

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

PHYSIOLOGY and PHARMACOLOGY

Message from the Chair

Hello everyone!

Happy New Year - I hope you all had a good and restful break. It will be a busy year once again, so the rest is important! All that snow from this week would have been nice to have over the break though.....

Term 2 has begun, thanks to everyone teaching, TA-ing, etc. And thanks to all the teams switching to online teaching on short notice this week.

CIHR deadlines are just around the corner again. Good luck for all those expecting results from the September competition and to those putting in grants this round! Hopefully there will be some good news. In other research-related news, the Western Vice-provost for Research Dr. Penny Pexman will attend our department meeting next week. Please come prepared with questions for her.

One note on department seminars, Mondays at 3pm. These are a great opportunity to learn about topics that are outside your core area of expertise but highly relevant to Physiology and/or Pharmacology. Moreover, they are a great vehicle to showcase scientific discussions to our trainees. I encourage all faculty and trainees to attend as often as possible.

Happy January!

Frank

This issue:

Welcome
Congratulations
New Organoid Facility
Poster Presentations
Building Tomorrow's
Researchers

Committee Updates:

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Research
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Health & Safety
Social

Graduate Student Council

Upcoming Events:

Department Meeting
Mon, Jan 13th

Upcoming Seminars:

Mon, Jan 13
Mon, Jan 20
Mon, Jan 27

Stay Connected



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PhysPharm



WELCOME

IRA GUPTA – Research Technician with Dr. Adrian Owen

YARA AZZAWI – new graduate student (MSc) with Dr. Donglin Bai

CONGRATULATIONS

HAILEY DRURY – gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Zoe, on Nov 25th

NICOLE CAMPBELL – on being granted Continuing Status as a Teaching Scholar effective July 1, 2025

BONNIE SCHMIDT – awarded the Canadian Science Policy Centre Trailblazer Award in Science and Society

JULIO MARTINEZ-TRUJILLO – has been re-appointed as the Provincial Endowed Academic Chair in Autism at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry

CHRISTOPHER PIN – the Lead Translational Researcher at the new Organoid facility at the Baker Cancer Centre

To graduate students for the completion of their degrees:

ANDREW BELL – MSc (Tom Drysdale)

JIWON HAHM – MSc (David Hill)

QI-TONG LIN – PhD (Peter Stathopoulos)

RYLEIGH VAN NECK – MSc (Qingping Feng)



Welcome to the world, little Zoe!
Born Nov 25th, 5 lbs, 13 oz to
Hailey and Michael Drury.



Dr. Bonnie Schmidt (founder and president, Let's Talk Science), was awarded the Canadian Science Policy Centre Trailblazer Award in Science and Society



NEW ORGANOID FACILITY

LHSC's Baker Centre for Pancreatic Cancer is opening a state-of-the-art organoid facility to personalize cancer treatment. Dr. Chris Pin has been an instrumental part of the Baker Centre team to launch this new facility that will analyze patient tumours outside the body and tailor new treatments to individual patients.

