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Welcome
Bienvenue
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In this issue...

- Faculty Hiring
- Aboriginal Reference Group now established
- Admissions for a Northern Ontario Medical School
- Distance Learning
- New Francophone Reference Group president
- Second Pilot Project wraps up

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Northern Passages

Newsletter of the Northern Ontario Medical School

Accredited! Medical School reaches major milestone

“This is a great day for North-western Ontario,” Dr. Roger Strasser told a crowd gathered for a media conference. On June 8, Strasser, Founding Dean of the Northern Ontario Medical School, formally announced that the School was granted provisional accreditation for the entire MD program from the Liaison Committee of Medical Education (LCME) and the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS).

“This means that we are accepted, we are respected, and that we meet the same quality standards as any other medical school in North America. It also means that we are ready to accept students,” he said.

In March, 2004, a review team



Founding Dean Dr. Roger Strasser addresses the media, while Lakehead University President Dr. Fred Gilbert looks on.

from the LCME and CACMS conducted the accreditation Survey for the Medical School. Accreditation is a rigorous certification process that involved examination of all elements of the organization that will support the

delivery of a medical program.

The School will proceed with recruiting and teaching Year I, as well as preparing for the subsequent stages in the process for accreditation of medical schools.

Look at us now

The first new medical school in Canada in over 30 years recently completed a process to determine the School's new visual identity. After months of consultation, design and concept testing, the School is proud to reveal its new visual identity.

The logo is a symbol that represents the cultural diversity of Aboriginal, Franco-Ontarian and northern communities in the vast geography of the northeast, the northwest and the far north. We are a new medical school and the process has produced a preferred new name, Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

The icon is in the shape of an heraldic shield, reflecting the traditional look of a shield, but executed in a more contemporary style. The colour blue matches the colours and acknowledges the partnership with Lakehead and Laurentian universities and is also

the blue of “truth” and “knowledge”. The symbol of medicine is the serpent twining around the rod of Aesculapius, the ancient god of medicine. The single serpent represents the renewal of youth and health through medicine.

The regal gold banner encircles the shield and brings into the icon three elements: the trillium is a woodlands flower and emblem of the Province of Ontario; the teaching circle from the Aboriginal culture represents the continuum of learning and teaching in the circle of life; the fleur de lis is the broadly recognized emblem of Francophones and our Franco-Ontarian communities. Both universities are recognized by name and colour and are an integral part of the logo of the School.

Linda Ashby, the School's Director of Communications, led the visual identity project.



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine

“Through a process of focus groups and interviews with internal and external groups we have created a name and logo that is meaningful for the students, faculty, staff, and communities of Northern Ontario,” she says. “Now, it only gets harder. We must develop brand recognition in a very competitive marketplace and respond to the expectations this new image creates. This logo will become an important visual element of the promises we make and the reputation we build.” Materials sporting the new name and logo will be produced over the next few weeks in preparation for a Fall rollout.

Francophone Reference Group appoints new president

The Francophone Reference Group is pleased to announce the appointment of Nicole Ranger as the new president, replacing Denis Constantineau who has been assisting the group since early this year.

A graduate of Laurentian University, Nicole continued to pursue her career in health by joining the prestigious Collège Boréal. She is currently the Dean of Health Sciences for Collège Boréal. Prior to working as an administrator, she was a microbiology and chemistry professor for more than 8 years at Boréal. Nicole is also active in the establishment of a new northern Francophone health network Réseau de santé du moyen-nord and represents the postsecondary sector. She is the northern representative on the Board of Governors of RIFSSSO (Regroupement des

intervenants-es francophones en santé et en service sociaux de l'Ontario).

“I am honored to accept this position. As president of the group, I have the responsibility



Nicole Ranger is the president of the Francophone Reference Group

to direct, oversee and supervise the School's Francophone initiatives, as well as manage several Centre National de Formation en Santé (CNFS)

tasks directly related to medical health initiatives at Laurentian University,” says Nicole. She will further ensure that the Francophone Reference Group represents, in a timely manner, the goals and objectives outlined in the annual work plan of the School's Francophone initiatives and will act as a primary advisor between Francophone communities, the School and groups in Northern Ontario.

