



### FROM THE SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR

Dear members of the SMRC community,

I'm delighted to share this edition of St. Mary's Research Centre's newsletter, which highlights a major milestone for our team: the successful launch of our inaugural research symposium, the 1st Canadian Symposium on Managing Toxicities of Emerging Cancer Therapies (CAN-TOX).

After six months of planning, CAN-TOX took place on May 23, 2025. I could not be prouder of the dedication shown by our team, especially Dr. Khashayar Esfahani, CAN-TOX Scientific Program Chair. With 150 in-person attendees (24% from outside of McGill) and nearly 200 virtual participants (41% from outside of Quebec), the symposium clearly addressed a need in the cancer community. A recap and photos can be found on page 4, planning for next year's edition is already in progress.

In May, we were proud to celebrate a major accomplishment by our colleague Dr. Ivan Litvinov, who was awarded the FRQS Chercheur-boursier clinicien – Senior award. Dr Litvinov joined SMRC in March as part of our Cancer Care research domain. This award recognizes his outstanding contributions to dermatologic research and signals the growing influence of his work. In addition, Dr Litvinov has travelled to Indigenous communities in Northern Quebec to co-design a dermatologic care and research model that will allow local teams to develop self-reliance and accelerated remote access to skin health.

During the spring, SMRC bid a heartfelt farewell to two individuals who have been instrumental to our research community: Najia Hachimi-Idrissi, Associate CEO of the CIUSSS-ODIM, and Franca Cantini, Program Manager of the Oncology Clinical Trials Program. On behalf of all at SMRC, we thank them both for their leadership and unwavering support to scientific advancement.



#### IN THIS ISSUE

2- Highlight:

4 - SMRC News

6 - Academic Output

8 - Roster of Oncology

Clinical Trials

9 - COMEO

10 - St. Mary's Research  
Centre Scientific Series

11 - Upcoming events



## FROM THE SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR

SMRC's scientific programming will pause during the summer months. However, we have prepared an exciting lineup of Scientific Series Lectures and Community Conferences for the fall. The full calendar is available on page 24.

I wish you all a safe, restorative, and well-deserved summer break. I look forward to reconvening in September with renewed energy and continued momentum.

Ari N. Meguerditchian, MD  
Scientific Director

# Highlight:

## 1st Canadian Symposium on Managing Toxicities of Emerging Cancer Therapies

# CAN-TOX

### 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Symposium on Managing Toxicities of Emerging Cancer Therapies

On May 23, 2025, St. Mary's Research Centre held the first edition of the Canadian Symposium on Managing Toxicities of Emerging Cancer Therapies (CAN-TOX). Spearheaded by SMRC Associate Scientist and CAN-TOX Scientific Program Chair Khashayar Esfahani, the symposium was born from a clear vision: to create a dedicated platform for meaningful exchange on the complexities of cancer therapy toxicities—an area he identified as underrepresented in existing Canadian research forums.



CAN-TOX brought together an impressive roster of speakers from leading institutions around the world, including McGill University, Harvard University, the University of Munich, and the University of California, San Francisco. Our speakers shared their expertise across a wide array of topics, united by a common goal of improving the management of toxicities in cancer care.



The event opened with a powerful personal testimonial from fourth-year McGill medical student Oliver Terry, who shared his experiences as a cancer patient with melanoma and how they informed his decision to pursue a career in medicine. Testimonials like Oliver's ground our research efforts in what truly matters: enhancing the care and wellbeing of patients.

*"In a field where today's practice quickly becomes yesterday's news, the speakers' presentations offered valuable insights into the future of immune-related adverse events (irAEs),"* observed Dr. Esfahani in his opening remarks. "They also helped lay the foundation for stronger networks across academic centers and fostered interdisciplinary collaboration."

We extend our sincere thanks to all the speakers who contributed their time and expertise to making this event so impactful. Your insights sparked critical conversations and improved our collective understanding of cancer toxicities.

# Highlight:

## 1st Canadian Symposium on Managing Toxicities of Emerging Cancer Therapies

# CAN-TOX

This event would not have been possible without the generous support of our pharmaceutical sponsors: Pfizer, Bristol Myers Squibb, Merck, AstraZeneca, Eisai, Novartis, Regeneron, Roche, GSK, Gilead, BeiGene, EMD, Amgen, Ipsen, Incyte. Your support for educational healthcare research events like CAN-TOX will go on to help improve patient care and cancer toxicity management not only in Canada, but around the world. A special thank-you to the St. Mary's Hospital Foundation and the Edward W. Tinmouth Lectureship in Community Cancer Care for their steadfast support of SMRC's mission.



Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive, confirming the value of a symposium focused on the rapidly evolving field of novel cancer therapeutics. We look forward to welcoming everyone again next year!



## Dr. Ivan Litvinov awarded FRQS Chercheur-boursier clinicien – Senior



This May, SMRC's Dr. Ivan Litvinov received the "Chercheurs-boursiers cliniciens - Senior" award from the Fonds de Recherche du Québec - Santé (FRQS).

This award will support Dr. Litvinov's project: *Élucider la pathogénèse moléculaire, améliorer le diagnostic et la prise en charge des patients atteints de cancer de la peau et de maladies inflammatoires de la peau, en mettant l'accent sur les populations autochtones du Nord du Québec* (Elucidate the molecular pathogenesis, improve diagnosis and management of patients with skin cancer and inflammatory skin diseases, with a focus on indigenous populations in northern Quebec).

SMRC is thrilled to celebrate this accomplishment with Dr. Litvinov, and we look forward to seeing the continued impacts of his research.

Dr. Litvinov recently travelled to Northern Quebec in an effort to close the dermatologic care and research gap in Indigenous communities, who often have to travel far from home for basic care.

Dr. Litvinov is putting SMRC's mission of community-based care and cancer prevention into action.

Read the full press release on Dr. Litvinov's FRQS award and dermatologic research our website.

## Dr. Ari Meguerditchian awarded 2025 McGill UGME Teaching Excellence Award



SMRC's Scientific Director Dr. Ari Meguerditchian was recently awarded the 2025 McGill University Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) Teaching Excellence Award.

Dr. Meguerditchian received the most nominations from students, who recognized and appreciated his outstanding teaching contributions and his devotion towards advancing the next generation of residents and physicians. McGill's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences officially recognized Dr. Meguerditchian's accomplishment at the reception ceremony on March 26, 2025.

## Dr. Sylvie Lambert launches new interactive patient tool on PROMs



SMRC researcher Dr. Sylvie Lambert and her team developed an educational tool in the form of an online mini-site to help patients understand the role of patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) in healthcare. This tool is also useful for clinicians, to engage with their patients and build adherence to PROMs.

This mini-site was launched in collaboration with the Unité de soutien SSA Québec. [Explore the digital tool here.](#)

## Dr. Julia Chabot appointed President of the Association des médecins gériatres du Québec



Dr. Julia Chabot appointed President of the Association des médecins gériatres du Québec

SMRC researcher and geriatrician Dr. Julia Chabot was recently appointed as President of the Association des médecins gériatres du Québec for the 2025-2027 term. Appointed in May 2025, Dr. Chabot brings compassion, geriatric expertise, and a strong commitment to advancing care for older adults to this leadership role.

## SMRC announces new research partnership with the Université de Caen (Normandie, France)

SMRC recently introduced a new partnership with Université de Caen Normandie, the INSERMU1077 “Neuropsychology and Imaging of Human Memory” lab, and French health-tech start-up Wivy.

Through this partnership, we are launching the AN-Famille project: a participatory research initiative to co-develop a digital application that strengthens communication between individuals with cognitive impairment and their loved ones during institutional visits.

This initiative aligns with our key strategic research priority of improving care for older adults. Our goal is to co-create non-pharmacological solutions that enhance cognitive and emotional well-being, build connection, and support caregivers. St. Mary’s Research Centre is represented in this collaboration by researcher Dr. Julia Chabot.

## SMRC Orthopaedics hosts patient event at St. Mary's Hospital Centre clinic

The St. Mary's Orthopaedics team recently hosted an educational session for patients at the Orthopaedics clinic on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of St. Mary's Hospital Centre. This event focused on sharing valuable information about the St. Mary's clinical trials program, as well as current SMRC research on Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis.



## SMRC highlights COMEO and RSH at the 1st Symposium on ethics and responsible conduct in research

On May 29, SMRC was invited to attend the 1st Symposium on ethics and responsible conduct in research, hosted by the Unité de soutien et d'encadrement de la recherche (USER) under the CIUSSS-ODIM. Our research centre was given a kiosk to share information on our Research Support Hub and Community Engagement Office service offers.

SMRC was also represented in the lecture period, with Dr. Sylvie Lambert participating in a discussion panel on practicing responsible ethics in research.



## SMRC wishes Najia Hachimi-Idrissi a happy retirement!

On May 15, SMRC wished a heartfelt farewell and happy retirement to Mme Najia Hachimi-Idrissi, Associate CEO of the CIUSSS-ODIM. Throughout her mandate, Najia promoted innovation, collaboration, and the fundamental role of research in the development of healthcare. Her constant support and confidence in SMRC's mission have left a deep mark, for which we are sincerely grateful.



