

# Health Notes

January 2014

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## Meet Your New Health Section Executive

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By SERGE SULTAN  
(Montreal)

#### **Dr. Kim Lavoie, Incoming Chair:**

Dr. Lavoie is Associate Professor Dept. of Psychology, UQAM, Director of and Researcher in the Chronic Disease Research Division, Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur, Associate Researcher at the Montreal Heart Institute, and Co-Director of the Montreal Behavioral Medicine Centre (MBMC: [www.mbmc-cmcm.ca](http://www.mbmc-cmcm.ca)). Her research focuses on how psychological and behavioral factors contribute to the development and progression of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease, asthma, and COPD.

**Dr. Tavis Campbell, Outgoing Chair:** Dr. Campbell is an Associate Professor in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Calgary. Dr. Campbell's research interests include studying the interplay of life stress, genetic predisposition, diet, and exercise in the development of high blood pressure and autonomic nervous system dysfunction, and their role in such problems as hypertension/cardiovascular disease.

**Dr. Simon Bacon, Treasurer:** Dr. Bacon is an Associate Professor in Exercise science at Concordia University, Researcher and Director of the Jean-Jacques Gauthier Cardiopulmonary Rehab Centre at Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montreal, and is Co-Director of the Montreal Behavioural Medicine Centre (MBMC). Dr. Bacon's interests include studying behavioural interventions for chronic illnesses, and identifying the role of acute stress in the progression of illnesses.

**Dr. Sherry Stewart, Conference Program Officer:** Dr. Stewart is Professor of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University. Dr Stewart's interests include investigating psychological factors contributing to addictive disorders, mental illness and addictions.

**Dr. Wolfgang Linden, Awards Chair:** Dr. Linden is Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of British Columbia and current CPA's President. Dr Linden's interests include psychophysiology, cardiac rehabilitation, hypertension, and psychological adjustment to cancer.

**Dr. Serge Sultan, Secretary:** Dr. Sultan is Associate Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics at the University of Montreal. His research focuses on psychological adjustment to cancer and diabetes, and empathic processes in medical settings.

**Dr. Anthony Austin, Student Representative:** Dr. Austin is a post-doctoral fellow at Concordia University/Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur. He is studying the potential mechanisms linking acute psychological stress to coronary heart disease.

**Lucie Gouveia, Student Representative and Newsletter Co-Editor:** Lucie Gouveia is a doctoral student at University of Montreal. She is studying empathy in patient-provider relationships as applied to oncology settings.



Left to right: Dr. T. Campbell, Dr. K. Lavoie, and Dr. S. Bacon

## Message from the Chair: Kim Lavoie, Ph.D.

As incoming Chair of the Health Psychology Section, I want to welcome you to the re-inauguration and re-vitalization of our bi-annual newsletter! The purpose of our newsletter is to keep our membership informed of the various activities and initiatives of the section, provide general information about the annual meeting, as well as serve as a vehicle for networking among section members.

On behalf of the new Section Executive, I would like to inform members of several exciting initiatives the section is planning for the upcoming meeting in Vancouver, June 4-7!

1. Invited Section Speaker: We are pleased to host a presentation by Dr. Michael Vallis, PhD (Dalhousie) who is an expert in motivational communication for lifestyle change in chronic disease.

2. Pre-conference Workshop – Creation of Canadian Motivational Communication Network: Motivational communi-

cation has become a popular method for motivating patients to engage in and maintain healthier lifestyles. The purpose of this pre-conference workshop is to bring together Canadian mental health care professionals interested in becoming part of a network to standardize training and training efficacy in motivational communication. Please join us for an intimate meeting on Wednesday June 4<sup>th</sup>...details to follow.

3. Annual Wine and Cheese Reception: Please join us for our annual wine and cheese reception to meet your section executive and network with section members. Award winners will be announced during the reception.