The Francophone Reference Group was initiated in 2003 as part of the Medical School's commitment to identify, respond and meet the needs of the people of Northern Ontario, including Franco-Ontarian communities, in the development of the new school. Members include various representatives in Francophone communities, particularly with interests in education and health, Francophone students, and the

general public.

The group recently held a strategic planning session and met with the School's Founding Dean to discuss their concerns and to put forward several recommendations to ensure Francophone students are welcomed and supported during their studies and while undertaking clinical placements in northern communities.

There is no doubt that the Francophone Reference Group and the School will continue to pursue partnerships and collaborate wherever possible. It is the School's commitment to create a Francophone-friendly school with the overall goal of providing a medical education option that meets the expectations of all communities in Northern Ontario.

School offers teaching challenge

Early this year, the Northern Ontario Medical School began recruitment of skilled and experienced faculty to deliver the curriculum and conduct innovative research. The School is now in the process of confirming the appointment of about 175 faculty members who will be experts across a range of disciplines.

Faculty members were chosen for three different Divisions: Clinical Sciences, Medical Sciences, and Human Sciences. The Clinical Sciences Division consists mostly of individuals with the M.D. degree (physicians), and also includes healthcare professionals such as nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. The Medical Sciences Division includes faculty with advanced degrees in disciplines such as anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, biochemistry,

cellular and molecular biology, microbiology, immunology, and genetics. The Division of Clinical Sciences is for experts in areas such as ethics, the history of medicine, epidemiology, and community health issues.

The Medical School received over 200 applications for nine medical science positions and three human science positions.

All faculty will support the School's curriculum, organized around five themes: northern and rural health, personal and professional aspects of medical practice, social and population health, the foundations of medicine, and clinical skills in health care. The curriculum will be delivered mainly through case-based learning.

Recruiting clinical faculty is a challenging process given that Northern Ontario is experiencing a shortage of family physicians. The School has worked closely with the Northwestern Ontario Medical Programme (NOMP) and the Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corporation (NOMECC) to recruit clinicians who are keen to be involved in the Medical School by sharing their expertise and knowledge with medical students.

The School has recruited outstanding scientists from universities and medical schools across North America, including some who were born and raised in Northern Ontario. Bringing them back to the community is definitely welcome news for communities in Northern Ontario. More than 200 candidates applied for nine medical science positions and three human science positions.

The new hires were chosen through a rigorous, fair and competitive selection process. Although expertise and research productivity were emphasized in the selection process, individuals chosen were the ones who can support our patient-centred learning program, focusing on people in both the family and community context.

The Medical School emphasizes the special features of Northern Ontario and diversity of cultures Aboriginal, Franco-Ontarian, remote communities, rural communities and northern urban centres. Students will learn in a diverse range of settings, including Aboriginal and Franco-Ontarian communities, supported by faculty who will be their tutors and preceptors to guide them through their four year program.

Students and faculty test curriculum in Pilot Project

Students and faculty participated in the Northern Ontario Medical School's second pilot project in May. Thirty-three students and forty faculty, at both Laurentian and Lakehead campuses, experienced a glimpse of the real teaching and study approach of the School.

The second pilot project examined the ability of students to cope with the amount of material and the format of first year curriculum and provided an opportunity to conduct tutor training.

Like the first student pilot project, the students and faculty spent a large portion of the project in small group and video conference sessions.

The curriculum module covered aspects of public health, health care delivery, the respiratory system, infectious disease, medical practice and clinical skills. The students also learned how to work with patients through the introduction of Patient Perspective and Patient Encounter curriculum topics during the month-long development initiative.



Students in East campus, Sudbury



Students in West campus, Thunder Bay

Distributed Learning provides advantage

The Northern Ontario Medical School is a geographically distributed network with major campuses at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, and Laurentian University, Sudbury. The School will use distributed learning, supported by sophisticated technology, to the best advantage for its students and faculty. The technology will contribute to the unique learning and teaching environment of the School, and permit the students and faculty to connect with learning tools and information and to deliver and receive quality medical education without depersonalizing the way they interact in communities.