## STUDENT SUCCESSES:

### Nina Morena presents fellowship research at Weizenbaum Institute

PhD candidate Nina Morena presented her research on “Knowledge making and online literacies of young people with metastatic breast cancer” as part of her fellowship at the Weizenbaum Institute in Berlin, Germany.

The Weizenbaum Institute’s Open Fellowship Program supports interdisciplinary researchers whose work aims to create meaningful social impact. During her fellowship, Nina had the opportunity to meet new researchers across disciplines and gain a new perspective on her doctoral project. She is currently completing her PhD under the supervision of SMRC’s Scientific Director, Dr. Ari Meguerditchian.



### Paige Boklaschuk receives CIHR and FRQS Scholarships

MSc candidate Paige Boklaschuk was recently awarded the CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship and the FRQS Masters Training Scholarship to support her project, “The role of low intensity physical activity on ovarian cancer risk”. Paige is completing her MSc under the supervision of SMRC researcher, Dr. Anita Koushik.



### Chang Sun receives CIHR Graduate Scholarship

MSc candidate Chang Sun was recently awarded the CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship to support her project, “Characterization of the Penile Microbiome and its Relationship to Human Papillomavirus Prevalence and Incidence”. Chang is completing her MSc under the supervision of SMRC researcher Dr. Talía Malagón.



# Academic Output



## Peer-reviewed scientific publications

Amina Moustaqim-Barrette, Hibo Rijal, Santina Conte, Mahan Maazi, Johnny Hanna, Alexandra Sarah Victoria Kelly, Alicia Belaiche, Alyson McKenna, Sandra Pelaez, François Lagacé, **Ivan V Litvinov**. Evaluating UV exposure and skin cancer prevention behaviours in Canada: a national population-based cross-sectional study. *BMJ Public Health* 2025;3:e001983. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjph-2024-001983>

Kevin L'Espérance, Sreenath Madathil, Jennifer A. Ritonja, Michal Abrahamowicz, Vikki Ho, Belinda Nicolau, Jennifer O'Loughlin, **Anita Koushik**. Trajectories of body fatness in adulthood and the risk of ovarian cancer. *Cancer Epidemiology* 96:102797. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.canep.2025.102814>

**Lydia Ould Brahim, Sylvie D. Lambert**, Nancy Feeley, **Jane McCusker**, Dan Bilsker, **Mark J. Yaffe**, Rosetta Antonacci, Stephanie Robins, John William Kayser, Christine Genest, Haida Paraskevopoulos, Jessica Blair, Andrea Laizner. The Consolidated Approach to Intervention Adaptation (CLARION): Developing and undertaking an empirically and theoretically driven intervention adaptation. *Implement Sci Commun* 6, 59 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43058-025-00731-y>

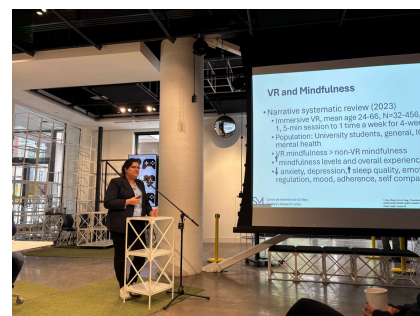
**Nina Morena**, Elly Dimya Htite, Yitzchok Ahisar, Victoria Hayman, Carrie A Rentschler, **Ari N Meguerditchian**. Breast Cancer Vlogs on YouTube: Descriptive and Content Analyses. *JMIR Infodemiology* 2025;5:e66812. doi: 10.2196/66812

## Conference presentations

### Dr. Harmehr Sekhon presents VR research at RECOVER Symposium

SMRC's Dr. Harmehr Sekhon was invited to present her research at Concordia University's RECOVER Symposium on May 21. Dr. Sekhon shared insights on VR interventions for older adults, as well as how these technologies can be leveraged to increase mindfulness and reduce mental stress in patients. She was also invited to participate in a panel discussion on using VR as a tool for rehabilitation.

Watch her lecture and panel discussion [here](#)



# Academic Output



## Dr. Ari Meguerditchian shares research insights at the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation

Dr. Ari Meguerditchian, SMRC's Scientific Director, was invited to participate in a panel discussion at the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation's Forum on Women's Health. The theme of this year's forum was "Progression, Recurrence: Better Understanding for Prevention," and Dr. Meguerditchian discussed new therapeutic strategies to thwart breast cancer.