4. New Investigator Award: The recipient will be recognized for outstanding achievement in and contribution to health psychology/behavioral medicine research in Canada. Past awardees include Drs. Tavis Campbell (Calgary), Linda Carlson (Calgary), Peter Hall (Waterloo), Brett Tombs (McGill), Christine Chambers



(Dalhousie), and Kim Lavoie (UQAM).

5. Ron Melzack Student Award: The top rated student abstracts will be nominated for this award, and will be presented at a special Ron Melzack student symposia session. The winner will be announced at the meeting wine and cheese reception.

6. Student poster awards: Two additional student poster awards will be announced at the wine and cheese reception.

Please join us for a stimulating and productive meeting!

**“I was very fortunate to receive our Section’s early career award.”**

**- Dr. T. Campbell**

## Highlights from the Health Section at the 2013 Meeting of the CPA

By TAVIS CAMPBELL (Calgary)

This past year, CPA held its annual conference in beautiful Quebec City, and for those who were able to attend, it was a very good one for our section. As usual, the coverage of topics in our Section was wildly diverse, and included stress and asthma, coping with type 2 diabetes, mindfulness interventions for chronic illnesses, pediatric pain, vulvar pain, insomnia treatment in children, etc. In short, the presentations and posters well-characterized the wide scope of the field. One notable symposium that drew considerable interest was entitled, ‘Participant recruitment in health research: riding the rollercoaster,’ and was organized by Wolfgang Linden, CPA’s

current President and a well-known Canadian Health Psychologist based out of UBC. In addition to highlighting various ‘flops’ in attempting to recruit participants, Wolfgang had some ingenious ideas around recruitment that always involved small tokens of appreciation and sometimes included surprising venues, like targeting people waiting in their cars at the B.C. ferry system! Another highly attended event was a symposium organized by Kim Lavoie, our Section’s current Head and entitled, ‘Improving communication in health care: the role of motivational interviewing and empathy on quality of care and patient outcomes in chronic disease.’ Kim is deeply involved in the teaching and training of motivational

communication to a wide variety of health care providers in Canada and abroad (her most recent trip had her teaching a group of physicians in the south of France). The symposium included evaluations of the efficacy of the MI approach but also moved beyond the confines of this structured approach to consider how key components of MI can be integrated with other evidenced based approaches like cognitive-behavioral therapy and psycho-education to arrive at a broader ‘motivational communication’ method. Finally, as I stepped down as Head of the CPA Health Section at the meeting, I was very fortunate to receive our Section’s early career award. Over the past decade, my program of research has

expanded from basic psychophysiological mechanisms in hypertension to include interventional work targeting sleep/fatigue among cancer survivors and adherence with complex medical regimens. It was a real honour (and humbling) to be

presented with this recognition by such a strong and vibrant group and I would like to thank the executive and membership for their involvement and support over the years.

## Congratulations to this Year's New Investigator Award Nominees!

By KIM LAVOIE  
(Montreal)

I am very pleased to announce that we have five outstanding nominees for our annual New Investigator Award this year! The nominees are: **Nathalie Rosen**, PhD, R.Psych, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University; **Catherine Sabiston**, PhD, Associate

Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto; **Simon Bacon**, PhD, Associate Professor, Dept. of Exercise Science, Concordia University; **Andrea Vodermaier**, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Psychology, University of British Columbia; and **Simon Sherry**, PhD, Dept. of Psychology, Dalhousie University. The winner will be contacted in Febru-

ary and a general announcement will be made in our next newsletter, due out early spring. Please join us at the Annual Meeting in Vancouver (June 5-7<sup>th</sup>) to hear the winner's research presentation and celebrate the outstanding contributions of Canadian researchers to health psychology and behavioral medicine!

