Optimal Aging

Focus of study and learning

Alumnus wins an Olympic medal

Doctors write notes of confidence
Message from the Dean and Vice-President

The aging process has long been a focus at the Faculty of Health Sciences. This has ranged from research looking at the basic stem cells of life to mitochondrial dysfunction in aging and from leadership in geriatric medicine to curriculum enhancements.

But a few months ago we received a wonderful gift that is allowing us to consolidate a real focus on healthy aging and to spark collaborations across the University with a focus on improving our knowledge about many aspects of the aging process and making that information widely available.

McMaster alumna Suzanne Labarge provided us a $10-million gift for the Labarge Optimal Aging Initiative which will provide both the Labarge Optimal Aging Opportunities Fund to provide seed funding for important research as well as the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal which will deliver a one-stop, web-based information source for a wide array of information and tools.

We appreciate Ms. Labarge’s visionary leadership, and in this issue of Network, we highlight the inaugural research projects being undertaken in the Faculty of Health Sciences as a result of her initiative.

This issue also examines those other aspects of research and education in aging, including what we hope is a sign of increasing interest in geriatrics training by medical students and residents.

In addition, last fall saw the official launch of the large Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, which intends to study factors influencing the aging process. McMaster is the lead institution for the national project which will involve 50,000 participants.

Within the School of Nursing, we are pleased to announce that Maureen Markle-Reid has been named the Canada Research Chair in Aging, Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Interventions. Her research is expected to inform practice and policy development to provide quality health care services for the elderly population.

As well in this issue we highlight some of the tributes given to faculty members and students. One is Stephanie Ralph, the first graduate of the School of Rehabilitation Science’s Master of Health Management Program. The online program provides health professionals the business skills to succeed in Canada’s health care sector.

The Bachelor of Health Sciences program continues to grow its global health specialization begun five years ago. Enrolment has tripled to 48 students and the program remains a distinct, undergraduate program in North America, focusing on the student experience.

In November, we also had the honour of welcoming Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands who received an honorary degree from our institution for her lifelong dedication to international humanitarian work. While she was present on campus, a memorandum of agreement was signed between McMaster University and Maastricht University of the Netherlands to expand our joint masters program in global health. This partnership promises to be enriching and to provide students with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

We wrapped up last year memorably by breaking ground for McMaster’s $86.5M downtown health campus, which will soon transform health care options in the city, and we welcomed the new year by opening a $1.3-million anatomy laboratory at the Waterloo Regional Campus of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. We are sharing the facility with our colleagues of the University of Waterloo’s School of Pharmacy.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of our most recent developments. It’s only a glimpse of what is a bright future ahead for the McMaster health sciences community.

John G. Kelton, MD
Dean and Vice-President
Faculty of Health Sciences
**Ground broken for McMaster Health Campus**

**A new era of** healthcare for Hamiltonians began in December as ground was broken on McMaster University’s new downtown Health Campus.

The $84.6 million landmark project will see 54,000 patient visits as well as 4,000 McMaster students each year at a state-of-the-art facility at Main and Bay streets. It is to open in 2014.

The 195,000-square-foot LEED certified building is a partnership between the University, the City of Hamilton, and the province.

“This project was created in part to help transform Hamilton’s downtown,” Hamilton Mayor Bob Bratina said.

“Later generations will look back to this time as the catalyst of our city’s rejuvenation.”

The building will be the base for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine’s Department of Family Medicine; the McMaster University School of Nursing’s nurse practitioner program; the McMaster Continuing Health Sciences Education Program and other research programs. It will also host the headquarters for the City of Hamilton’s Public Health Services and public health clinics, and be the site for the Maternity Centre of Hamilton and the Shelter Health Network.

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The Family Health Centre will be located on the third floor of the campus and will provide primary health care to 15,000 Hamiltonians. It will feature:

- Teams of family doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, occupational therapists and physiotherapists all located under one centrally-located roof
- These teams will provide integrated health care to Hamiltonians, with a focus on serving those from the lower city
- A patient-focused design is aimed at ensuring comfort and high quality care
- McMaster students will work side-by-side with health care providers treating patients

**Anatomy lab opens at Waterloo Regional Campus**

**In January,** Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine students at the Waterloo Regional Campus and the University of Waterloo’s pharmacy students began sharing a new, $1.3-million human anatomy lab.

The 3,200 square foot, state-of-the-art laboratory features a high-definition video system allowing the viewing of anatomic specimens captured by HD cameras. These extraordinarily-detailed images are showcased in higher resolution than ever before.

“For the better care of our patients, it’s important that we train health care professionals who appreciate the knowledge and perspectives of the whole health care team, and that starts here,” said John Kelton, dean and vice president, Faculty of Health Sciences and dean of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine at McMaster University.

The lab will be used by the 84 students in the Kitchener medical campus, the 40 medical residents in family medicine, psychiatry, internal medicine and pediatrics. There are about 120 students at Waterloo’s School of Pharmacy who will use the lab. The school has 467 students.

For students, the new anatomy lab means they can attend all classes at the downtown campus.

Bruce Wainman, director of anatomy for the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, shows a specimen to guests at the opening of the new anatomy lab.
Research chair focuses on novel cancer drugs

For Paola Muti, the question of how to avoid cancer is a serious one.

It’s what the oncology professor is exploring as the inaugural holder of the ArcelorMittal Dofasco Chair in Experimental Cancer Therapeutics. Her research focuses on chemoprevention, which investigates the potential for agents, including vitamins and drugs both old and new, to prevent cancer.

At the recent announcement, ArcelorMittal Dofasco President and CEO Juergen Schachler said the position is an investment in global health, as well as in the Hamilton community.

“Through the research chair, we expect that cancer prevention will become a wider topic of conversation, and that the Escarpment Cancer Research Institute and its scientists will make Hamilton an even more accomplished centre of excellence for both the prevention and treatment of cancers,” he said.