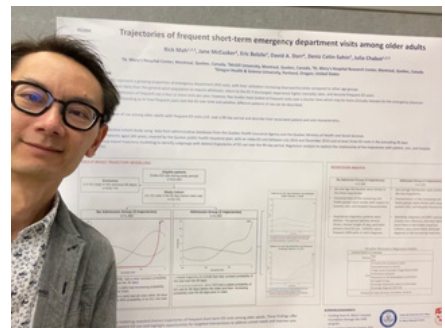
## Dr. Lyndia Dervis participates in AQME sustainability panel

SMRC researcher Dr. Lyndia Dervis was invited to participate in a panel discussion held by the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement (AQME). This discussion focused on sustainability in healthcare, and Dr. Dervis shared her expertise on topics such as endocrine disruptors, legislation for increased environmental considerations in healthcare institutions, and how certain populations with lower socioeconomic standing may be more vulnerable to pollutants.



## Dr. Rick Mah presents emergency medicine research at ICEM 2024

SMRC researcher and emergency medicine physician Dr. Rick Mah recently presented his research at the 24<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Emergency Medicine (ICEM 2024), one of the leading international events in the field. Dr. Mah's research study examined patterns of frequent emergency department use among older adults using province-wide administrative data. This project was supported by a CARE grant through St. Mary's Research Centre.



# Academic Output

## Dr. Julia Chabot presents study results at the High Value Healthcare Symposium

SMRC researcher Dr. Lyndia Dernis was invited to participate in a panel discussion held by the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement (AQME). This discussion focused on sustainability in healthcare, and Dr. Dernis shared her expertise on topics such as endocrine disruptors, legislation for increased environmental considerations in healthcare institutions, and how certain populations with lower socioeconomic standing may be more vulnerable to pollutants.



## Dr. Julia Chabot highlights SMRC research at la SAMS' Benefit Evening 2025

Dr. Julia Chabot was invited to speak at the 2025 Benefit Evening hosted by la Société pour les arts et la musique en santé (SAMS), on the topic of "Human Resonance". Dr. Chabot shared her expertise on the therapeutic properties of music and highlighted ongoing research at SMRC, including her project with Dr. Harmehr Sekhon on virtual reality musical interventions for older adult patients.



## Dr. Sylvie Lambert leads session at McGill Summer Institutes in Global Health

On May 26, SMRC's Dr. Sylvie Lambert led a session at the McGill Summer Institutes in Global Health, as part of the course Implementation Science for Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention and Management. Her talk, "Putting Theory into Action: Applying Frameworks in Implementation Science - Lessons Learned Along the Way", draws on over a decade of applied research in cancer survivorship, caregiver support, and the integration of digital health tools.



## Dr. Sylvie Lambert presents at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Congrès de l'Acfas

Dr. Sylvie Lambert was invited to co-present on the topic of "In the Shadow of Cancer: Caregivers" alongside caregiver Chantal Tardif, at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Congrès de l'Acfas. This presentation was part of the 429<sup>th</sup> conference section on "Caregiving: key events in the journey and diverse realities depending on the profiles of those receiving assistance", and brought together research and field experience to better support caregivers in oncology.

# Academic Output

## Community-focused publications

**Dr. Ivan Litvinov** was recently interviewed by various major news outlets for his research on melanoma and sun protection trends across Canada. Read and watch his interviews here:

- [1. CTV News](#)
- [2. National Post](#)
- [3. Global News](#)
- [4. The Globe and Mail](#)
- [5. La Presse](#)

**Dr. Julia Chabot** was featured in a recent La Presse article on her efforts providing care for older adults at CHSLD Herron during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read the article [here](#).



# Roster of Oncology Clinical Trials



## **Bladder cancer**

### Accrument Complete

A Phase 3, randomized, study of neoadjuvant chemotherapy alone versus neoadjuvant, chemotherapy plus Nivolumab or Nivolumab and BMS-986205, followed by continued post- surgery therapy with Nivolumab and BMS-986205 in participants with muscle-invasive bladder cancer. [CA017-078]

## **Breast cancer**

### Active Recruitment

A Phase 3, Randomized, Multi-center, Open-label Study of DB-1303 Versus Investigator's Choice Chemotherapy in Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor 2 (HER2)-low, Hormone Receptor Positive (HR+) Metastatic Breast Cancer Patients whose Disease has Progressed on Endocrine Therapy (DYNASTY-Breast02)

Registre cancer du sein métastatique [Groupe McPeak-Sirois]

### Accrument Complete

A Phase III Study of Trastuzumab Deruxtecan (T-DXd) with or without Pertuzumab vs Taxane, Trastuzumab and pertuzumab in HERs-Positive, first-line Metastatic Breast Cancer [Destiny]