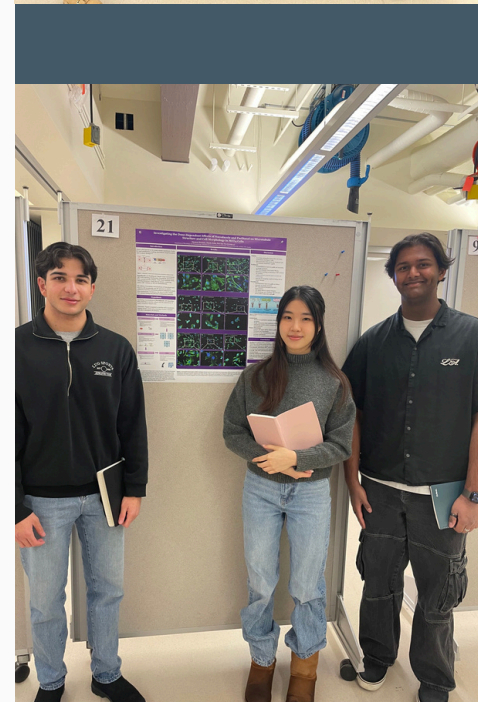
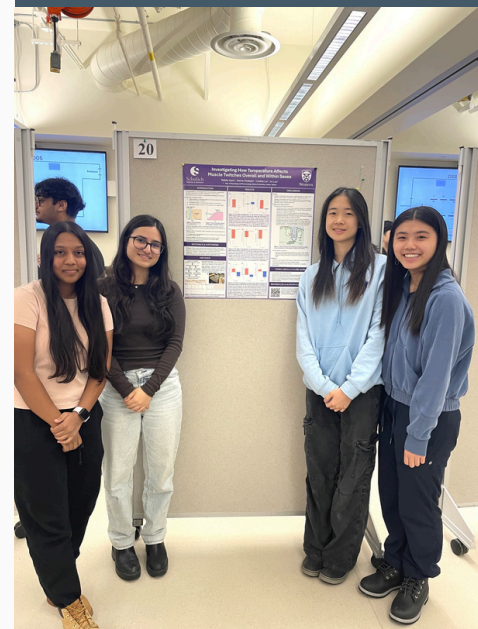
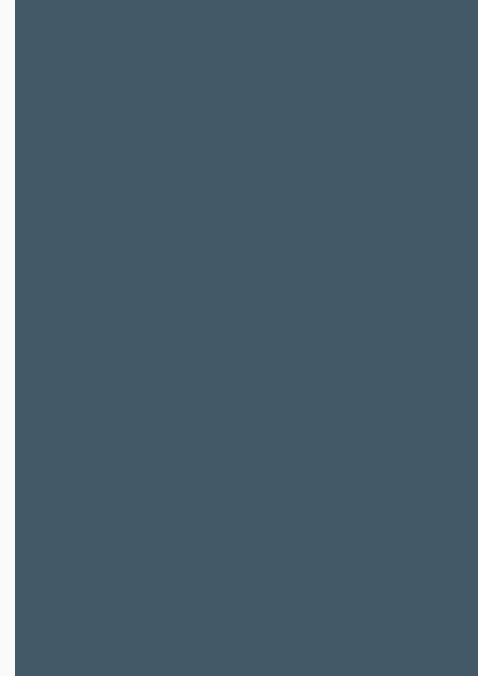
[LINK TO ARTICLE AND VIDEO](#)

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

The PhysPharm 3000E lab course had its poster presentation right before the end of classes. Students used this opportunity to highlight their work for the rotation 2 of the course. For the better part of the 5 weeks prior to the presentation, our students worked hard to design and implement experiments and collect their data for the big day.

Thank you to the faculty and teaching assistants who have supported them. Special thanks go out to Drs. Dagnino and Di Guglielmo, who put together a brand new and exciting cell culture experiment; Dr. Cregan for working with our students on the effects of cancer drugs on cell survival; Drs. Bai and Hardy for supporting our students through two experiments focused on the stretch reflex and neuromuscular junction physiology; Dr. Tirona for introducing the students to pharmacology concepts focused on drug-drug interactions using microsomes, and last, but not least, to Dr. Drysdale, for guiding our students through the Wnt pathway and how chemical exposure at key developmental stages impacts tissue regeneration, using planaria as a model.

We could not do this without you! We are also grateful to the Science Student Council for providing us with funding to purchase a brand-new fluorescent microscope for our cell culture experiments, to be shared with the IMS team. Due to this support, we can now have more students participate in these experiments in the future!



BUILDING TOMORROW'S RESEARCHERS

We are happy to share that we have successfully hosted our first high school outreach event in the department, marking an exciting milestone and the beginning of many more events to come!

On November 11th, this science outreach event brought together curious minds as students from Goderich District Collegiate Institute became scientists for the day. Through an interactive workshop on circadian rhythms, these future researchers explored the question: Are you an early bird or a night owl? Using advanced qRT-PCR techniques, they analyzed their own genotypes, helping them to determine their unique circadian tendencies.

From pipetting samples to running gel electrophoresis, the students gained valuable hands-on experience, diving into the process of scientific research in a real lab setting, bringing concepts from the classroom to life. This workshop inspired curiosity, built confidence, and planted the seeds for a lifelong interest in STEM and open doors to exciting new career paths.