“With Paola Muti as our new Chair, we know that this research will help to push and direct the global discussion from right here, in Hamilton.”

Muti said she appreciates the “openness” with which McMaster, ArcelorMittal Dofasco and Hamilton Health Sciences officials have been welcoming her approach to treating a disease that killed almost 76,000 Canadians in 2012.

“McMaster University, with its innovative approach to research and gold standard for research methodology, is the most suitable environment for successful cancer prevention research,” she said.

Muti was the scientific director of the Italian National Cancer Institute Regina Elena in Rome, Italy, and adjunct professor of epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health.

The ArcelorMittal Dofasco Chair in Experimental Therapeutics is supported by a $1-million gift from ArcelorMittal Dofasco through the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation, matched with funds from McMaster’s Michael G. DeGroote Health Sciences Development Fund.

Major grant for cancer screening promotion

Low-income residents may have never been screened for cancer.

To target this group, Olive Wahoush, assistant professor with the School of Nursing, and a team of nurses with the Hamilton Public Health Services have received nearly $1 million from the Public Health Agency of Canada. They are using the funds for the Creating Access to Screening and Training in the Living Environment (CASTLE) project, which promotes breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening to residents of low-income housing communities.

The community residents include Aboriginal people, the disabled, newcomers to Canada, seniors and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

“Cancer screening is probably not the first thing on their mind when it comes to their health,” said Angela Frisina, a co-principal investigator on the project and a clinical lecturer with the nursing school. “It’s how do I get food on the table? Do I need to take time off work? Who will take care of my family?”

Frisina said since low-income populations tend to be underscreened, cancer is often diagnosed too late.

The project is in partnership with the public health units from Halton, Niagara, Haldimand-Norfolk and Brant County, along with Brock University. Hamilton is the pilot site, with the project expanding into Halton, Niagara, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant County and Aboriginal communities in the area.

The project is to be completed by March 2014.

“We want to see what works best to promote cancer screening in communities like these across Canada,” Wahoush said. “It’s not just that they become aware, but that they actually take action and get screened.”
Three professors emeriti at McMaster University have published books on understanding the science of breathing, ideas formed during the age of science and the rewards of teaching.

Norman Jones, the first head of McMaster’s Division of Respirology and professor emeritus of medicine, has written *The Ins and Outs of Breathing*, exploring respirology through exciting physical adventures, such as expeditions to Mount Everest where climbers must contend with low levels of oxygen.

Barb Mueller, a Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine founder, its first chair of surgery and now professor emeritus, has authored *Excalibur: The Sword of Science That Reshaped the World*. Mueller explores the development of science as a cultural phenomenon that began in a climate of opposition and now dominates many features of our daily lives.

Patangi (Chari) Rangachari, who has been involved in all aspects of McMaster’s undergraduate medical program and is now professor emeritus, has co-authored *Students Matter: The Rewards of University Teaching*. It shares the journey of renowned biomedical scientists/educators who taught university students.
Happy gene cuts down risk of depression

McMaster University researchers have discovered new genetic evidence why some people are happier than others. The gene FTO, contributing to obesity, is associated with an eight per cent reduction in the risk of depression. It challenges the common perception that obese people become depressed because of their appearance and social and economic discrimination and that depressed individuals may lead less active lifestyles to cope with depression causing them to become obese. The study by David Meyre, associate professor in clinical epidemiology and biostatistics, and Zena Samaan, assistant professor in psychiatry and behavioural neuro-sciences, was published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

Alcohol risks

Moderate alcohol consumption increases the risk of atrial fibrillation, an irregular heartbeat, in older people with heart disease or advanced diabetes, say McMaster researchers. Koon Teo, professor of medicine, measured moderate drinking as one to 14 drinks a week for women and one to 21 drinks a week for men. The study was published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

Wealthy = Healthy

Healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, proteins and total fats are consumed more often by the wealthy while poorer people consume more carbohydrates, says a report of the Population Health Research Institute. Principal investigator and professor Salim Yusuf said policies to prevent cardiovascular disease need to focus on different aspects of lifestyle among the rich versus the poor and between rich and poor countries. The study involving 154,000 individuals from 628 communities was presented at the European Society of Cardiology 2012 Congress in August.

Pro-probiotics

C. difficile (Clostridium difficile)-associated diarrhea among hospitalized patients taking antibiotics can be reduced by two-thirds with the use of probiotics, says research by Bradley Johnston, assistant professor in clinical epidemiology and biostatistics. The results suggest therapeutic probiotic agents, as well as some yogurts and probiotic dairy products, may be vastly under-used in some nursing homes and hospitals. The study was published in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine.

Diabetes guidelines

Routine screening for diabetes in adults of low and moderate risk is not recommended, but it is recommended for those at high and very high risk of developing the condition, state new Canadian diabetes screening guidelines published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. The recommendations were released by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, following a review led by assistant professor of nursing Diana Sherifali. The guidelines also suggest using a web-based risk calculator and then based on the predicted risk of diabetes, using the non-fasting A1C blood test to screen.

Virus immunity

Our immune system does not shut down with age, say McMaster researchers. A specialized class of immune cells, known as T cells, can respond to virus infections in an older person with the same vigour as T cells from a young person. Pathology professor Jonathan Bramson said individuals, younger than 40, between 41 to 59 years of age and older than 60, were infected with three different viruses and the older group demonstrated perfectly normal immune responses. The study was published in PLOS Pathogens.

Heart health

A heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables and fish significantly reduces the chance of a second heart attack and stroke in people with cardiovascular disease. McMaster researchers, including lead study author Mahshid Dehghan, studied nearly 32,000 patients in 40 countries and found those who ate a heart-healthy diet saw a “consistent benefit” over and above the benefits of taking medications to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. The study was published in the American Heart Association Rapid Access Journal.