A Clinical Trial to Determine the Efficacy of Five Years of Letrozole Compared to Placebo in Patients Completing Five Years of Hormonal Therapy Consisting of an Aromatase Inhibitor (AI) or Tamoxifen Followed by an AI in Prolonging Disease-Free Survival in Postmenopausal Woman with Hormone Receptor Positive Breast Cancer [NSABP-42]

Identification and evaluation of patients at risk of developing cardiotoxicity after receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer, leukemia or lymphoma [CarChem]

## **Lung cancer**

### Active Recruitment

A Phase 3, Randomized, Double-blind, Multicenter Study of MK-1084 in Combination With Pembrolizumab Compared With Pembrolizumab Plus Placebo as Firstline Treatment of Participants With KRAS G12C-Mutant, Metastatic NSCLC With PD-L1 TPS  $\geq$ 50% (MK-1084-004)

# Roster of Oncology Clinical Trials



## **Lung cancer - continued**

A Phase III, Randomised, Open-label, Global Study of Datopotamab Deruxtecan (Dato-DXd) in Combination With Rilvegostomig (AZD2936) or Rilvegostomig Monotherapy Versus Pembrolizumab Monotherapy for the First-line Treatment of Participants With Locally-advanced or Metastatic Non-squamous NSCLC With High PD-L1 Expression (TC  $\geq$  50%) and Without Actionable Genomic Alterations (TROPION-Lung10)

A Phase III, Randomised, Open-Label Study of Savolitinib in Combination With Osimertinib Versus Platinum-Based Doublet Chemotherapy in Participants With EGFR Mutated MET-Overexpressed and/or Amplified, Locally Advanced or Metastatic Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer Who Have Progressed on Treatment With Osimertinib [SAFFRON]

An Open-label, Multicenter, Phase 3 Randomized, Active-Comparator-Controlled Clinical Study of Pembrolizumab (MK-3475) in Combination With Sacituzumab Govitecan Versus MK-3475 Monotherapy as First-line Treatment in Participants With PD L1 TPS Greater than or Equal to 50% Metastatic Non-small Cell Lung Cancer [KEYNOTE D46/EVOKE-03]

A Phase 3 Study of Pembrolizumab in Combination With Carboplatin/Taxane (Paclitaxel or Nab-paclitaxel) followed by Pembrolizumab With or Without Maintenance MK-2870 in the First-line Treatment of Metastatic Squamous Non-small Cell Lung Cancer [MK-2870-023]

A Phase 3 Randomized Open-Label Study of Adjuvant Pembrolizumab With or Without MK-2870 in Participants With Resectable Stage II to IIIB (N2) NSCLC not Achieving pCR After Receiving neoadjuvant Pembrolizumab With Platinum-based Doublet Chemotherapy Followed by Surgery [MK-2870-019]

### Accruelement Complete

A phase 3 study of Pembrolizumab (MK-3475) in combination with concurrent chemoradiation therapy followed by Pembrolizumab with or without Olaparib vs concurrent chemoradiation therapy followed by Durvalumab in participants with unresectable, locally advanced, stage III non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). [MK 7339-012]

# Roster of Oncology Clinical Trials



## **Lung cancer - Accrument complete continued**

A phase 3 study of Pembrolizumab (MK-3475) in combination with concurrent chemoradiation therapy followed by Pembrolizumab with or without Olaparib vs concurrent chemoradiation therapy followed by Durvalumab in participants with unresectable, locally advanced, stage III non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). [MK 7339-012]

A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled phase 3 study of Pembrolizumab (MK-3475) in combination with concurrent chemoradiation therapy followed by Pembrolizumab with or without Olaparib (MK-7339), compared to concurrent chemoradiation therapy alone in participants with newly diagnosed treatment-naïve limited-stage small cell lung cancer (LS-SCLC). [MK 7339-013]

A Phase 3 Study of Pembrolizumab in Combination with Carboplatin/Taxane (Paclitaxel or Nab-paclitaxel) Followed by Pembrolizumab with or without Maintenance Olaparib in the First-line Treatment of Metastatic Squamous Non-small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC) [MK7339-008]

A Phase III, Randomized, Double-blind Trial of Platinum Doublet Chemotherapy +/- Pembrolizumab (MK-3475) as Neoadjuvant/Adjuvant Therapy for Participants with Resectable Stage II, IIIA, and Resectable IIIB (T3-4N2) Non-small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC) (KEYNOTE-671)

## **Hematology**

### Active Recruitment

Statins for Venous Event Reduction in Patients with Venous Thromboembolism (the SAVER Trial)

Early Detection of Lymphoma Relapse Using Plasma ctDNA Sequencing.

