

ALUMNI REVIEW 2023

LEGACY IN MEDICINE:
FROM STUDENTS TO LEADERS

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ASSOCIATE DEAN'S MESSAGE



Dr. Matthew Sibbald, Associate Dean, UGME

Dear Esteemed Alumni,

I am delighted to provide an update on our UGME program, reflecting on the past year's achievements and future endeavors.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have emerged stronger and more resilient. Our regional approach to education has fostered strong campus connections and collaboration through initiatives like Regional Days, enhancing our students' educational experience.

Social accountability remains a core focus, as we strive to meet the needs of our communities. Through diverse clinical experiences, service-learning initiatives, and admissions initiatives like the Black Equity Stream, we are molding a diverse, compassionate, and socially conscious physicians.

We are dedicated to continuous improvement, undertaking a comprehensive curriculum review. This ensures our students receive the most relevant education. Overall, the curriculum aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for a successful medical career.

Our overarching theme, "Educating and inspiring future physicians to improve health and well-being for all," drives our commitment to nurturing intellectual curiosity, fostering a passion for lifelong learning, and empowering future leaders.

I am immensely proud of our UGME program's achievements and the dedication of our faculty, staff, and students. Thank you for your unwavering support as we shape the future of healthcare through exceptional education and compassionate care.

Dr. Matthew Sibbald

Associate Dean
UGME

ALUMNI STORIES



DR. AMANDA BELL

Regional Assistant Dean, Niagara Regional Campus
Class of 1998

Dr. Amanda Bell is a dedicated professional serving as Regional Assistant Dean at Michael G. DeGroot's School of Medicine, Undergraduate Medical Education Program, Niagara Regional Campus. With a Master's degree in Health Science Education from McMaster, she demonstrates expertise in various areas, including distributed medical education, community-based research systems, and student mistreatment and wellness. Alongside her leadership role, Amanda maintains her clinical practice as a compassionate family physician in a small town community, where she has diligently served for over two decades. Her commitment to education, research, and patient care is truly inspiring.

DR. ARIA FALLAH

Associate Professor, David Geffen School of Medicine
Pediatric Neurosurgeon, Mattel Children's Hospital
Class of 2008

Dr. Aria Fallah is an esteemed pediatric neurosurgeon known for his expertise in the field. He currently practices at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, where he also serves as an associate professor of neurosurgery and pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Aria is internationally recognized for his work in pediatric epilepsy surgery, particularly in hemispherectomies. He has performed over 600 epilepsy operations, achieving remarkable results and improving the lives of countless children. Aria's dedication extends beyond his clinical practice, as he has helped establish epilepsy surgery programs in Shenzhen, China, and India, while also providing volunteer care in Haiti. His contributions and expertise have made a significant impact in the field of pediatric neurosurgery worldwide.





DR. DEBBIE FILEK

Retired Paediatrician
Class of 1983

Dr. Debbie Filek is a highly experienced physician with a notable background in pediatric hematology/oncology. From 1987 to 1994, she dedicated her time to the Haematology/Oncology clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children, where she primarily cared for children with leukemia, sickle cell disease, and other hematological disorders. During her tenure, Debbie played a pivotal role in establishing the Procedures Clinic, which offered children and their families the opportunity to undergo painful procedures under general anesthesia. As the clinic’s first physician, she provided much-needed pain-free treatments, particularly for children undergoing intrathecal chemotherapy and bone marrow aspirates. Her contributions have had a lasting impact, as the clinic continues to operate successfully to this day.

DR. RAJ GREWAL

Emergency Physician, Hamilton Health Sciences
Class of 2003

Dr. Raj Grewal, an emergency physician at Hamilton Health Sciences, emerged as a pivotal figure during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, he co-founded the South Asian Covid Task Force, a grassroots organization aimed at curbing the spread of the virus in the disproportionately affected South Asian community. Recognizing the need for accessible testing centres and vaccine clinics, Raj advocated for culturally appropriate services with multilingual staff to build vaccine confidence. His relentless efforts led to the establishment of one of Canada’s largest testing centres in Peel Region, administering over 100,000 vaccines and saving numerous lives.



DR. DOUG GRUNER

Physician, Bruyere Family Health Team
Class of 1993

Dr. Doug Gruner is an esteemed individual with a remarkable background in humanitarian work and refugee healthcare. In 1999, he played a crucial role in rebuilding the health system in East Timor after a period of violence while working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). With over 25 years of experience working with refugees in Canada, Doug was instrumental in establishing the Ottawa Newcomer Health clinic in 2008. As an associate professor, his research primarily focuses on curriculum development in the field of refugee health. His dedication and expertise have made a significant impact on the lives of refugees and the advancement of healthcare in this specialized area.

DR. ESTHER KONIGSBERG

Owner, Integrative Medicine Physician, Integrative Medicine Consultants, Inc
Class of 1983



Dr. Esther Konigsberg is a respected figure in the field of integrative medicine and health. Since 2007, she has served as McMaster University's Representative at the Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine and Health. Esther's contributions extend beyond her role at McMaster, as she has also chaired the accreditation committee for Integrative Medicine Fellowships under the American Board of Integrative Medicine for three years. Presently, she holds the position of Chair for the Complementary and Integrative Medicine Medical Interest Group at the Ontario Medical Association (OMA). Esther's primary objective is to achieve formal recognition of the field of integrative medicine in Canada.