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First year students of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine crossed the stage in September to receive their white clerk’s jacket and be welcomed into the profession of medicine. When they returned to their seat, they found something tucked into the pocket of their jacket — a handwritten note to them from a graduate of the medical school. This year for the first time, alumni were asked if they would like to write a note to a beginning student. Many were delighted to respond, enough that each of the 205 new medical students received a different note. Many of the notes offered encouragement as well as practical advice. Although the alumni were given no direction on what to write, many told the students to work hard, think independently, look after themselves, have interests outside medicine and to have fun. They warned there will be tears and laughter, but that the McMaster approach to medical education will support them throughout their careers.

Rob Whyte, assistant dean of the undergraduate program and a 1997 graduate of the school himself, said the notes were a marvelous idea. “For 40 years graduates from McMaster’s medical school have experienced one of the most innovative medical programs in the world, but its relatively unstructured curriculum can create as much uncertainty as freedom. The certainty expressed by our alumni physicians will provide students well-earned confidence in their future success.”

Perry Guo, a first year medical student and president of the Class of 2015, said the students will appreciate the notes and he expects many will keep them close to be re-read often. “It’s easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of school,” he said. “These words of wisdom from our alumni, who have been through it all, are very heartening.”

Plans are being made to add the program for future first-year students.

Excerpts from the Doc’s notes:

**Mark J. Magenheim**, a graduate of 1974 now based in Florida, said: “I have been fortunate to have travelled the world practising ‘the McMaster Way’. You will also appreciate the way of learning, and the great resources available to you will ensure you emerge as a competent, compassionate and caring physician. Relish the experiences that await.”

**Paul Labrecque**, a 1995 grad and family physician in Calgary, wrote: “Remember to balance your life with interests outside of medicine and academia. I highly value my training at McMaster: It has led me to an enriching career.”

**Amanda Bell**, ’98, a family physician in Port Colborne, had this advice: “Eat, sleep and use the bathroom whenever you have the opportunity. Surround yourself with the positive energy and love of those that matter to you. Respect your patients, your teachers and expect respect in return.”

**Achilles Thoma**, ’76, a plastic surgeon in Hamilton, gave specific advice on time management and study habits, adding: “Listen more to what others have to say and speak less. When you speak, make sure your words are sensible and useful to others.”

**Lyndsay Rein Evans**, ’11, a family medicine resident in Kitchener, said: “Don’t forget to think — independent thought is what got you into medical school. Make sleep a priority. Be kind to allied health professionals — always.”

**Rebecca Anglin**, ’05, a Hamilton psychiatrist, said time will fly by: “Perhaps the greatest lesson I was taught as a student of medicine was to always remain intellectually curious and committed to understanding each patient.”

**Dawn Davies**, ’93, a pediatrician in Edmonton, had this advice: “Keep grounded in non-medical friendships. Know your neighbours. There is a whole world out there with no pathology!”
Universities expand joint graduate programs

Maastricht University of the Netherlands and McMaster University are expanding their joint graduate programs in global health.

Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, honorary chair of the global health program’s advisory board, and her country’s ambassador to Canada, Wim Geerts, were at McMaster in November to witness the signing of the memorandum of agreement by University president Patrick Deane and Gerard Mols, the former rector magnificus of Maastricht University.

“Because of the partnership between McMaster and Maastricht universities, the global health program becomes a really worldwide experience, providing students the opportunity to work in international, multicultural and interdisciplinary teams,” Mols said.

The two universities have a joint Master of Science Program in Global Health which has produced 122 graduates since beginning in 2010. These graduates are now working for agencies like the Red Cross, and in pharmacy, public health departments, and federal and provincial governments.

During the one-year program, students at the two universities work together remotely, have the option of studying at the other partner university as well as spend time working in a developing country and meet at a combined symposium. The current master’s program has 44 students at McMaster and 50 students at Maastricht.

The new agreement lengthens the partnership for five years.

Kit prepares disabled teens for adult life

Youth with disabilities say transitioning from pediatric to adult health care and community services is like falling off a cliff.

Researchers at McMaster University’s CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research recognize that gap and are helping bridge it through development of the Youth K.I.T. (Keeping It Together) of information. This free, online resource was developed to prepare disabled teens in the transition to adult life.

The project was done in collaboration with the Hamilton Family Network. Matt Freeman, a CanChild researcher who himself has cerebral palsy, worked on a team to develop the Youth K.I.T.

The information includes managing medication, identifying special needs, and guidance for social activities like throwing a party, planning post-secondary education and landing a job.

Thirty-six participants, from the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, between the ages of 14 to 21 with different disabilities have trialed the kits.

“We found the K.I.T. allows youth to give, receive and organize information about themselves,” said Freeman, who is also a McMaster PhD student. “It gives them a way to set goals and helps them tell their own story.”

The Youth K.I.T. has been made available for download through funding from the Hamilton District Society for Disabled Children. It is available on CanChild’s website.
When in doubt, sit them out

Ten-year-old Owen Turner was playing competitive hockey before Christmas when he ran head-on into another player, landing hard on his head. He came out of the dressing room complaining of a headache, dizziness, and nausea.

Later that evening, Owen was sensitive to noise and light and complained that he was not able to think. His mother Laura Turner saw he was extremely fatigued and “really not himself.”

Once home she went online to the child concussion guidelines of McMaster University’s CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research and matched his symptoms. Monitoring him for red flag symptoms overnight, a visit to the family doctor the next day found them following CanChild’s new guidelines for children with concussions.

Owen had no television, computers or books the first week. “We took all the books on CD from the library,” said his mom, then the second week he was recovered enough to be back at school half-days and having short visits for board games with his friends.

Turner, a New Hamburg occupational therapist, shared the guidelines with her son so they could follow the plan together, and she shared the guidelines with Owen’s coach and teachers.

“They [the guidelines] are user-friendly and provide a high-quality source of information,” she said. “It was really key for me to have the information to fall back on.”

The guidelines for children with concussions were recently developed by a team of CanChild researchers headed by Carol DeMatteo, an associate clinical professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science.

