

disorders as they strengthen their resilience and rebuild connections in the next phases of COVID-19. ■

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News

We welcome news items of less than 300 words; we may edit them for clarity and length. News items should be emailed to journal@doctorsofbc.ca and must include your mailing address, telephone number, and email address. All writers should disclose any competing interests.

2019 J.H. MacDermot writing award winner



Dr Moor-Smith

The 2019 J.H. MacDermot Prize for Excellence in Medical Journalism: Best article or essay was awarded to Dr Moor-Smith for his article, “The world’s most poisonous mushroom, *Amanita phalloides*, is growing in BC” [*BCMJ* 2019;61:20-24].

Dr Moor-Smith wrote the article as a medical student (class of 2020) in the University of British Columbia Island Medical Program with coauthors Mr Raymond Li, a drug and poison information pharmacist at the BC Drug and Poison Information Centre, and Dr Omar Ahmad, a physician with Island Health, head of Critical Care and Emergency Medicine, and a clinical associate professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of British Columbia. Dr Moor-Smith graduated from UBC’s Island Medical Program and is starting his residency in emergency medicine at UBC. His professional interests are broad but consistently include medical education and acute care medicine.

BC medical students are encouraged to submit full-length scientific articles and essays for publication consideration. Each year the *BCMJ* awards a prize of \$1000 for the best article or essay written by a medical student in the province of BC. For more information about the award, visit www.bcmj.org/submit-article-award.

COVID-19 Research Fund recipients

The Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute, along with the VGH and UBC Hospital Foundation, is providing funding for innovative research projects aimed at addressing the evolving health care needs and challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding will help accelerate research efforts to proactively respond to the virus in BC through prevention, detection, treatment, and management. The COVID-19 Research Fund recipients are listed below. For more information on each recipient visit www.vchri.ca/stories/articles/2020/05/26/cutting-edge-covid-19-research-bc-boosted-research-funding.

- Dr Chris Carlsten, professor and head of the UBC Division of Respiratory Medicine and scientific director of the Legacy for Airway Health.
- Dr Daniel Kim, emergency physician at VGH and clinical assistant professor with the UBC Department of Emergency Medicine.
- Dr James Lan, transplant nephrologist at VGH and assistant professor with the UBC Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.
- Dr Agnes Lee, director of the Hematology Research Program at VCHRI, medical director of the Thrombosis Program at VCH and professor with the UBC Department of Medicine.
- Dr Allison Mah, clinical assistant professor with the UBC Department of Medicine.
- Dr Renelle Myers, thoracic interventional respirologist at VGH and clinical assistant professor with the UBC Department of Medicine.

- Dr Jacqueline Saw, program director of the Interventional Cardiology Fellowship Program at VGH and clinical professor with the UBC Faculty of Medicine.
- Dr Andrew Shih, hematopathologist at VGH, medical director and regional medical leader of Transfusion Medicine at VCH and clinical assistant professor in the UBC Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.
- Dr Isabella Tai, gastroenterologist at VGH and UBC Hospital and assistant professor with the UBC Department of Medicine.
- Dr Teresa Tsang, director of Echo Lab at VGH and UBC Hospital and professor with the UBC Department of Medicine.

FIT now available at labs in BC

Fecal immunochemical testing (FIT), part of the early screening process for colon cancer, has resumed in British Columbia after distribution of FIT kits was temporarily suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 situation.

Eligible patients can pick up FIT kits from any public or private lab across the province with a referral from their health care provider. For patients who had picked up their FIT kit at the time of the testing suspension and have not completed it, now is the time to complete the test and return it to the lab.

Labs in BC have introduced special measures to keep patients and staff safe from COVID-19. It is recommended that patients

check with their preferred labs for any COVID-19 related procedures or instructions prior to picking up their FIT kit.

More information about FIT kits is available at www.screeningbc.ca/covid-19.

Breast cancer screening resumes

The BC Cancer Breast Screening Program resumed screening mammography services in select screening centre sites in June. The introduction of screening mammography occurred in a measured, phased approach, with each site working with downstream diagnostic services to ensure there is capacity for follow-up



Childhood immunizations drop during COVID-19

ImmunizeBC is recommending that physicians who provide routine childhood vaccinations contact the parents of their young patients to bring their vaccines up to date. The BCCDC has developed a document for physicians (Continuity, Prioritization and Safe Delivery of Immunization Services During COVID-19 Response) which provides guidance on infant and childhood immunization programs, as well as

those for adults. Priority immunizations are the infant series, including the doses beginning at 2 months of age, and the 12-month doses.

Physicians who do not usually provide immunization services directly but have pediatric or high-risk adult patients in their practice can encourage parents and others to continue with immunization services through their local health unit.

procedures, as well as sufficient personal protective equipment on hand before resuming services. It is anticipated that all sites, including three mobile screening units, will be screening again in July. This measured approach is to ensure that patient anxiety due to abnormal screening results is minimized, and to provide a safe environment for cancer screening to occur.