## Connections Abroad

By ANTHONY AUSTIN  
(Montreal)

Some may ask: Why engage in international collaboration when we have so many top researchers right here in Canada? International collaboration is important because it widens and enriches the scope of research, allows greater participation in large-scale research, provides access to unique data, increases the impact of research, and addresses global issues. As a postdoctoral trainee, I have been collaborating on a number of projects with researchers in Switzerland and the United States. To begin, I collaborate with Roland von Känel at the University of Bern in Switzerland and Stephen Patterson at Ohio University in the U.S, on a CIHR-funded study that is designed to understand mechanisms of elevated blood clotting in those with and without heart disease. Involved in the design of the project, they provide necessary expertise in the analysis of important biomarkers relevant to heart disease that are measured in this study. Furthermore, through collaboration with Dr. Patterson, I was introduced to Paul Mills and Michael Ziegler



at the University of California, San Diego, who have provided valuable biomarker data related to spaceflight. With them and Dr. Patterson, I spearheaded a paper on the influence of spaceflight on changes in plasma volume and soluble adhesion molecules, important inflammatory biomarkers which could have implications in heart disease. To continue, I have also made use of data on biomarkers related to sleep and stress, collected by Joel Dimsdale and Merideth Pung at UCSD. In collaboration with Drs. Dimsdale, Pung, Bacon, Lavoie, von Känel, and Mills, I am writing a paper examining whether sleep disturbances influence soluble adhesion molecules during acute psychological stress. Finally, for an unrelated project examining whether different

coping methods mitigate pain and electromyographic responses to the cold pressor test, I collaborate with Zina Trost at the University of North Texas, as well as Dr. Patterson and two of his graduate students. In this capacity, I indirectly provide mentorship to these two students, affording me important supervisory experience. Had I limited my research to Canadian soil, I would not have been exposed to such varied and important data and would never have been so productive.

**“It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.”**

**-Charles Darwin**

## Expert Report

### Changing Habits for Good: The McGill CHIP Healthy Weight Study

By BARBEL KNAUPER  
(Montreal)

An estimated 26 million Canadians adults are currently overweight or obese. These individuals are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Lifestyle modification programs like the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) developed by the NIH have been shown to be very effective for weight loss and the prevention of diabetes. The programs teach individuals how to effectively initiate and sustain a healthy lifestyle by helping them to get active and eat healthier. However, such programs are expensive because they are delivered in year-long one-on-one sessions by highly trained professionals. Group-delivered versions of the DPP are cheaper, but are considerably less effective: Participants lose less weight and a great proportion gains it back after completion of the program. Our team at McGill has proposed

that the group-delivered DPP can be enhanced by a stronger focus on **habit formation**.



The **Healthy Weight Program** is a collaboration between the psychology department and the Comprehensive Health Improvement Program (CHIP) at McGill University. In this program, we have integrated if-then plans (concrete action plans that specify when, where, and how one will carry out a new behaviour; Gollwitzer, 1993, 1999) and their mental practice into the group-delivered DPP curriculum. These techniques should facilitate habit formation and lead to better long-term results. We are currently conducting a 2-year longitudinal study examining the differential effectiveness of the original DPP program and its enriched version. Participants get to track their weight

changes, food choices and physical activities online through CHIP's myhealth-checkup.ca and the website of the Dietitians of Canada, eatracker.ca. We expect that the enriched program will result in greater and more sustained weight loss and a greater reduction in other weight-related risk outcomes than the standard program. If supported, this innovative research would show that weight loss programs can be made more effective without adding costs. This project gathers Canadian and American researchers including Steven Grover, Ilka Lowensteyn, Laurence Joseph and Aleksandra Luszczynska.

**“We expect that the enriched program will result in greater and more sustained weight loss”**

- Dr. B.  
Knauper

## Upcoming Conferences in Health Psychology

By LUCIE GOUVEIA  
& WILLOW BURNS  
(Montreal)

- The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions of the Society of Behavioral Medicine will be held on April 23<sup>rd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The event will take place in the heart of Philadelphia, at the *Marriott Downtown*. This year's theme is entitled 'Behavior Matters: The Impact and Reach of Behavioral Medicine.' Early bird registration is available until March 25<sup>th</sup>. Please visit <http://www.sbm.org/meetings/2014> for more information.