Children with brain injuries often head back on the ice or field much too soon, when their brains haven’t healed enough, she said, adding that as a result many children have prolonged symptoms and are vulnerable to a second injury.

She said previous research showed how little was understood about concussions in children, so her team developed the guidelines specifically designed for children from an international protocol for adults with concussion.

Depending on the symptoms and speed of recovery, the CanChild guidelines begin with no activity and complete rest before light exercise, then individual sport-specific activity, followed by sport-specific practice with the team without contact and sport-specific practice with the team and contact, before finally returning to activity, sport or game play. For returning to school, the guidelines begin with complete brain rest followed by gentle activity, then heading back to school with modified academics, before returning to nearly normal routine but with only a maximum of one test per week and then gradually returning to normal routines.

The guidelines are available on the CanChild website.

Student gets taste for international work

Following a clinical placement in Zambia, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, McMaster nursing student Hannah Bell reflects on the experience that’s pointed her towards future international work.

“This was really just a way to get a taste of if it’s something I want to do long term, and, it definitely is,” Bell said.

The School of Nursing’s global health professional practice placements offer senior-year students a unique opportunity to learn about the broad determinants of the health of diverse populations, comparative health care systems and the role of the nurse in cross-cultural and resource-constrained environments.

Bell was one of 20 nursing students who spent 10 to 12 weeks in 2012 developing nursing skills and knowledge in a different part of the world; places like India, Kenya, Nepal, Thailand and Nicaragua.

Since 1984, over 240 McMaster students have undertaken international or Canadian outpost placements in more than 25 countries worldwide and in six provinces and three northern territories in Canada.

Bell completed her placement at the Macha Mission Hospital in Zambia from Sept. 1 to Nov. 12, 2012. She practiced in pediatrics, the operating room, maternity, an HIV clinic, and community nursing.

“I strengthened a lot of my skills. You were the one there who had to do it all, from inserting nasogastric tubes for malnourished children, to providing medications,” Bell said.

“It heightens your creativity as a nurse,” she added.
Canada is aging. In 2011, the first of the baby boom generation turned 65. Between 2005 and 2036, the population of Canadian seniors — those older than 65 — is expected to jump from 4.2 million to 9.8 million.

The aging population will experience a variety of challenges and Suzanne Labarge wants to ensure that healthy aging becomes a focus of study and conversation. The McMaster University graduate has provided $10 million to create the Labarge Optimal Aging Initiative at McMaster. Her gift is sponsoring interdisciplinary research and a website portal on optimal aging to provide evidence-based, accessible information for the public as well as health care professionals, public health practitioners, researchers and policymakers. Through this gift, McMaster intends to become Canada’s authoritative voice on aging.

“Aging is a huge issue for this society, and it needs to be addressed,” said Suzanne Labarge, at a celebration of her gift in September.

“I’m confident that McMaster, with its multidisciplinary approach and focus on evidence-based medicine, is the best place to pull it all together and advance both the knowledge and the response to the needs of our aging population.”

The Labarge Optimal Aging Opportunities Fund is providing seed funding for research aimed at minimizing risk and maximizing resilience, with an initial focus on supporting mobility, slowing chronic disease and tackling deadly infections. The first set of new McMaster research projects in these areas will include researchers in the faculties of health sciences, science and engineering.

These researchers are currently in the beginning stages of their work: recruiting subjects, collecting preliminary data and connecting with other partners. One of the researchers is associate professor of nursing Maureen Markle-Reid. She is also the Canada Research Chair in Aging, Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Interventions, whose work intends to enhance the quality of life of community-residing older adults with or at risk for multiple chronic conditions and their family caregivers, to reduce demand for health services.

“The (Labarge Optimal Aging) initiative allows prominent researchers at McMaster to focus their research more closely on the aging population,” said Susan Denburg, associate vice-president, academic for the Faculty of Health Sciences and university lead for the initiative. “The gift seeds multiple research projects focusing on areas of relevance to seniors, creating incubators for interdisciplinary innovation.”

Work is also being done to merge various health-related databases for the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal, a website designed as a one-stop information source for a variety of stakeholders, housing the trusted information on optimal aging. The initiative will also create opportunities for dialogue and debate about existing and emerging issues relevant to the older adults of Canada.

The information on the portal is vetted by subject experts, evaluated for quality and links the user to related resources and services relevant to their inquiry.

Labarge, who retired as vice-chairman and chief risk officer of the Royal Bank in 2004, also held several senior positions with the federal government. Labarge received her economics degree from McMaster in 1967. She said she was inspired to donate the funds by her mother, who aged well and lived independently until she turned 93.
The first round of research grants has been awarded to an interdisciplinary group of McMaster researchers who will begin research projects that focus on issues of healthy aging. Highlights of the projects from within health sciences include:

Monitoring function in people aging with and without chronic illnesses is the focus of research by Julie Richardson, physiotherapist and professor, and Lori Letts, occupational therapist and associate professor, both of the School of Rehabilitation Science.

Richardson said that the study involves adults over 44 years of age who will complete online assessments on how they manage daily activities like bathing and climbing stairs.

The aim is to detect early changes in physical functioning that might be pre-clinical indicators of disability. Patients and their physicians will be able to view and monitor their results online and receive personalized therapy consultations on how to stay active, healthy, and independent.

A trial on the effectiveness of seniors’ use of probiotics for protection from respiratory infections is being conducted by Dawn Bowdish, assistant professor, along with a team of researchers, including professor Mark Loeb, both in pathology and molecular medicine.

“There is some evidence that probiotics may have some immune-boosting powers or function and might help the elderly fight infections better,” Bowdish said, adding for example, that influenza is the third most common killer of elderly women and the fifth most common killer of elderly men.

The pilot project, involving about 200 seniors, will provide some subjects a daily intake of probiotics, and others a placebo.

