About the Team

It is with great enthusiasm that we are distributing the first edition of our newsletter as the Multi Organ Transplant Student Research Training Program (MOTSRTP) at the Toronto General Hospital. The MOTSRTP is a program composed of students and faculty that work to integrate education and research into clinical practice. Through the structure of this program, students of all levels and faculties are able to work together on various projects within the overarching domain of solid-organ transplantation. The numerous opportunities offered through this program enable students to develop knowledge in the field of transplant medicine, competency in research methodology and the abstraction, auditing, and entering of data. It also provides a network of connections among health care professionals both within and outside of Toronto General Hospital.

Dragon's Den Competition 2011

Mirrored after the hit TV series, MOTSRTP hosted their very own Dragon's Den competition in December 2011. Trainees were assigned a certain task and left to their entrepreneurial selves to develop a proposal. These business concepts were pitched to a panel of healthcare professional judges, who spent over a week deliberating between the well-thought-out and creative plans. Winners were announced at the annual MOTSRTP holiday party and the “Clinical Research Team” came in first with their proposed development of tools for the evaluation of the kidney transplant program and MOTSRTP. “Team 1der” and their proposed promotion strategy for outreach to the academic community followed closely behind as runner up. This competition proved to bring out the hardworking nature of the teams while fostering strong teamwork skills.

MOTSRTP Holiday Party

This year’s annual holiday party was, as always, a hit. Students and mentors from within the program had the chance to de-stress and unwind after a semester of hard-work and deadlines. It was a nice way to end exams with delicious food, treats, and a great group of people.

From the Director’s Corner

Segun Famure introduces our inaugural newsletter

Welcome to the inaugural edition of “Transplant Connections”, from the Multi-Organ Transplant Student Research Training Program at the Toronto General Hospital. Our biannual newsletter will showcase profiles and accomplishments of our multi-disciplinary mentorship team as well as program activities and the academic diversity of our trainees who have come through our program. It will also provide information for colleges and university academicians and researchers for future collaborative opportunities with our program. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and that we continue to keep you engaged over the years with future editions of “Transplant Connections”.

The Winning Team

Holiday party: a chance to socialize and enjoy a musical performance
Mentor Spotlight

Interview with Dr. S. Joseph Kim, MD, PhD, MHS, FRCPC

Alainna Jamal chats with Dr. Kim about the genesis of MOTSRTP and more

What was your initial inspiration for a program like the MOTSRTP?

From a pragmatic perspective, my initial goal was to create a comprehensive research database. One of the key issues was that of personnel and the people who would be able to help us bring the goal to fruition. We thought about using undergrads from U of T so we started looking into various opportunities like ROP299Y and work-study, which seemed to jive with what we wanted to accomplish. That was the genesis of it.

We decided right from the start that this was going to be more than just a work program for students. We wanted to make sure that whatever they were doing with us benefited them in a real way – that’s why we set up a formal education curriculum and opportunities for observations in the clinic and OR. It was very well received and eventually it continued to mushroom and bloom. We started with 6 students and our biggest year had 31 students. At the time, this was a program within kidney transplant, but it has now become an example across multi-organ transplant of what you can do when you have industrious, smart students willing to learn and gain experience.

Do you have something you’d like to share with other potential mentors?

I think especially for people who are research intensive: consider engaging and being involved in undergraduate education. It brings in a different element.

We wanted to make sure that whatever they [students] were doing with us benefited them in a real way...

Do you have a favourite band or artist?

You might be surprised, but I really enjoy Adele’s music. I think she’s got a tremendous voice; very talented. I’ve also been listening to Lady Antebellum these days.

Partners in the Academic Community

Linzi Manicom—Service Learning Program

In early 2010, New College’s Service Learning Program (SLP) was brought to the MOTSRTP to create service learning (SL) positions for its students. SL differs from the more conventional research internship that places emphasis on technical skills; SL focuses heavily on the “social purpose” aspect of community and campus partners. In regular reflections notes, SL students make links between their academic learning in the classroom and the experiential learning in the placement. They consider questions of social and ethical responsibility, and ways to effectively address the issues of community members (health care workers, patients and their families).

Students in the program also attend seminars monthly to share their diverse experiences, as SL students are placed in a variety of organizations. Some SL students work with “at risk” youth or people with intellectual disabilities. Other students are involved in health education or newcomer integration issues.

So far, seven undergrads have participated in the SLP within the MOTSRTP. In their reflections, most have described this experience as one that has deepened their understanding of the complexity of health care, making them more prepared for a career in this field.

DID YOU KNOW?

MOTSRTP mentors come from a variety of disciplines including clinical research, medicine, occupational therapy, physical therapy, pharmacy, and social work.
Student Achievements

Nishant Fodzar, American Society of Nephrologists Presentation

In November 2011, Nishant presented on the topic of “A comparison of equations to estimate glomerular filtration rate in Canadian adults without renal disease” at the annual American Society of Nephrologists conference.

Spencer Lalonde, Heart Failure Conference Abstract and Presentation

Spencer contributed to the project “Endothelial progenitor cells and functional capacity in heart failure patients”, which was presented to the Canadian Cardiovascular Society and submitted as an article to the European Journal of Heart Failure. The project is supervised by mentors in the Heart Transplant Program.