- Beautiful San Francisco will be hosting the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Psychosomatic Soci-

ety this year. On March 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, researchers from a wide variety of health disciplines will be elaborating this year's theme: 'Stretching the Boundaries: From Mechanisms of Disease to Models of Health.' More information can be found at <http://www.psychosomatic.org/anmeeting/2014AnnualMeeting.cfm>

- The 28<sup>th</sup> conference of the European Health Psychology Society will be held on August 26-30, 2014. Entitled "Beyond prevention and intervention: increasing well-being", this next meeting will be taking place in the midst of the scenic Alps of Innsbruck, Austria. Deadline for abstract submission is February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Early bird registration fees are

available until May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Please visit <http://www.ehps2014.com/> for more information.

- The next meeting of the Psycho-Oncology and Psychosocial Academy (IPOS) will take place in the picturesque location of Lisbon, Portugal from October 20-24<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This conference is entitled, "Integrating psycho-oncology into mainstream cancer care: From research to action." The combination of preconference workshops and sessions during the congress program will provide an excellent opportunity to explore the ways in which psychosocial oncology research can be translated into action, as well as provide the opportunity to network with other profes-

sionals on an international scale. Please visit <http://ipos2014.com/> for more information.

## Memorable Talks in International Health Psychology

By WILLOW BURNS  
(Montreal)

As a Ph.D. student studying marital satisfaction in the context of pediatric oncology, this year's meeting of the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS), had several memorable talks to offer. A presentation at IPOS that I found to be particularly interesting was embedded within a session on pediatrics and was delivered by an avid researcher at the University of Groningen, Barbara J Wijnberg-Williams. Her talk was entitled "Effect of communication styles on marital satisfaction of parents of pediatric cancer patients: a prospective longitudinal study." This presentation gave a concise over-

view of a study, which was conducted with the aim of exploring the influence of communication styles on marital satisfaction of parents of children with cancer on a longitudinal basis (from diagnosis to 5-years post diagnosis). Findings from this study suggested that, five years following the cancer diagnosis, parents' marital functioning remains unaffected for the most part. This study also demonstrated that distinct communication styles affected mothers' and fathers' marital satisfaction at a later date. Specifically, avoidant communication was associated with mother's marital distress, whereas destructive communication was associated with fathers' marital distress. The

researcher concluded by advocating for the importance of clinicians being aware that distinct factors (e.g., communication styles) affect mothers' and fathers' marital satisfaction. It is important to be mindful of these potential differences and as mentioned by the presenter both parents should be included in psychosocial interventions.

## CPA Health Section Students

### Six Essential Lessons for Graduate Students in Health Psychology

By CODIE R. ROULEAU,  
JOSHUA A. RASH,  
& JILLIAN A. JOHNSON  
(Calgary)

Health psychology is a flourishing field with endless opportunities for graduate students. With so many opportunities, students can find it challenging to successfully navigate their own professional development. As three graduate students with diverse experiences and interests within the realm of health psychology, we have agreed on six key lessons that we hope will be relevant to current and prospective students in this field.

**1. Walk the talk.** Many students sacrifice their own mental and physical health while dealing with deadlines, scholarship applications, and other demands of graduate school. However, it is important to take our own advice as health researchers when it comes to self-

care. Healthy choices improve your own productivity and are an important component of motivating health behavior change in others.

**2. Embrace criticism.** As chronic over-achievers, grad students can find it difficult to tolerate the frequent criticism that accompanies the peer review process. Constructive feedback, whether from your supervisor, peer reviewers, or others, takes time and effort. Those who give you honest feedback are often invested in your success; accept the criticism with grace.

**3. Create your own opportunities.** Some graduate programs may not be designed with health psychology in mind. You may need to seek courses outside your department, create clinical practica that fit with your interests, or spend a semester conducting research in a different lab in order to become

a well-rounded health researcher and professional.