A Prospective National MDS Clinical Database (MDS-CAN)

A Phase 3, Multicenter, Randomized, Double-blind, Placebo-controlled Study Comparing the Efficacy and Safety of Golcadomide Plus R-CHOP Chemotherapy vs Placebo Plus R-CHOP Chemotherapy in Participants with Previously Untreated High-risk Large B-cell Lymphoma (CA073-1020 / GOLSEEK-1)

# Community Engagement Office (COMEO)



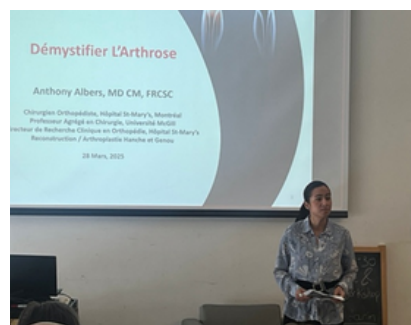
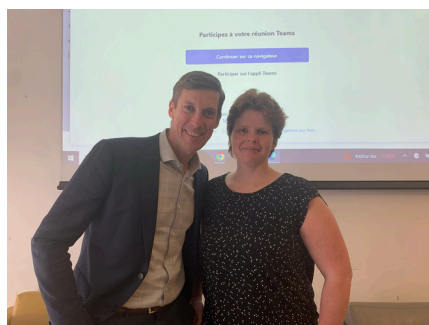
## Community Conference: St. Mary's Orthopaedics

On March 28, 2025, SMRC's Orthopaedics Team and our Community Engagement Office (COMEO) hosted a Community Conference on "Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis".

Held at Bibliothèque Benny, this activity was part of the programming for older adult care and featured SMRC researchers Dr. Anthony Albers and Dr. Jennifer Mutch, who spoke about the role of exercise in reducing the risk of both osteoporosis and osteoarthritis. They also discussed other helpful lifestyle changes and clinical treatments available to those affected by these conditions. Many attendees shared that they found the presentations highly relevant to their everyday lives, and the Q&A session sparked engaging and informative discussion.

In the weeks leading up to the event, SMRC also showcased a poster exhibition at Benny highlighting various impacts and prevention strategies for both osteoporosis and osteoarthritis. Our goal was to share research insights directly with communities who can benefit from this knowledge, empowering individuals with practical tools for better bone and joint health.

A sincere thank you to SMRC's Orthopaedics Team, our collaborators at Bibliothèque Benny, and everyone who participated in this event.





## Community Conference: Dr. Hirsh Rosenfeld Distinguished Public Lecture in Family Medicine

On April 29, 2025, St. Mary's Research Centre was proud to partner with the McGill University Department of Family Medicine to present the annual Dr. Hirsh Rosenfeld Distinguished Public Lecture in Family Medicine.

This year's lecture was delivered by SMRC researcher and physician Dr. Isabelle Leblanc, who presented the topic: "Too much pain, doctor!": Recognizing and Contextualizing Cultural Expressions of Pain. Najia Hachimi-Idrissi, Associate President and CEO of the CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, introduced Dr. Leblanc on behalf of SMRC.



Dr. Leblanc's lecture explored how patients will often express emotional or psychosocial suffering through physical symptoms, which can lead to misunderstandings or missed diagnoses if clinicians rely solely on biomedical frameworks. Her talk emphasized the importance of integrating cultural context and narrative into clinical care, offering practical strategies for improving communication and outcomes in diverse patient populations. The research presented was funded by a CARE grant at SMRC, supporting innovative work aimed at improving equity and compassion in health care delivery.

SMRC is honoured to take part in this collaborative effort[ANMD1], and create a space for discussion on improving culturally sensitive patient care. We thank everyone who attended this event, and look forward to seeing the positive impacts of Dr. Leblanc's research on patient experiences.



*Photo credits: Owen Egan and Joni Dufour*

# Community Engagement Office (COMEO)



## Knowledge transfer and co-development with older adults

On April 24, 2025, SMRC's Community Engagement Office had the pleasure of visiting the senior residents at HLM Place Newman to present a [video highlighting Dr. Harmehr Sekhon's research](#) on integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) tools into older adult care interventions, featuring one senior resident Fauzia Abassi.

The seniors showed great enthusiasm towards learning about these emerging technologies and were glad that their lived experiences and personal perspectives could help shape the direction of our research to improve older adult care. They shared thoughtful suggestions for the kinds of immersive experiences they'd like to explore through VR headsets. It was a meaningful and collaborative exchange, grounded in the shared goal of co-developing interventions that directly benefit community needs.





