their ability to contract. “When a heart attack occurs, muscle cells known as cardiomyocytes die in the affected regions,” says Dr. Re-Ke L a Senior Scientist at the Toronto General Hospital Research Institute.

[Read more about this exciting study](#)

## U of T – KAROLINSKA INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

**Drs. Steve Matthews, Steve Lye and Jim Woodgett** met with the new Swedish Ambassador to Canada **Urban Ahlin** (middle left) and **Lars Henriksson** (Honorary Consul General; far left) on March 3, 2020 in Toronto to discuss UofT-Karolinska linkages etc. Great meeting!



## A PHYSIOLOGY FIRST

Congratulations to **Manroop Khroud**, MSc student in Tianru Jin's lab, for successfully defending his MSc thesis defense on March 19<sup>th</sup>. This was the **FIRST COMPLETELY ONLINE** thesis defense in Physiology where all participants were at different locations.

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**Stay well everyone!**

**#weareinthistogether**



Please continue to visit the [central COVID-19 hub for the U of T community](#). The page is frequently updated with the latest relevant information. You can find important messages and answers to commonly asked questions about the coronavirus and its impact on the university.