Evaluating an interprofessional community-based diabetes intervention and identifying gaps in service delivery for seniors with Type 2 diabetes who have multiple chronic conditions is a research focus for Maureen Markle-Reid, associate professor of nursing and Canada Research Chair in Aging, Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Interventions.

These community-living older adults are at higher risk for developing diabetes-related complications and using health services. In partnership with a diabetes clinic and a community senior centre, 50 seniors will participate in a program for six months that involves group-based exercise, a meal, diabetes education and internet-based support to support self-management as well as home visits by a nurse and a dietician.

The intervention is designed to address barriers to optimal diabetes care in this population, such as social isolation and reduced access to health and community services.

A study on how yoga can help older women with arthritis is being conducted by Monica Maly, a physiotherapist and biomechanist at the School of Rehabilitation Science.

Maly is evaluating the load experienced by the knee in different types of exercise to create an exercise program that is safe. Her first study, using funds from the Labarge gift, seeks out different yoga postures that will strengthen the muscles without overloading the knee. Her second study tests the effectiveness of the exercise program.

Previous research by Sonia Anand found that a diet high in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of heart disease in adults with genetic predispositions to the condition.

Anand, along with postdoctoral fellow Russell de Souza, have now set up an intervention study to examine how the genes of seniors and non-senior adults respond to dietary changes. For two weeks, individuals are provided either a Western diet, made up of highly processed foods; or a prudent diet: emphasizing fruits and vegetables and whole grain foods.

The participants are then measured for established heart disease risk factors, such as cholesterol and blood pressure and markers of inflammation and gene expression. Data gathering is wrapping up and analysis of the data is set to begin.

How to keep seniors driving safely is a concern of Brenda Vrkljan, associate professor in occupational therapy.

“We need to think about how we can better design our environment for older adults,” she said.

Her work looks at how older adults interact with their vehicles: how they transfer in and out of the vehicle, how they feel when seated inside, their reach and ability to process information. The study involves about 50 older adults with different levels of mobility. She hopes recommendations for an improved vehicle design will be one of the results.
Geriatrics is getting a second look from future medical professionals.

An aging population and increasing career options are causing some medical students and residents to consider exploring opportunities in the field at McMaster University.

Justin Lee, an internal medicine resident at McMaster will start his two years of geriatric training in July. Brighter career prospects and a geriatric rotation during his residency made him decide he wants to work with the elderly.

“You can make small and large differences in their lives and help them continue to live with a certain quality of life and function in the community,” he said.

Geriatric medicine often focuses on caring for the elderly, many of whom may be frail and have cognitive impairment or decline in function.

Traditionally, geriatrics has been one of the least popular electives in medical school and subspecialties in post-graduate training, but academics in geriatric medicine at McMaster are hopeful they are seeing a turnaround.

“I am an eternal optimist and I think that things will be changing for the better,” said Tricia Woo, associate professor in the Division of Geriatric Medicine. “I think the people involved in teaching geriatrics and the curriculum, across all the different health-care specialties, are becoming more innovative and looking for new avenues to deliver the material.”

Joye St. Onge, associate professor of medicine and the geriatric medicine residency program director at McMaster, said it was challenging to provide geriatrics clinical rotations when McMaster made it mandatory in the medical school curriculum. Due to the historical level of low interest, there were never enough geriatricians to place all the students.

However, St. Onge said there will be four internal medicine residents starting in geriatrics this summer compared to the previous years when there was only one geriatric resident per year.

Meanwhile, Woo said nearly five years ago she was approached by medical students to start a geriatrics interest group. The group now organizes interdisciplinary geriatric skills days which pools resources and students from the undergraduate medical program, nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy to learn about various geriatric topics.

There are now 13 student groups across the country, which has led to the creation of a national group.

“I’ve been working for about seven years now, and nobody came knocking on my door,” Woo said. “Now they are coming knocking on my door.”

Marisa Rossi, former vice-president of education for the National Geriatrics Interest Group and a member of the local geriatrics interest group, said she finds geriatric medicine quite interesting.

“Geriatric patients tend to be quite complex and often have changing and evolving goals of care. To address these goals of care, the management of these patients lends itself well to interdisciplinary teams,” Rossi said. “Working with other allied health professionals is something I really enjoy.”

She plans to pursue family medicine.
Canada’s largest and most comprehensive study on health and aging held its grand opening and showcase this past September at McMaster University. The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) will follow 50,000 men and women between the ages of 45 and 85 over a 20-year period to uncover the factors that influence the aging process.

The study welcomed national and international researchers and policy-makers to the ribbon cutting at its McMaster home base which features a data collection site, biobank and the CLSA National Coordinating Centre.

The CLSA is collecting information on the changing biological, medical, psychological, social, lifestyle and economic aspects of people’s lives as they age. “By studying aging as a process – and looking at the various trajectories of aging – we can begin to understand why some people age in a healthy way and why others do not,” said Parminder Raina, lead principal investigator and professor in the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McMaster University.

Participants in the CLSA are recruited at random and take part in either a telephone interview, or a home interview and a visit to a data collection site. Currently, 10 of the 11 data collection sites are active and welcoming participants. As of February 2013, the CLSA has recruited over 20,000 participants.

The CLSA team consists of more than 160 researchers and collaborators from across the country. The first wave of data from the telephone interviews will be available to the research community by early 2014. For more information, visit www.clsa-elcv.ca.

“IT can kind of skew your thinking,” Lee said.

Emili said that within family medicine they are working on portraying more positive images of the field. The residents are exposed to long-term care rotations, so they can see the elderly living in that environment. She has two incoming residents in July, double the number from recent years.

St. Onge said the increased interest may be due to concerns about job prospects. She said in recent rounds of interviews, she has had a lot more questions about job opportunities.

“Now people are realizing that as a geriatrician, you are never going to be out of work,” she said. “The need is endless.”

St. Onge said she’s just crossing her fingers that this increased interest in the field isn’t just a blip.

“It is not glamorous,” she said. “It is not ER. It is not as exciting or procedural as other specialities so I think it attracts a special type of person who has patience and likes complexity and likes challenge.”

