



A NEWSLETTER FROM  
**The Snyder Institute  
for Chronic Diseases**



**April 2026**

## **Snyder Emeritus Member Dr. Samuel Lee Brings Liver Care to Remote Indigenous Communities**



Snyder emeritus member Dr. Samuel Lee, MD, co-founder of UCalgary's first clinic dedicated to liver disease, has continued breaking new ground even after retiring from full time academic work 14 months ago. His focus has shifted to Indigenous communities in Alberta and beyond, traveling to more than a dozen remote First Nations each year as the first specialist to visit many of these communities. In 2015, he launched a telehealth ECHO program to help treat hepatitis C, and he also visits local high schools to encourage Indigenous youth to consider careers in health care, noting that Indigenous people make up five percent of Canada's population but far less than that in medicine. Since arriving in Calgary in 1988 when there were no other hepatologists in the city, Lee has helped build the liver program into one of the largest and most respected in Canada, recruiting Dr. Mark Swain in 1993 to form Calgary's first dedicated hepatology unit. Today, Calgary has more than a dozen hepatologists. [Read more.](#)

## **Congratulations to Paula Brandt on Winning UCalgary 3MT Competition**



Congratulations to Paula Brandt, PhD student in the Muruve lab, who won first place at the University of Calgary's 2026 Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition. Paula's presentation, titled "Islet Amyloid Polypeptide: The Biological Velcro Creating Sticky Situations in Type 2 Diabetes," examined how a misfolded protein linked to type 2 diabetes may contribute to the formation of abnormal and dangerous blood clots. As the first place winner, Paula will

represent UCalgary at the Western Regional Three Minute Thesis Competition in Regina on May 4. [Read more.](#)

## Publications

- Wagdi Almishri, Dunn, J. F., & Mark Swain. [Thalamic homeostatic transcriptomic signatures are altered in a mouse model of cholestatic liver injury and are mitigated by systemic TNF neutralization.](#) *Molecular Brain*, 2026
- Afshin Derakhshani, Di Fonte, R., Porcelli, L., Orang, F. N., Shadbad, M. A., Feriz, A. M., Safarpour, H., Antoine Dufour,... & Azzariti, A. [Integrated single cell RNA sequencing and flow cytometry analysis identifies elevated S100A6+ and S100A8+ myeloid subsets in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma.](#) *Clinical Immunology*, 2026
- Muleta, K. G., Signe Holst, Garcias López, A., Chakraborty, S., da Silva, C., Cunningham, A. F., Ulmert, I., Nakawesi, J., Hütter, J., & Katharina Lahl. [Murine Intestinal Neonatal and Adult Dendritic Cell Subset Migration and Activation Characteristics in Response to Toll-Like Receptor Stimulation Through MyD88.](#) *Scandinavian Journal of Immunology*, 2026
- Hommes, J. W., Hughes, M. E., Cheung, D., Petri, B., Orthner, L. M., Van Der Linden, T. J., Bardoel, B. W., Deo, S. K., Patel, D. T., Flannagan, R. S., Heinrichs, D. E., Wootton, S. K., & Bas Surewaard. [Adeno-associated virus delivery of anti-alpha toxin monoclonal antibodies confers protection against Staphylococcus aureus infections.](#) *PLOS Pathogens*, 2026

## Education News

### Grad Seminar Series Schedule (May)



All lectures begin at noon. Pizza (2 pcs. per person please) provided first come first served; best to arrive by 11:50 am.

#### May 4 | Theater One

- Sami Hoque, MDGI MSc Graduate Student, Dr. Lu's Laboratory, Department of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

#### May 11 | Theater One

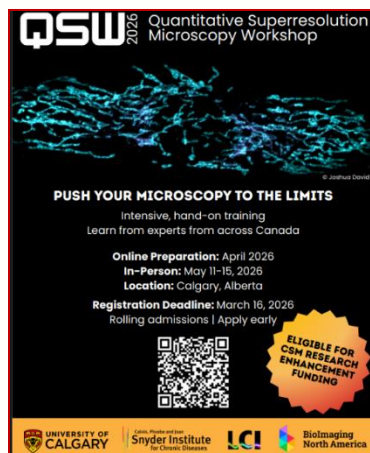
- Emilie de Chantal, MDIM MSc Graduate Student, Dr. Deniset's Laboratory, Department of Physiology and Pharmacology
- Sydney Perreca, MDMI MSc Graduate Student, Dr. Alexei Savchenko Laboratory, Department of Microbiology, Immunology & Infectious Diseases

#### May 18 | Victoria Day No Seminar

#### May 25 | Theater One

- Emily Baines, MDMI MSc Graduate Student, Dr. Semper's Laboratory, Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
- Shashini Perera, BISI PhD Candidate, Dr. Finney's Laboratory, Department of Biological Sciences