## **Equity in dementia care & communication between hospital and primary care**

Dr. Claire Godard-Sebillotte

Inequitable care and underdiagnosis disproportionately affect older adults with lower neighbourhood socioeconomic status. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Claire Godard-Sebillotte from the MUHC-RI shared her research on equity in dementia care throughout the Quebec healthcare system.

Key takeaways from the presentation included:

- There are many circumstances in which prescribing medication can be avoided, and instead replaced with other solutions first, primarily to avoid the side effects of dementia medication.
- Lower socioeconomic status typically meant more emergency room visits, hospitalization, and medications prescribed.
- Higher socioeconomic status typically meant less emergency room visits, hospitalization, and medications prescribed.

## **Parental mental health and child development - Examining mechanisms and sociocultural differences**

Dr. Marilyn Ahun

The mental wellbeing of parents can have different effects on a child's educational, emotional, and physical development. On April 3rd, Dr. Marilyn Ahun from McGill's Departments of Medicine and Global Health shared findings from her research program examining the mechanisms through which parental mental health affects a child's development.

Key takeaways from the presentation included:

- Within the ELDEQ study, children with chronic exposure to maternal depression performed slightly poorer on tests concerning language and cognitive abilities.
- Maternal depression is more closely associated with cognitive outcomes in male children than female children.
- Intervention tools and programs involving healthcare workers can support parents in promoting child development skills creation.

# St. Mary's Research Centre Scientific Series



## **Family Caregiving in an Era of Healthcare Shortages and an Aging Population**

Dr. Jennifer Baumbusch

Family members often each want to be involved in care in different ways, and to different degrees. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Jennifer Baumbusch from the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia shared her research on family caregivers' experiences of navigating the complexities of the healthcare system.

Key takeaways from the presentation included:

- There are numerous compounding crises within the Canadian healthcare system, including a lack of primary care, shortage of healthcare professionals, and waitlists for long-term care facilities.
- Hospitals are now being used as an entryway to community-based services.
- Trauma-informed care can give us tools and insights on how to work better with family caregivers to create conscious collaboration.

## **Lifestyle across the life course and ovarian cancer prevention**

Dr. Anita Koushik

Cancer has long been known to be a disease of aging. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, SMRC's Dr. Anita Koushik shared her expertise on cancer prevention, specifically examining modifiable lifestyle factors like body fatness and physical activity, and their relation to ovarian cancer risk.

Key takeaways from the presentation included:

- Cancer is the current leading cause of death in Canada.
- Including considerations of exposure timing across the life course is instrumental in understanding degree of risk of ovarian cancer.
- Most cancers are detected and diagnosed later in life.

Since August 2023, Anita Koushik has been a professor in the Department of Oncology at McGill University, a researcher at the St. Mary's Research Centre and the first McGill University Research Chair in Community Oncology at the St. Mary's Research Centre. She's also the Director of the McGill Division of Cancer Epidemiology.



## **Isn't there a better way? Using research to address disparities at the intersection of perinatal substance use disorders and incarceration**

Dr. Andrea Knittel

Identifying the gaps in availability of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment is the first step in providing improved care for those affected. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Dr. Andrea Knittel from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill shared her research on the intersection of perinatal SUD and incarceration.

Key takeaways from the presentation included:

- Mass incarceration in the US have had discriminatory and often racialized impacts on incarcerated pregnant people, particularly those with an SUD.
- For those with SUD, incarceration can result in unsupervised substance withdrawal, increase risk of overdose and death by 40x, and interruptions of medications.
- Jenna's Project is a program aimed at improving recovery outcomes by coordinating post-release care in incarcerated perinatal patients with opioid use disorder.

## **Cancer care and outcomes for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities: research and advocacy**

Dr. Alyson Mahar

Advocating for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) along the cancer continuum ensures more equitable care. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Alyson Mahar from Queen's University presented her research findings on how to address gaps in knowledge and ableism in cancer research and care delivery.

Key takeaways from this presentation included:

- Adults with IDD have a difficult time seeking care and getting diagnosed with cancer.
- Lower rates of cancer screening, delays during the diagnosis period, and lower rates of treatment contribute to worse cancer outcomes for individuals with IDD.
- Adults with IDD are more likely to die from cancer compared to adults without IDD.

# St. Mary's Research Centre Scientific Series



## **Better prepared, better repaired: An introduction to surgical prehabilitation**

Dr. Chelsia Gillis

Surgical prehabilitation can help patients recover faster and more effectively. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Chelsia Gillis from the MUHC-RI shared her insights on how the prehabilitation program at the MUHC has vastly improved physical and psychological outcomes for many patients post-op.