Aging study launched at McMaster

The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) hosted its first CIHR Café Scientifique — Use it or Lose it: Secrets of a Healthy Brain – in January in Hamilton. The event featured Parminder Raina, CLSA lead principal investigator, and a panel of experts in the field of aging: Allison Sekuler and Christopher Patterson of McMaster University and Kathy Pichora-Fuller of the University of Toronto Mississauga.

Here are some tips offered by the experts on how to maintain brain function and protect against decline:

• **Engage your mind.** It is possible to train our brains to improve at any age. Keep pushing your brain to the limit.

• **Healthy eating.** Research shows that a Mediterranean diet may work well to prevent age-related cognitive decline. More research is needed.

• **Stay active.** It’s never too late to get fit. Even people with memory changes can slow the decline with physical activity.

• **Reduce stress.** Research shows that those in less stressful environments have increased cognitive ability.

• **Get lots of rest.** Seven or eight hours a night is the optimal amount.
Global health specialization focuses on student experience

Five years ago, students in the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) program asked a simple question: Why isn’t there an opportunity to learn about global health?

Out of their probing developed the B.H.Sc. global health specialization which remains the only undergraduate program of its kind in North America.

Traditionally, undergraduate programs in global health parachute students into a foreign country for a week or two during reading week or summer holidays. McMaster’s program requires a four-month commitment from students in which they immerse themselves in another culture, developing sustainable relationships with organizations – either in Canada or around the globe.

“The primary focus is on the student experience within the context of these organizations,” said Del Harnish, assistant dean of the Bachelor of Health Sciences program.

Forty-five students are currently enrolled in the program – triple the initial 15. In second year, students explore other cultures and potential locations for an extended learning experience, assess their own values and what they want to accomplish. The course is linked to a traditional academic course on such topics as the social determinants of health, Harnish said.

In third year, students leave from September to December and the most recent group travelled to India, Palestine and Africa. Once back home, they undergo a debriefing in which they organize their experience in the context of what they might like to do next.

For Narmeen Haider, the global health specialization helped her build relationships with people passionate about global health issues; created opportunities and gave her tools to pursue her goals. She went on to earn a Master of Science in International Health Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She now works as project manager for the Health Impact Fund.

Sheiry Dhillon, now at The University of Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship, said the semester she spent in India for her “embedded learning experience” was “eye-opening” and a unique learning opportunity not available in a classroom.

Physiotherapists

Cathy Hoyles and Caroline Gill work almost half a continent apart – one in St. John’s, Newfoundland, the other in Hamilton – yet both are honing their business management skills in McMaster University’s Master of Health Management (MHM) program.

Currently, 79 health professionals from across Canada are enrolled in this online, 32-month interdisciplinary program between the School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS) and the DeGroote School of Business which includes two intensive residencies: one at the beginning and the second towards the end of the program.

It began in the fall of 2010 with 18 students; another 31 students were admitted in 2011 and a further 48 students entered this academic year – all progressing through the program at different levels. The first class will graduate this spring.

A broad range of health professionals are enrolled: technologists, speech language pathologists, psychologists, physicians, nurses, surgeons, dietitians, dental hygienists, chiropractors, kinesiologists and social workers. Most work in hospitals and clinics. While they have the necessary skills to deal with patients, they are at a point in their professional careers where they are looking to, or being promoted to, areas of leadership or management.

“They know how to deal with a client but not a spreadsheet,” said Michelle Benjamin, program manager. “This program provides them with foundations to enhance their skills in business areas where they are taking on management roles.”

Gill values the knowledge she has gained. “There is the access to current literature, the critical thinking involved, the discipline of writing and meeting deadlines and last, but not least, the relationships/friendships made across so many disciplines.”

Hoyles agrees. “Essentially, this program prepares you to ‘walk through doors that may open in the future.’”
Faculty members honoured with prestigious awards

Mohit Bhandari, professor of surgery, has been recognized by three plastic surgery associations for his "unparalleled and transformational contributions to the entire specialty of plastic surgery." He was given an award of outstanding merit by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery Inc., the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Bhandari also received the Canadian Orthopaedic Association’s Award of Merit. He was recognized for his many years of outstanding service to the orthopaedic profession and to Canadians in raising the standards of orthopaedic care.

Murray Enkin, a professor emeritus of obstetrics and gynecology and clinical epidemiology and biostatistics, is now a member of the Order of Canada for his contributions to maternal care and the development of midwifery as a recognized profession in Canada.

Enkin, who graduated from the University of Toronto in 1947, joined McMaster’s medical school after its founding, and became renowned for his focus on the patient perspective in medical practice, especially in family-centred maternity. He led McMaster to establish Canada’s first midwifery program.

Enkin said a lot of the credit goes to McMaster. He said he chose to practise in Hamilton precisely because it was close to a big city but it didn’t have a medical school “because I was tired of academia. Then the medical school started, and it was so innovative and exciting, I had to jump right in.”

Nursing professor Gina Browne has been honoured with the 2013 Canada Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) Excellence through Evidence Award.

The annual award recognizes a health services leader who has implemented evidence-informed innovations in care and service delivery.

Browne has spent her career at McMaster conducting research in chronic illness and service utilization; in developing researchers and research participants; and in linking and coordinating clinical and research initiatives.

Browne said she was especially delighted to be able to apply the award’s honorarium to her current project involving children and youth who learn in different ways compared to mainstream youth.

“This is the first step in a mental health promotion strategy and not a treatment approach,” she said. “It uses a variety of arts studios — music, dance, computer, literary and visual arts, and others — to help youth find their passion and the spark that ignites their enthusiasm for learning, self-esteem and life skills.”

A discovery by Mick Bhatia has been selected as one of the top 10 significant cancer research breakthroughs of 2012 by the Canadian Cancer Society. Bhatia, director and senior scientist of the Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute (SCC-RI), found the antipsychotic drug, thioridazine, kills cancer stem cells responsible for initiating leukemia without harming normal stem cells.