Beyond the lab, the students also had the opportunity to explore campus, interact with faculty, and hear stories from graduate students about their personal academic journeys. This opportunity helped provide guidance for students, empowering them to explore new possibilities regarding their future education.

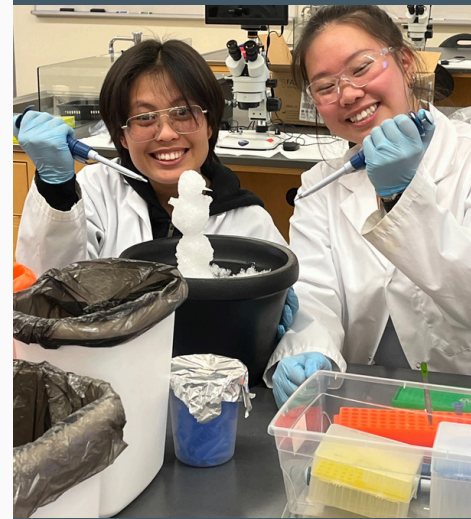
A big thank you goes to Dr. Faraj Haddad for planning and leading this first initiative in the department. We would also like to thank our amazing team of volunteers John Wang, Sahar Mouawad, Abinaci Kaur Bahra, Abbey Jayne Kirkwood and Kathleen McCombe whose hard work and passion towards research made this event possible.

Your Graduate Student Representatives,
Sahar Mouawad and John Wang

Graduate Studies Update

A quick reminder that the internal deadline for OGS applications for international students (and domestic students that were not eligible for tri-council funding) is January 31, 2025. The application should include a research proposal (maximum 2 pages), a special circumstances commentary (maximum 1 page) and a CV (maximum 5 pages).

Please forward your applications to John Di Guglielmo or Olga Krougly.





Undergraduate Studies Update

Happy 2025 everyone! We're back at it again for semester 2. To our semester 1 course managers, congratulations on a successful transition to Brightspace and wrapping up your course. For course managers with semester 2 courses, this is just a reminder to familiarize yourself with the new undocumented absence policy in your syllabus. All absences, whether medical, compassionate, varsity, or undocumented, will be submitted by students through a centralized portal, which you will review on Extranet through a tab called "SAP Instructor". You will need to accept or deny the request upon receiving it. If you have any questions about the process, please reach out to me (abeye2@uwo.ca).

While I shouldn't be looking forward to another teaching break on week 1 of classes, I'll leave this here: Reading Week is Feb 15-23rd. Please ensure you do not have assignments or makeup exams on those dates.

I want to recognize our lab team (Hailey, Baur, Oana, and Christie) for a successfully funded application to purchase a new fluorescent microscope through the Science Student Donation Fund. Amazing work, team! And a big thank you to Michele for her incredible work coordinating our semester 1 makeup exams, grade submissions, and everything else she does behind the scenes.

Have a great semester, everyone!

Research Committee Update

Lunch and Learn

Save the date for our next Lunch and Learn session on March 27th, 2025. We will feature a presentation from Noldus Technologies on Methods and Tools for Behavioral Research.

Research Day

Save the date for the 2025 Gowdey Distinguished Lecture and Research Day on Tuesday, November 4th, 2025. Our distinguished lecturer will be Dr. Hans Clevers, Head of Pharma, Research and Early Development, Roche and Scientist, Molecular Genetics, University of Utrecht (Hubrecht Institute). Dr. Clevers is a pioneer in the development and use of organoids to study the molecular mechanisms of tissue and cancer development. The 2025 Gowdey Lecture will coincide with an Organoid Symposium being held at Western during the same week (organized by Van Lu and Chris Pin). Stay tuned for more details.





We will also be circulating a survey to seek speaker nominations for the 2026 James A.F. Stevenson memorial lecture. Please look out for this and send us your suggestions.

Faculty Biographies

Our work study student, Merna Saleem, is available to help update faculty biographies. Merna will be reaching out to schedule interviews to update biographies on the Department Website. If you would like your update expedited, please contact Merna (msalee29@uwo.ca) and Rithwik Ramachandran (rramach@uwo.ca) to set up a meeting. Please also let us know if you would like to highlight any research related stories on the department website news feed and Merna can assist with putting this together. A recently published story is linked [here](#).