Key takeaways from this presentation included:

- Prehabilitation at the MUHC operates along three domains: interventions of exercise, nutrition, and behaviour changes.
- Enhancing functional capacity through pre-hab trainings can allow patients to withstand surgical stressors, improve post-operative outcomes, and facilitate recovery.
- How engaged a patient is in their own health maintenance can factor into the pre-hab training program designed for that individual.

## **Resilience-to-Frailty in Older Adults: A Window on Lifelong Health**

Dr. Karen Bandeen-Roche

The physical resilience concept aims to promote positive outcomes following stressors to older adults. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Karen Bandeen Roche from Johns Hopkins University shared her research on the resilience-to-frailty spectrum, as part of this collaborative lecture with the Simone & Edouard Schouela Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Health of Seniors.

Key takeaways from this presentation included:

- Frailty can be defined as a lack of robustness and resilience to stressors.
- Physical resilience was the focus of this study, and denotes a patient's capacity to bounce back from physical challenges (e.g., total knee replacement surgery).
- The study implemented various stimulus-response tests, including holter monitoring, ACTH stimulation, and diurnal salivary cortisol collection.

# St. Mary's Research Centre Scientific Series



## **The Microbiome of the Neovagina**

Dr. Rachel Pope & Dr. Christina Farr

The natal vaginal microbiome is important in informing gynecological healthcare practices in both cis and transgender women. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Rachel Pope and Dr. Christina Farr from University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center shared clinical research on the neovaginal microbiome after vaginoplasty in transwomen.

Key takeaways from this presentation included:

- After vaginoplasty, trans women have high rates of gynecological symptoms and concerns, including bacterial vaginosis and excessive discharge.
- Many instances of bacteria were skin- or penile-associated.
- The DIVA study found that the neovaginal microbiome composition is diverse and does not resemble the natal vaginal microbiome.

## **The right support for the right person, at the right time: Real-world implementation of a stepped care, interdisciplinary post-radiation rehabilitation program for survivors of head and neck cancer**

Sydney Wasserman

Self-management tools are integral to accessible rehabilitation for neck cancer patients. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, SMRC student Sydney Wasserman shared insights into her PhD thesis work under Dr. Sylvie Lambert, including stepped care interventions and TEMPO

Key takeaways from this presentation included:

- Patients with head and neck cancers are among the most vulnerable when it comes to cancer care and survivorship.
- Self-management support interventions, such as TEMPO, are essential in helping patients and their caregivers feel a greater sense of control.
- Digital solutions like TEMPO play an important role in improving the accessibility and equity of care, especially for patients with complex needs."

Sydney Wasserman is a registered nurse clinician and current PhD student under the supervision of Dr. Sylvie Lambert.

# Upcoming Events



St. Mary's Research Centre has an exciting Fall 2025 lecture program lined up! See our calendar below for more details. Professional development credits are available for physicians and nurses attending Scientific Series Lectures.

## SEPTEMBER

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>04 Bertrand Lebouché</b><br>McGill University, Department of Family Medicine | <b>18 Kristen Reidel</b><br>Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire en Réadaptation |
| <b>11 Ari Meguerditchian</b><br>McGill University, Department of Surgery        | <b>25 Gustavo Duque</b><br>McGill University, Department of Medicine               |

## OCTOBER

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|--|---|
| <b>02 Tracie Barnett</b><br>McGill University, Department of Family Medicine | <b>23 Timothy Wideman</b><br>McGill University, School of Physical & Occupational Therapy |
| <b>09 Saima Hassan</b><br>CHUM, Department of Surgery                        | <b>30 Sarah Chehayeb</b><br>McGill University, Ingram School of Nursing                   |
| <b>16 Farhana Shariff</b><br>University of Manitoba, Department of Surgery   |   |

## NOVEMBER

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|--|--|
| <b>06 Stephen Milford</b><br>Basel University, Institute for Biomedical Ethics   | <b>20 Gilles Allali</b><br>Leenards Memory Center, Head of service |
| <b>13 Walter Marcantoni &amp; Bertine Akouamba</b><br>CIUSSS-ODIM, Direction des affaires académiques et de l'innovation | <b>27 Shayan Karimi</b><br>McGill University, Medical Student      |

## DECEMBER

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|---|---|
| <b>4 Yuliya Nikolov</b><br>CAMH, Neurobiology of Depression and Aging Program | <b>11 Rick Mah</b><br>McGill University, Department of Emergency Medicine |
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