The cancer society selected the top 10 cancer research highlights to shine a light on the life-saving and life-enhancing potential of cancer research.

Hertzel Gerstein, professor of medicine and clinical epidemiology and biostatistics, received the Canadian Diabetes Association’s 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award is given to a prominent Canadian physician or medical scientist who is a leader in diabetes research and has made longstanding contributions to the Canadian diabetes community.

He was the principal investigator on the ORIGIN Trial, which discovered long-term insulin use does not harm people with diabetes or pre-diabetes or put them at risk of heart attacks, strokes or cancer.

Amanda MacLennan, an assistant clinical professor of family medicine, received the Elizabeth J. Latimer Prize in Palliative Care. The award is named in honour of Canadian pioneering palliative care physician and educator Dr. Elizabeth Latimer, a professor emeritus of McMaster’s Department of Family Medicine who died last year.

MacLennan entered the field of oncology in 1989. She has been working in Canada for 15 years in different community and palliative care settings, including Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, the Halton Community Care Access Centre, the Brampton Civic Hospital and the Brameast Family Practice Group.

She is recognized as a leader in improving palliative care by bringing together clinical leaders in various disciplines to integrate palliative care throughout the health care system.
Gérard Simon, a professor emeritus in pathology and molecular medicine, who spearheaded the electron microscopy laboratories of the Faculty of Health Sciences and became chairman of anatomical pathology for the laboratory medicine program, died in January at the age of 82.

He started his work in Switzerland, at the University of Geneva, organizing the first electron microscopy laboratory for the pathology department. He came to Canada with his family in 1967 and worked at the Banting Institute in Toronto, where he became head of the Electron Microscopy Department.

In 1979, he took over the direction of the electron microscopy laboratories of the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University in Hamilton and became chairman of anatomical pathology for the laboratory medicine program in Hamilton. He was a founding member of and major contributor to the Microscopical Society of Canada.

Gilbert Simon

Famed MD grad and early learning expert dies

Clyde Hertzman, MD ’79, who was an expert in early learning, died suddenly at age 59 in February.

He was recently awarded the Order of Canada for the central role he played in creating a framework linking population health to human development, and emphasizing the special role of early childhood development as a determinant of health. He had three degrees and his residency in community medicine from McMaster University.

He was director of the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia, and a professor at UBC’s School of Population and Public Health which he joined in 1985.

“His wonderful ability to energize and excite so many people in different walks of life was electric,” said Jean Clinton, McMaster associate professor of psychiatry and a colleague of Hertzman. “He was a man with pristine academic thinking. He changed the way we view how children grow and are affected by the world around them. Even with all his accolades, he was a wonderful, humble man who took great delight in his friends and colleagues.”

Hertzman had wanted to establish a legacy at McMaster for his MD class, and had taken on a leadership role in helping to plan his class reunion which will be held on May 31 in Victoria, B.C.
1970s

**Pat Morden, BScN ’74**

For 37 years, Pat Morden worked in a variety of roles in Hamilton, including front-line nurse, a director of resident care at the Brownstone Nursing Home and as chief executive officer of Shalom Village. Morden also led the Long-Term Care Network Council and was a member of different boards, such as the Ontario Long-Term Care Association and the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington. She remains an associate clinical professor in nursing at McMaster and was the recipient of the 2009 John C. Sibley award. In 2011, she moved to the Town of Durham to start her own company, StoneHill Farm Growing Leadership, providing executive development and leadership coaching to different organizations.

1980s

**Richard Tytus, MD ’80**

After graduating from McMaster’s medical school, Richard Tytus finished an anaesthesia residency at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton and then decided to take a break from his residency to head up to Blind River as a general practitioner anaesthetist for five years. Tytus returned to Hamilton in 1987 to practise family medicine. Tytus was honoured as one of seven Ontario doctors named Family Physician of the Year by the Ontario College of Family Physicians in 2012. He is now an associate professor in family medicine at McMaster and sits on the Ontario Medical Association board. He is also board chair of Ontario MD.

1990s

**Robert McCall, B.H.Sc. (PT) ’93**

Robert McCall went on to start up Norwich Family Fitness and Norwich Rehabilitation and Wellness Clinic in Norwich. Between 2003 to 2006, he also instructed physicians and physiotherapists in Bosnia with the International Centre for the Advancement of Community-Based Rehabilitation at Queen’s University. In 2008, he completed a fellowship in manipulative therapy from the Canadian Academy of Manipulative Therapy and received his masters of clinical science in manipulative therapy from the University of Western Ontario. In addition to the business in Norwich, McCall is now co-owner of Highland Physiotherapy & Associates in Dundas and Essential Physiotherapy & Wellness in Brantford. All three businesses specialize in orthopedics and manual therapy.

**Julie Wilson (née Hill), B.H.Sc. (Midwifery) ’98**

Julie Wilson is the supervisor of the Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratsa Onagrahsa’ Birth Centre at Six Nations. Upon graduating, she worked for about six months with the Hamilton Midwives and returned in 1999 to Six Nations, where she was raised. She developed a training program for Aboriginal midwives, incorporating Aboriginal birthing practices and traditional medicine. In 2007, she became the supervisor of the centre, used by about 100 Aboriginal women every year. The centre also hosts traditional medicine workshops and Women’s Wellness Days.

2000s

**Sean Park, B.H.Sc. ‘04**

Sean Park is a faculty member at Kwantlen University in Surrey, B.C., teaching interdisciplinary expressive arts and he is a doctoral candidate at Simon Fraser University. Upon graduating from McMaster, he obtained a masters in education at the University of Toronto and travelled India for six months. He returned to Toronto to work with the Ontario Association of Food Banks, creating partnerships with universities and developing poverty education curriculum for the association. Park also taught courses from 2005 to 2008 in the B.H.Sc. program at McMaster and was a recipient of the 2005 President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching.