## Quantitative Superresolution Microscopy Workshop (QSW)



The Quantitative Superresolution Microscopy Workshop (QSW) will take place May 11-15 at the Cumming School of Medicine. This intensive, hands-on workshop offers comprehensive training in state-of-the-art superresolution imaging, guiding participants through experimental design, rigorous data acquisition, quantitative analysis and evidence-based decision-making throughout the imaging process. QSW provides an interactive and collaborative learning environment, welcoming instructors and participants from across Canada and internationally. Faculty interested in advancing their technical skills may be eligible

for up to \$4,000 in support through Stream 1 of the Cumming School of Medicine's Research Enhancement Program. [Learn more and register.](#)

## Funding Opportunity: Research Enhancement Program (REP)

The Cumming School of Medicine's Research Enhancement Program (REP) supports primary faculty at all career stages in strengthening research capacity and grant competitiveness. Stream 1 offers up to \$4,000 per year for advanced training in new techniques and methodologies, including workshops and research visits, and may also support trainee development. Stream 2 provides up to \$2,000 for grant writing or design support and up to \$7,500 for project management for complex or unique funding opportunities. Stream 3 funds an external scientific peer review of grant applications.

[Learn more and apply here.](#)

## Congratulations

- Please join us in congratulating the Snyder doctoral and master's trainees who have received Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) studentship awards:
  - Amit Jaiswal (Dr. Tim Shutt's lab)
  - Derek Cheung (Dr. Nargis Khan's lab)
  - Sajida Alkadri (Dr. May Choi's lab)
  - Kathryn Strayer (Dr. Braedon McDonald's lab)
  - Gareth Ryan (Dr. Braedon McDonald's lab)
  - Asha Octoman (Dr. Claire Arrieta's lab)

- Dorian Rojas Villalta (Dr. Claire Arrieta's lab)
- Ariel MacKenzie (Drs. Mark Gillrie and Christina Thornton's lab)
- Hanna Huska (Dr. Nathan Peter's lab)
- Julia Willson (Dr. Katharina Lahl's lab)

We are incredibly proud of these outstanding trainees and their achievements, and we thank the trainees and supervisors who shared this wonderful news with us.

- Congratulations to Elina Karimullina on receiving a Trainee Travel Award from the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences to attend the Membrane Proteins in Health and Disease conference in April 2026.

## Upcoming Events

### Snyder Award for Research Excellence Lecture | June 4



Join us for the Snyder Award for Research Excellence Lecture, celebrating research excellence and the legacy of visionary philanthropist Joan Snyder by bringing distinguished, internationally recognized scientists to the Snyder Institute for Chronic Diseases. This year's lecture will feature award recipient Dr. Daiana Alvarez Olmedo, a Postdoctoral Associate at the Snyder Institute, who will present on "Infection-Mediated Endothelial Activation Drives Novel Adhesin Interactions in Host-Adapted Lyme Spirochetes,"

highlighting her work on how *Borrelia burgdorferi* crosses blood vessel walls to disseminate throughout the body. The lecture will also feature Dr. Jeanne Mrazzozzo, CEO of IDSA and former director of NIAID at the NIH, who will present on "The Global Cost of Undermining the U.S. Scientific Enterprise: Public Trust and Research Investment in an Era of Uncertainty." Following the lecture (HSC Theater 4), an informal reception will be hosted in the Azreili (HRIC) Atrium. [Register here.](#)

## Snyder Invited Speaker Seminar Series:

- Dr. Patrick Hanington | May 7 | 11:00 am to 12:00 pm | Clara Christie | Spinning Tales: Exploring Whirling Disease in Alberta and British Columbia | [Learn more.](#)
- Dr. Robbie Loewith | May 8 | 11:00 am to 12:00 pm | Clara Christie | Post *tenebras lux* – How the Target Of Rapamycin (TOR) Kinase Enables Cells to “See” Their Environment | [Learn more.](#)
- Dr. Derek MacFadden | May 14 | 11:00 am to 12:00 pm | Theatre Four | Genomic Epidemiology of AMR: Approaches to Phenotype Prediction and Transmission Assessment.

## SITC Postdocs and Research Associates Seminar Series | May 15

The Snyder Institute Trainee Committee invites you to the Postdocs and Research Associates Seminar Series and Breakfast Social on May 15th at 10:00 am in Theatre 4.

Dr. Carolyn Thompson will present on the role of maternal and early life microbiota in pancreas-immune crosstalk and type 1 diabetes. To express interest in giving a future seminar, please email [sitc@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sitc@ucalgary.ca).

## Breaking Barriers Day: Confronting Ableism in Academia | June 10

Join UCalgary Breaking Barriers Day on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm to learn how ableism presents in our classrooms, labs, campus and conversations, introducing key concepts around disability justice and identifying concrete changes to break barriers. Keynote speakers include Dr. Bonita Sawatzky, Dr. Victoria Fast, Dr. Danielle Peers, Dr. Matthew Christison and Dr. Stephanie Chipeur. **Please note that masking is requested as one speaker has significant disabilities impacting their ability to fight off respiratory viruses.** Masks will be

provided. The in-person registration deadline is June 5, and virtual registration deadline is June 8. Faculty, staff, trainees, practitioners and community members are welcome.