- **Hand hygiene:** Hand sanitizer and/or hand-washing stations are available at all screening sites to support good hand hygiene.
- **Physical distancing:** Breast screening centres have rearranged their waiting areas and allow more time between patients to support physical distancing. Unscheduled walk-in appointments will not be accommodated at this time.
- **Enhanced cleaning:** Mammography equipment and exam rooms are frequently cleaned and sanitized in accordance with provincial guidelines.
- **Personal protective equipment:** Screening staff wear personal protective equipment including surgical masks, appropriate eye protection, and gloves to protect themselves and others.
- **COVID-19 screening:** Patients are screened for COVID-19 symptoms at the entrance to the building or facility.

The Breast Screening Program has been contacting patients on existing wait lists and those whose previous appointments were canceled due to COVID-19 to book a new appointment.

Breast screening was temporarily suspended in March to support physical distancing measures and to assist in efforts to minimize COVID-19 transmission in the community. A temporary suspension in screening services allowed hospitals to redeploy and train essential health care workers in the likelihood of a potential surge in COVID-19 patients requiring acute care. For more information, visit www.screeningbc.ca/breast.

An AI solution to COVID-19

BC-based Patriot One Technologies and its subsidiary, Xtract Technologies, is collaborating with Vancouver General Hospital and the University of British Columbia, among others, to develop an artificial intelligence (AI) solution to help radiologists identify the increased risk of COVID-19. CT and X-ray scans obtained from around the world are being labeled from a group of 14 radiologists into three classes: background, normal lung, and ground glass opacity (GGO). The percentage of lung volume affected by GGO is a leading indicator for COVID-19, and the development of an

automated approach to assess this can greatly assist medical practitioners to quickly diagnose early onset of the virus.

Using these labeled images, the Xtract AI team is training 3D residual networks (a style of AI algorithm) to automatically identify GGO volumes in the lungs and compare them with the total volume of the lungs. The ratio of affected lungs in new patients can then be calculated from analyzing CT and X-ray images of their lungs.

The project is being led by Dr Savvas Nicolaou and Dr William Parker and is supported by the UBC Community Health and Well-being Cloud Innovation Centre. Additional support for the project is being provided by the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute. The team will continue to improve the model as more data become available, with the aim of achieving greater than 90% diagnostic accuracy. The model has been released under an open source licence, to be shared with health care facilities worldwide to help early diagnosis of COVID-19 patients.

Chronic pain: Online patients support groups

Pain BC is providing its free pain support and wellness groups online in order to provide education and peer support to people during

Information for physicians reopening offices



Written by physicians, *The Doctor Is In: Recommendations for Expanding In-person Care in Community-based Physician Practices*, compiles official guidelines for opening community-based physician offices in a one-stop source of information. The document also provides insights and templates to help family physicians and specialists with community practices effectively implement changes resulting from the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. It covers topics such as:

- What to think about before expanding in-person care.
- Preparing physical office space.
- Developing a safety plan.
- Building physician and staff wellness and resilience.
- Using checklists and a template to develop individualized plans.

The document will be updated as new information becomes available. It is accessible online, along with information on all COVID-19-related supports for physicians, at www.doctorsofbc.ca/working-change/advocating-physicians/coronavirus-covid-19-updates.

physical distancing due to COVID-19. The peer-led groups provide an opportunity for people living with persistent pain to interact and build a community of support while learning about pain, pain management, and coping strategies.

Patients can register for a group in their geographic region. There is also a men's-only group, which is open to men from any area in BC. All groups meet online on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month; those without Internet access can dial in by phone. For more information, visit www.painbca/supportgroups, or call 1 844 880-PAIN (7246).

Back-to-practice resources

The Doctors Technology Office (DTO) has prepared a guide for physicians preparing to reopen clinics and offices, *Getting Back to Practice*, and has posted a recording of a recent online seminar. The resources provide suggestions on how to rebuild patient volumes for clinics using virtual care, operating in a hybrid virtual/in-person model, and best practices for communicating with patients. For support or information about webinars or resources, contact the DTO at 604 638-5841, dtinfo@doctorsofbc.ca, or visit www.doctorsofbc.ca/resource-centre/physicians/doctors-technology-office-dto.

Guide for youth living with schizophrenia

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada has developed a guide for both the young people who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia and the health care professionals, families, and others who support them. The guide is a resource with up-to-date and accessible information about living with and beyond schizophrenia, and setting the course toward recovery, offering readers information on the types of health services and support that are available.

The guide, *Hope and Recovery, Your Guide to Living with and Beyond Schizophrenia*, is based on the Canadian Schizophrenia Treatment Guidelines developed in 2017 by a multidisciplinary team of experts, patients, and family members from across Canada. It is available online at <https://schizophrenia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Hope-and-Recovery-Guide.pdf>.

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