DR. TOMASZ HRUCZKOWSKI

Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of Alberta
Class of 1998



Dr. Tomasz Hruczkowski, an accomplished individual, graduated in Electrical Engineering from Warsaw University of Technology in 1981. He pursued a Master's degree in Engineering at the University of New Brunswick and joined its Biomedical Engineering Institute. In 1995, he entered McMaster University Medicine program and completed internal medicine residency in 2001. He specialized in cardiology with a residency in Edmonton in 2004. He undertook a Cardiac Electrophysiology Fellowship at Harvard and Brigham and Women's Hospital. In 2006, he joined the University of Alberta's division of Cardiology as a faculty member, bringing diverse expertise to the field of cardiology and medical education.

DR. RICHARD VAN DER JAGT

Adjunct Professor of Medicine, University of Ottawa
Class of 1983



Dr. Richard Van Der Jagt is an accomplished individual in the field of cancer research. He secured a fellowship from the Canadian Cancer Society, allowing him to train at the renowned Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle, which is recognized as the world's largest stem cell transplant center. Afterward, he played a vital role in establishing the stem cell transplant program in Ottawa. Additionally, he founded and chaired the Canadian Leukemia Studies Group (CLSG), a collaborative effort involving 22 centers across Canada and the US, supported by funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

Over the course of his career, he has contributed to numerous published papers and is currently working on developing a national infrastructure to establish links between environmental toxins and adverse health effects, aiming to leverage the data for policy and regulatory changes.

ACCREDITATION

We are thrilled to share the successful completion of our UGME accreditation process. The UGME Accreditation Team, in collaboration with our dedicated faculty, students, and staff, worked diligently to prepare for the review conducted by the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS). Our collective efforts ensured that the highest standards of medical education were upheld throughout the process.

The virtual site visits took place from March 27th to 30th, 2023, allowing the CACMS team to verify and clarify the data compiled in our accreditation submission. Our UGME community demonstrated remarkable commitment and professionalism during these meetings, showcasing our dedication to clinical excellence, innovation, scholarship, leadership, and social accountability.

Following the virtual visits, the CACMS review team conducted an in-person visit on May 9th and 10th, 2023. They had the opportunity to experience our campuses and facilities firsthand, gaining valuable insights and addressing any outstanding questions.

The UGME Accreditation Team played a crucial role in guiding our institution through the rigorous accreditation requirements set by CACMS. Their dedication to excellence and tireless efforts enabled us to showcase the quality and effectiveness of our medical education programs. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our students, faculty, and staff for their thoughtful preparation, and attention to detail throughout this accreditation journey. Their exceptional representation, knowledge, and professionalism played a pivotal role in achieving this significant milestone.

As we move forward, we confidently await the CACMS' accreditation decision on whether we have been accredited for the next eight years.



The Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools Team with UGME Leadership and Class of 2025 Student Tour Guides

CURRICULUM REVIEW

Our medical school curriculum has undergone an extensive review to enhance the learning experience for our students. Here are the key highlights of the improvements made:

The **Introduction to Medicine** is a three-week block that serves as a foundation to problem-based learning (PBL) and a physician's professional roles. A sustained orientation to PBL reaffirms the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine's commitment to this pedagogy and deliberately introduces students to the rationale behind and process of PBL. Likewise, an introduction to the UGME graduating competencies prepares students for the breadth that their professional role will encompass. The Introduction to Medicine focuses on the learning process, communication, professionalism, and wellness, using Respiriology cases to unpack these foundational concepts. The block also includes orientation activities, introducing students to the program and covering administrative matters, and an introduction to clinical skills.



The first day of medical school for the Class of 2025

The pre-clinical portion of the MD program has been re-sequenced such that medical students now learn about all major organ systems in Medical Foundations 1 to 4, before heading into their first summer of elective placements. Medical Foundation 5 has been replaced with an **Integration Foundation** that enables better coverage of complex and chronic health conditions, supports students' integration of multiple aspects of medical practice in preparation for clerkship, and provides a structural mechanism for the repetition and consolidation of key concepts.

The **Transition to Clerkship** (TtC) is a three-week block designed to support students in seamlessly progressing from the Pre-Clerkship curriculum to early Clerkship. TtC includes a range of clinical experiences, including in-person, virtual, and self-directed learning, to ground students in knowledge, skills, and practices that are encountered across multiple core Clerkship rotations.

Transition to Residency is a 16-week block of rotations in IM, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Surgery, and Family Medicine offering students the chance to revisit prior knowledge, skills, and attitudes while challenging themselves in new ways as they prepare for residency. These rotations provide diverse clinical exposures over a two-week period, encompassing inpatient and outpatient experiences, academic and community sites, as well as subspecialty exposure, enabling students to pursue their individual learning objectives.



Kelsey (back left), Class of 2025; Josha (back right), Class of 2023; Chyna (front left), Class of 2026; and Caitlin (front right), Class of 2023; at the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

We are proud of our medical school for taking strides to tackle systemic inequity with the introduction of the Black Equity Stream (BES_t) and evolving Indigenous Health initiatives. However, we recognize that this is just the beginning, and more needs to be done to create safe learning environments and address centuries of trauma perpetuated by academia.

Our dedication to Indigenous Health aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, instilling social accountability in students, faculty, and the community. BES_t, established after extensive collaboration, has seen remarkable success in its inaugural year, granting admission offers to promising applicants.

To build on this success, we must continuously refine and enhance our initiatives. Addressing systemic barriers, like high school streaming and the lack of representation among Black and Indigenous faculty, is vital. By working together with partners, we can create a more equitable and inclusive future for medical education and healthcare.

We eagerly anticipate welcoming BES_t students and Indigenous Health learners to the MD Program in the upcoming fall and beyond. Our journey towards true equity is ongoing, and we remain committed to making lasting change.