**4. Collaboration breeds success.** Finding mentors, colleagues, and like-minded peers is essential to success in health psychology. Use conferences, workshops, and your supervisor's connections to network with others and cultivate lasting professional relationships.

**5. Get involved in the academic community.** It is easy to get wrapped up in your own research and studies. Make your grad school experience more rewarding by engaging in academic service activities, participating in professional societies, and reviewing for academic journals. Student engagement is essential to giving back to the academic community.

**6. Grad school is the beginning of your career, not the step before it.** You are no

longer a passive recipient of knowledge, but rather an active and contributing member of a broader community of health professionals. The opportunities and relationships that arise today may have a lasting impact on your professional identity and on the future development of the field.



Left to right: Josh Rash, Jillian Johnson, and Codie Rouleau

“My own program of research and supervisory style continue to be influenced by Ron”

-Dr. J. Katz

## Meet Dr. Ronald Melzack

By JOEL KATZ  
(Toronto)

Dr. Ronald Melzack is Professor Emeritus in the Psychology Department at McGill University and one of the most influential and distinguished psychologists that Canada has ever produced. Among Prof. Melzack’s many contributions to the field of pain, he is probably best known for his 1965 paper with Patrick Wall in Science entitled “Pain Mechanisms: A New Theory”. The gate control theory of pain emphasized the importance of central neural modulation of nociceptive impulses and introduced the idea that psychological factors were an integral part of the pain experience, not merely reactions to the pain. The theory revolutionized thinking in the field of pain and opened up new avenues for managing acute and chronic pain. The 1965 Science paper has been cited more than **8,000** times. Prof. Melzack is

also known for a number of other major contributions to the field of pain; including, an understanding of **phantom limbs**, the development of the **McGill Pain Questionnaire** (long-form, short-form and short-form 2) and the **Neuro-matrix Theory**.



Prof. Melzack’s brilliance as a scientist is acknowledged world-wide. But he was also a superb supervisor and mentor. As a graduate student working under his supervision, he in-

spired me and his other graduate students to excel, in part by example, and in part through his unwavering support, unbridled enthusiasm, and pleasure in seeing his students succeed. My own program of research and supervisory style continue to be influenced by Ron, even now, almost 25 years after I completed my Ph.D. It is especially fitting, then, that the CPA Ron Melzack Student Award in Health Psychology is named in Ron’s honour; it reflects both his reputation for outstanding research and his excellence in graduate student supervision.

## The Ron Melzack Student Award

By LUCIE GOUVEIA  
(Montreal)

Each year at the CPA convention, a young researcher is offered the Ron Melzack Student Award for most outstanding student presentation. Students at the undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D. levels are invited to enter the competition by sub-

mitting an abstract to the health section of the CPA annual conference. The presentation may be in either poster or oral format.

By ANTHONY AUSTIN  
(Montreal)

Postdoctoral training is more and more a necessity for graduate students in health psychology who want to pursue an academic career. The pool of new PhDs continues to grow while the number of full-time tenure track faculty positions slowly declines. It is nearly impossible to be a top candidate for a faculty position at a high-quality university without post-doctoral training. Some important considerations should be taken into account when choosing a postdoc. Fit is very important. I opted for a research-intensive position at the Montreal Behavioural Medicine Centre (MBMC) because I felt it was a good match for my skills and interests. It is also

important to know whether the postdoc will provide opportunities to publish solid research papers. The MBMC is extremely productive, so I recognized the potential for first-rate publications. Another consideration is whether the position will significantly expand the candidate's professional network. MBMC's members are affiliated with many different institutions, including Concordia University, Université du Québec à Montréal, McGill University, and Hôpital du Sacré-Coeur de Montréal. Working in such a centre has resulted in the formation of important collaborations and, consequently, the development of an important line of research examining altered blood clotting as a potential link between psychological stress and coro-

nary heart disease. Perhaps the most important consideration is whether the candidate can develop an independent research program and gain related skills like grant writing. The grant writing experience I have gained in my postdoc and the research stemming from it is helping me establish myself as an independent researcher. In sum, a good postdoc will be a good fit, provide opportunities for publications, expand the candidate's network, and help the candidate develop an independent research program, all of which will increase candidates' attractiveness on the job market.