EDID Committee Update

As we embark in a new academic year, we encourage our faculty, staff and students to go through the [Western EDIDA Strategic Plan](#) that was released in December 2024. This document highlights five key EDIDA strategic areas that our university is taking on: Diverse Representation and Engagement; Inclusive Excellence in Learning and Teaching; Inclusive Excellence in Research and Innovation; Safe, Accessible and Inclusive Spaces, Places and Experiences and System Wide Capacity Building and Cultural Change.

In addition, we are provided with an [Action Planning Tool](#) that can be adapted to courses, research, and teaching groups, to ensure that EDIDA principles are at the core of our approach to education.

We are excited to announce that The Honourable Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament, Advocate for EDID in Research, and Champion for Science and Research Funding, will be joining us as our EDID speaker on May 5th. This seminar will be held jointly with the Departments of Physiology & Pharmacology and BrainsCAN.

- Date & Time: May 5th, 3:00–4:00 PM
- Location: DSB 1002

More details about the seminar will be shared soon. Stay tuned!





Health and Safety Committee Update

A friendly reminder to ensure that you and your lab personnel are up to date on training. Please review the email sent on December 3rd that includes a power point and some documentation.

We are required to run through an emergency response refresher training with our staff and students annually. This should include, what to do in the event of a fire, nearest exits, how to use a safety shower and eye wash station. If you are a BCL2 lab, biosafety protocols.

Secondly, we are now required to provide protocol or SOP specific training annually AND document this. The documentation part is new. What this means is that students and staff who are shown new procedures or protocols, should receive training about the hazards-annually. They are then responsible to sign documentation that acknowledges this training.

Social Committee Update

December was an exciting month for the Social Committee! The combined efforts of all of our members helped bring together another successful holiday lunch party with delicious food, a fabulous hot chocolate and dessert bar, and multiple fun contests and activities.

Congratulations to Dr. Oana Birceanu for being crowned the 2024 holiday trivia champion, Hayley Murray for clinching (and grinching) the pHestive outfit trophy, and Saiswaran Manorathan for showcasing a tip-tacular degree of speed and dexterity. Lastly, a big thank you to all the graduate students who took part in the gift exchange, we hope you make good use of your gifts over the holiday break!

We will be planning a Spring Social event in the coming weeks. If you have suggestions for an activity or event, please send your suggestions to one of the committee co-chairs (Faraj Haddad fhaddad2@uwo.ca , Ruud Veldhuizen rveldhui@uwo.ca).





2024 HOLIDAY LUNCH



Graduate Student Council Update

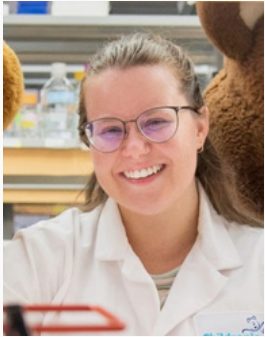
We strongly encourage all students to complete the Schulich Graduate Student Financial Survey! Your input is extremely valuable in helping PSAC and Schulich better understand stipends, cost of living, and the financial realities that graduate students face. Plus, by participating, you'll have the option to enter a draw to win some Western swag!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe-PTgIGSI2An5Ggd3Wa_pSYI5HRKeDhHRaNX3J5bB8t3tMmA/viewform

Upcoming Seminars

The Department of Physiology and Pharmacology 2025 Winter/Spring Series

All lectures held at 3:00 p.m. in MSB 384 and on Zoom unless otherwise noted



Date: Monday, January 13
Speaker: Jennifer Carleton, PhD candidate
Western University

"Exploring the tissue specific expression patterns and roles of Shroom3 in the mouse"

Host: Tom Drysdale



Date: Monday, January 20
Speaker: Gonca Erdemci-Tandogan, PhD
Department of Physics & Astronomy, Western University

"Modelling Developmental Processes"

Host: Chris Pin



Date: Monday, January 27
Speaker: Shawn Whitehead, PhD
Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Western University

"Microglia as a focus for biomarker discovery and therapeutic targeting"

Host: Van Lu

We love celebrating our accomplishments, in and out of the lab.
Please share your stories, pictures and newsworthy items for
upcoming editions! Send emails to jjacob62@uwo.ca.