[Learn more.](#)

## CIHR IMHA Dialogue Series | June 23

The CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA) Dialogue Series is taking place now until June 23. The Calgary session takes place on June 23 from 9:00 to 10:30 am at the Azrieli Atrium. Join the national conversation to help shape the Institute's Research Priority Plan. In-person and virtual sessions are available, and individuals from all roles and career stages are invited to share their perspectives. For a full list of dates and locations, visit the IMHA Dialogue Series webpage. [Learn more and register.](#)

## ISSSI 2026 in Banff | September 20–24



Registration is now open for the 20th International Symposium on Staphylococci and Staphylococcal Infections (ISSSI 2026), taking place September 20-24, 2026, at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Banff, Canada. The global Staphylococcus research community is heading to the Canadian Rockies, where researchers, clinicians and trainees from around the world will come together to share the latest discoveries in Staphylococcus biology, pathogenesis and host interactions, epidemiology and antimicrobial resistance, and diagnostics, prevention and treatment. Attendees can expect cutting edge science, inspiring discussions and valuable networking, all set in the stunning landscape of the Canadian Rockies. [Learn more.](#)

## International Conference on Innate Lymphoid Cells | June 2-4

Registration and abstract submission are now open for the 6th International Conference on Innate Lymphoid Cells (ILC6), taking place June 2-4, 2026, in Vancouver. Join leading scientists and emerging researchers to share advances in ILC biology and immunology, foster collaborations and drive innovation. Visit [ilc6vancouver.com](http://ilc6vancouver.com) for details.

## Opportunities

### CSM Commercialization Office: 15K Grants and 1K Awards

The Cumming School of Medicine Commercialization Office is offering Proof & Propel 15K Grants to support CSM faculty commercialization efforts from early-stage idea to prototype testing or pre-clinical work. Funding under this grant does not trigger additional revenue sharing obligations under the University's IP Policy. In addition, four 1K awards are available to recognize commercialization efforts at CSM. You can nominate yourself or a promising startup in the following categories: Faculty Founder, Student Founder, Women Entrepreneur and Ecosystem Champion. The application and nomination deadline is July 10th. [Click here for more information or to apply](#). Questions can be directed to [elsa.reisenhofer@ucalgary.ca](mailto:elsa.reisenhofer@ucalgary.ca).

### BD S8 Cell Sorter Now Available



The Nicole Perkins Microbial Communities Core Labs (NPMCCCL) flow cytometry core facility of the Snyder Institute has acquired a BD S8 real-time image-enabled cell sorter. The BD S8 is now available for acquisition, sorting and training. If interested, please contact [Dr. Karen Poon](#).

## Grant Support

Grant support services are now available through the Snyder Institute to help researchers develop competitive funding applications, with current priority given to larger, collaborative grant opportunities across the Institute. A short document outlining the service scope and request prioritization is now available on the [website](#).

The service also aims to facilitate new collaborative funding opportunities by engaging with research groups to better understand their priorities, upcoming plans and areas of

research activity across the Institute. Researchers are encouraged to directly reach out to [Ryan Eng](#), Scientific Grant Writer, to arrange a meeting or start a conversation.

### **Need help with your individual funding opportunities?**

The CSM Grant Development Office offers dedicated support throughout the grant development and submission process. Whether you're applying to CIHR, Horizon Europe or other major funding agencies, their experienced team can provide guidance at every stage. [Contact them](#) to get started! Be sure to explore their [website](#) for helpful resources, including application guidance and examples of previously funded proposals.

## **Other News**

### **Snyder Institute Funding Reminder**

- Snyder internal funding opportunities can be found on our website under [Membership & Funding](#)
- Snyder internal scholarship opportunities can be found on our website under [Education & Scholarships](#)

## **Awareness Information**

### **Freezer Efficiency Matters: What You Need to Know**



A new ultra-low temperature (ULT) freezer uses as much energy as an average household.

- Too many ULT freezers increase building heat load and strain HVAC systems.
- Freezer management helps cut costs, prevent failures, and improve performance.
- Try “Freezer Fridays” to clear out expired or unusable samples.
- Label all samples and keep an inventory—less time searching means less time with the door open.

- ULTs take ~10 minutes to recover for every 1 minute the door is open.
- Test older freezers (10–15+ years); some use 2–4x more energy and pose a risk to stored samples.

### **Would you like to contact someone at the Snyder Institute?**

On our website, our [Contact Us page](#) has some useful contacts.

### **We want to hear from you! Send us your news**

We invite all Snyder members, trainees and staff to send us your news about successes, lectures, workshops... anything that you would like to share with the membership. We will make every effort to post it, and the best ways for us to share your news are through our:

- [Snyder Newsletter](#)
- [Snyder Website](#) (as long as your news fits the site's guidelines)
- [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) channels

Do you want help publicizing your event/lecture/workshop? Send us the details **at least one month before the event date**. Please contact Anurag if you have any questions ([anurag1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:anurag1@ucalgary.ca)). Thank you.

For the latest news and information, visit us at [snyder.ucalgary.ca](https://snyder.ucalgary.ca), and at



If you have news to share, please send it to Anurag: [anurag1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:anurag1@ucalgary.ca)

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