**“The MBMC is extremely productive, so I recognized the potential for first-rate publications.”**

**-Dr. A. Austin**

## Interventions in Health Psychology

### Mindfulness for Health Care Providers: Improving Emotion Regulation Skills

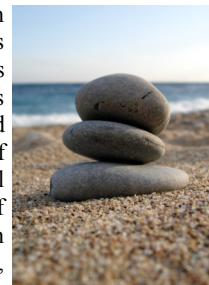
By MARTIN LAMOTHE  
(Montreal)

Health care professionals (HCPs) are often overloaded with responsibilities involved in caring for patients within the constraints of limited organizational resources. They are also confronted with various emotionally distressing situations associated with illness, death and suffering, all of which may result in extremely challenging interactions with patients and other medical staff.

Unfortunately, relatively little is known about treating burnout. However, a growing body of research points to mindfulness as a possible preventive measure. Mindfulness is a way of calming body and mind with the intention of becoming more open to one's direct experience. It works through paying careful attention to the present moment, with an attitude of kindness and equanimity. Recently, authors have examined the mechanisms of mindfulness within the context

of emotion regulation strategies. Emotion regulation is extremely important for HCPs exposed to the suffering of patients because it reduces feelings of distress and frees up cognitive resources needed for patient assistance. Research suggests that there are direct links between poor emotion regulation in HCPs and psychological difficulties, such as compassion fatigue and burnout. Mindfulness, on the other hand, has been associated with better emotion regulation strategies and can help HCPs become more focused, more empathetic and less emotionally exhausted. At the Montreal CHU Sainte-Justine Research Center, Dr. Serge Sultan and his team are currently developing a project based on mindfulness for helping HCPs working in pediatric hemato-oncology. Their mindfulness research project consists of two phases. The first goal of the project aims to identify precursors to HCP burnout among professionals and support staff in

hemato-oncology departments across the province of Quebec. The second phase of the project will focus on the development of a mindfulness-based intervention, specifically adapted to the needs of pediatric hemato-oncology HCPs. Participants will learn various mindfulness practices such as awareness of thoughts and emotions, and compassion for self and others. They will also be practicing self-inquiry and emotion regulation. Finally, group discussions will address issues related to the integration of mindful practice in the workplace and in daily life.





CPA Health Section

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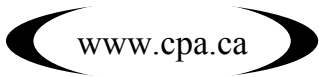
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## Help Make our Section (even) Better

By SERGE SULTAN, Ph.D.  
(Montreal)

As a recent newcomer to Canada, I have been impressed by the scope and quality of activities performed by Canadians in Health Psychology. One strong asset of our section is to showcase tight inter-relationships between practice and research. Health psychology is an integration of different psychological traditions and this is what makes our work so enriching, and challenging. To take up these challenges we need a stronger section, with members from various backgrounds. We would like to encourage members to consider joining the Health Section executive. If you are interested in becoming involved in the Section or contributing to this newsletter in the future, please send an e-mail to the current chair, Kim Lavoie at [kiml\\_lavoie@yahoo.ca](mailto:kiml_lavoie@yahoo.ca), or myself at [serge.sultan@umontreal.ca](mailto:serge.sultan@umontreal.ca). We are interested in hearing about your ideas, and wish to engage members in envisioning the future of the Health Section. We wish you a happy new year, full of wonderful health psych projects!

**CPA ANNUAL CONVENTION 2014 (Vancouver, June 5th-7th)**

**REGISTER ONLINE: [www.cpa.ca/convention](http://www.cpa.ca/convention)**