2010s

**Melinda Yeung, B.H.Sc. (Physician Assistant) ’11**

Before entering McMaster’s Physician Assistant (PA) program, Melinda Yeung observed PAs in action at Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, since it was a relatively new profession in Ontario. Yeung said she wanted to observe first-hand their integration in the workplace before committing to the program. The McMaster degree gave her the foundation and skills to apply in her position today at Bridgepoint Health in Toronto. The rehabilitation hospital provides care for stroke survivors and patients with acquired brain injury, spinal cord injury and complex chronic disease.
Nurse and competitive athlete

Doug Csima has had several months to reflect on his life-changing experience and accomplishment at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

"Standing on the podium is the most memorable and most surreal moment for me," Csima said. "I never imagined reaching this level in the sport. Watching the Olympics as a kid, those athletes were like superheroes to me."

The native of Oakville, who earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree in 2007, was one of two McMaster alumni who rowed to an Olympic silver medal on Aug. 1, 2012.

Csima, along with Jeremiah Brown who graduated with a degree in commerce in 2007, are part of Canada's men's eight rowing team. Canada finished just behind Germany and ahead of Great Britain in a thrilling race that capped a wildly successful Olympic debut for Csima.

The 27-year-old certainly had a busy summer, as he was married only 13 days after the Olympic Games' closing ceremonies.

Csima admitted to having difficulty balancing his rowing and nursing careers heading into the Olympics, since he was in training full time.

"The past few years have been pretty tough," he said.

"Rowing requires you give it all you have."

Leading up to the biggest race of his life, Csima put himself through three years of three to four training sessions a day, 60 to 120 minutes a session, six days a week – either in the water or the weight room. He said that may sound daunting but, "it's a little easier when it's your full-time job. You get used to it."

Prior to London 2012, Csima worked occasionally as a nurse in long-term care at the Beacon Hill Villa, a residential care facility in downtown Victoria, B.C.

"I tried to do as much nursing as I could to keep my skills sharp," he explained, adding that the staff and residents were very accommodating and supportive of his rowing career.

Csima grew up as a hockey goalie. He only started rowing when he got to university. A member of McMaster's varsity rowing crew from 2003 to 2007, he has been a member of the national rowing team since 2008, winning a silver medal at the 2009 world championship and a bronze in 2011.

He said the hardest and most stressful time of his life was working his way through the BScN program at McMaster while trying to figure out if he could make the leap to the national team.

But his experience in the nursing program "allowed me to learn one of the most valuable skills I have, which is being able to manage my time effectively," he said. "The school was always accommodating when I had to compete, but it's a challenging program. It prepares you for the real world."

Michael Ladouceur is an assistant professor of nursing at McMaster who had Csima as a student.

"Doug embodies the old Greek aphorism of 'a sound mind in a sound body.'"
Doctor honours personal experience at McMaster

McMaster alumnus S-J. Gene Li is grateful for the personalized education he received during his family medicine residency. That, along with his desire to help students with a genuine interest in medicine and to honour his parents, is why he has given McMaster University a gift of $25,000.

Li knew he wanted to start off with a practice in a small town, where there would be a greater need for medical support and services. The rural setting also gave him an opportunity to fully use what he had learned during his medical training at McMaster. After completing his residency program in 1985, Li practised in Kirkland Lake for five years and he assisted the region in starting the palliative care program, along with other hospital and local responsibilities.

“In the McMaster program, they were accommodating and were able to set me up with several specialized rotations in the areas of interest and need.”

Li now wants to support students who are interested and committed to the field of medicine.

The Lew-King Li and Yun-Fang Li Award will be given to a student of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine who demonstrates financial need and maintains good academic standing. Li has requested that preference be given to students who are new to Canada within the last five years.

The award also honours his parents who, he said, gave up so much of what they had so he would be able to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor.

“I wouldn’t be able to do what I do, without the sacrifices my parents made,” Li said. “That is a fact. They gave up their lives in Taiwan to give us better opportunities for education in Canada.”

His dad immigrated to Canada from Taiwan in 1963, leaving behind his wife and three children so he could finish his post-graduate education in Canada. His family joined him three years later. Li’s father went on to work for Citizenship and Immigration Canada for nearly 40 years and was able to send all three of his children to university.

Li studied medicine first at the University of Toronto and then later came to McMaster for a residency in family medicine. He is now a family physician and lives in Brampton. In addition, he is an active staff member at the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton and continues to support medical training at McMaster as an assistant clinical professor of family medicine.

For more information on setting up student awards, please contact Josie Bufalino-Jasek at jasekj@mcmaster.ca or 905-525-9140 ext. 21874.
Alumni reunite many years later

McMaster MD alumni enjoyed their class reunions at the Hamilton Convention Centre in October.

Reunions and Events

• The MD Class of ’79 will be celebrating its 34th reunion in Victoria, B.C. from May 31 to June 2. The celebrations include a Friday evening reception at the Inn at Laurel Point and a Saturday dinner at the Aura Waterfront Restaurant. The class reunion committee members are Shayna Chamitoff, Sharon Mintz and Nancy Wardle.

• From June 7 to June 9, the Nursing Class of ’73 will mark its 40th reunion at the Colonel Butler Inn in Niagara on the Lake. Organizer Ruth Pettis can be reached at pettiscr@gmail.com for further details.

• On Oct. 5, the Faculty will be holding reunions featuring the MD Classes of ’73, ’78, ’83, ’88, ’93 and ’03. The day will feature a continuing medical education (CME) lecture by Geoff Norman, entitled Beyond PBL: The Evolution of Problem-Based Learning at McMaster 1969-2013 and campus tours, as well as a dinner at the Hamilton Convention Centre.

To assist with class outreach for the MD reunions or to get more information, please contact Josie Bufalino-Jasek at jasekj@mcmaster.ca and to connect with classmates, visit the “events” section of the MacHealthSci’s Facebook page.