Emily Lu, Canadian Medical Association Journal Essay Publication

Emily received an honourable mention for her short story titled “Clamps Off” in the 2010 ARS Medica and CMAJ humanities poetry and prose contest. She wrote about a kidney transplant surgery she observed as an MOTSRTP trainee from a surrealistic perspective, discussing the uncertainties in practice and decision-making that is seen during an operation. The theme of the competition was White Coat, Warm Heart: Integrating Science and Humanism.

Alice Hoi Ning Tse, Canadian Society of Transplantation Research Grant

The Canadian Society of Transplantation awarded funding to Alice’s project on the development and piloting of a psychosocial assessment tool for pre-transplant kidney patients. This project is jointly supervised by mentors in Multi-Organ Transplant Nephrology and Social Work.

Julie Van, Institute for Medical Sciences Best Poster

At the Institute for Medical Sciences research fair in August 2011, Julie won the Best Poster Award for her project on “The impact of diabetes on kidney transplant waiting list outcomes at the Toronto General Hospital”.

Student Spotlight

Medical Student Jennifer Amadio’s DOCH2 Project

The goal of the project was to investigate the impact of socioeconomic status on access to health care resources in kidney transplant patients and determine if this increases complications post-transplant. The MOTSRTP was essential for helping me to refine my project and provided both direction and guidance throughout the process. Weekly educational seminars increased my knowledge of the issues surrounding organ transplantation and developed a holistic understanding of the complex challenges facing these patients. Working as part of a team allowed for continued support, discussion and evolution of research ideas throughout the course of the project, facilitating my integration into the program. The MOTSRTP provided a variety of experiences, including the opportunity for direct interaction with patients. Through the MOTSRTP, I have developed important insight into the barriers to transplant patients seeking health care and the many factors influencing their compliance, ability to access treatment and ultimately health care outcomes.

MPH Student Jamie Greenfield’s Experience

I honestly do not believe that I could have found a more suitable placement than the MOTSRTP for the practicum component of my Masters of Public Health. Through educational sessions, clinical observations, and patient interactions, I have gained knowledge above and beyond that acquired through traditional in-class lectures.

One of my major projects is a research protocol that aims to examine barriers to post-transplant care outside the major transplant centres. The goal is to improve collaboration between general and specialised nephrologists at transplant centres, and thus enhance the quality of patient care. Presently, my career goal is to be a part of a hospital-based clinical research unit, which has been influenced greatly by my positive experiences within the MOTSRTP. I have gained skills in the conduct of clinical research, including skills related to Research Ethics Board applications, study budgets, recruitment and consent of participants, and the completion of regulatory documents. The best part of the program is by far the positive attitudes of the mentors and the collaborative team environment. I am very excited about the prospect that future students in the MOTSRTP will also have the opportunity to contribute to exemplary research in transplantation at UHN.
Where Are They Now?

Man Wah Yeung speaks about how the MOTSRTP impacted her pursuit of graduate studies

It took no time for me to respond to the question “Future career?” posed in my elementary school yearbook blurb. Scientist, I wrote. Today, my answer remains unchanged. But it took several mentors, continual encouragement and research studentships before deciding to launch myself towards a career in scientific research. Currently, I am a graduate student pursuing a Master’s degree in epidemiology. Epidemiology is the study of distribution and determinants of disease in human populations.

Of all the disciplines in science, why epidemiology? This decision was influenced to a great extent by my experience in the Multi-Organ Transplant Student Research Training Program (MOTSRTP). During my undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto, I had the pleasure of participating in the program for 12 months. At the time, the program consisted of thirty students from various majors and at various stages of their education. This created a unique environment where students motivated, taught and helped each other. We had weekly Monday morning seminars, academic rounds, and career talks that constituted our educational component of the program. This was the first time I was introduced to the field of kidney health and transplantation. The language and concepts were new but interesting. From studying transplantation, I am amazed by the resilience of the human body and human spirit.

Additionally, I was exposed to the practice of medicine through opportunities to shadow physicians and was exposed to research in medicine through journal club meetings. In the program, I helped to build the clinic research database, and developed the framework for Kidney Pulse and for the upcoming MOTSRTP website. It is exciting to see the transplantation community—including the patients, physicians, nurses, social workers, etc—communicating with each other through the newsletter and website. Our mentors were trained in epidemiology and offered continual support. I would say their enthusiasm for epidemiology must have passed on to me as I decided to do graduate work in this area. Overall, the experience was enriching. Such a program has added to my student experience and I am grateful for it. I would encourage others to look into the MOTSRTP.

Get Involved

The MOTSRTP is currently looking for new collaborators who may be interested in:

- Being a speaker at one of our seminars
- Conducting a journal club session related to organ transplantation
- Supervising students on independent study or service learning projects
- Providing any other relevant educational opportunities

If you are interested please contact us indicating your area of research and how you would like to contribute.

CONTRIBUTORS & CONTACT INFO

Newsletter Team: Alainna Jamal, Alice Hoi Ning Tse, Christie Liang, Jacquie Lu, Laureen Hachem, Souzi Badr, Stacey Konidis

Multi-Organ Transplant Student Research Training Program
585 University Avenue,
Toronto ON MSG 2C4
11th Floor Transplant Office
(416) 340-4800
motsrtp@uhn.ca