Distributed Learning at the Medical School weaves together

four strands of developments in medical education: the preceptor model (usually one-on-one approach), community-based medical education, conventional distance education, and the virtual learning environment to enhance flexible learning, which allows students and faculty to access information and materials through technology, at a time and frequency that is convenient without geographical barriers.

The technology will assist in maximizing our students' and faculty's hands-on experience and patient contact in community settings, while maintaining access to information and educational resources as if they were in a metropolitan teaching hospital.

Also, experience with electronic distance education has been shown to enhance student learning and improve the learner-teacher relationship particularly when learners are geographically dispersed, as such is the case for the Northern Ontario Medical School.

Through partnership with Laurentian and Lakehead universities and collaboration with the Northwestern Ontario Medical Program (NOMP), the Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corporate (NOMEC), NORTH Network, Contact North and K-Net, we are setting up a sophisticated network and technology to support the School's Distributed Learning.

Aboriginal Reference Group underway

The Northern Ontario Medical School has a mandate to contribute to improving the health of the people and communities of Northern Ontario. A large portion of the underserved areas in Northwestern Ontario are Aboriginal communities. The School is committed to the active recruitment of Aboriginal students, and to ensure that curriculum and clinical placement opportunities reflect the realities of practicing medicine in a Northern Ontario Aboriginal community. Orpah McKenzie, Interim Director of Aboriginal Affairs at the School, works as a liaison between the School & Aboriginal Communities.

McKenzie is currently working to establish an Aboriginal Reference Group. "This was one of the recommendations from the Aboriginal Workshop the School hosted last June. The goal is to ensure that the Group has input into the development of the Medical School and its curriculum

content," says McKenzie.

Aboriginals have been under-represented in medical schools, according to McKenzie. There is also a lack of Aboriginal physicians. The Aboriginal Reference Group hopes that providing input will make Medical School more accessible and more relevant to Aboriginal students, with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of Aboriginal doctors practicing in remote communities. "I hear physicians talking about how hard it is working with Aboriginal groups because there are a lot of issues related to giving care to Aboriginal people: the level of illness in aboriginal communities, isolation, access to health services, and even language barriers. We want to introduce all students to Aboriginal health and to the opportunities available to them in these communities," McKenzie says.

The Aboriginal Reference Group will include representatives from

approximately 9 different groups, including the three main provincial territorial organizations (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Treaty #3 and the Union of Ontario Indians).



Orpah McKenzie reviews her contact list as she prepares for the development of the Aboriginal Reference Group.

McKenzie says that recruiting members has not been difficult. "Most of the Aboriginal groups have never had the opportunity to work together on such a significant project. There is a lot of excitement about it," she says.

A workshop to begin drafting the group's terms of reference was held in June. McKenzie hopes that regular meetings will begin in the fall.

Admissions process eliminates barriers

Admissions Criteria:

- a 4-year undergraduate degree
- Canadian citizen or Landed Immigrant status
- Minimum 3.0 grade point average, on a 4.0 scale

The Northern Ontario Medical School has developed Admissions criteria, and is now able to focus more on student recruitment initiatives. Dr. Jill Konkin is Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs at the School. She says that despite the fact that medical school students need a four-year degree to apply, recruitment begins when the prospective students are quite young.

“We are starting recruitment strategies at earlier levels and ultimately the medical school will have a very robust recruitment initiative down even into junior high,” says Konkin.

“We are making it clear that students from the communities of Northern Ontario will have the most advantage at this school”

- Jill Konkin, Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs

Encouraging families and communities to support children who are interested in attending

medical school is another important part of recruitment. The potential impact that these students could have on their communities is very important to relay. “We will help people understand that the evidence shows that medical students who come from rural and remote communities are more likely to go back to similar size communities,” explains Konkin.

The goal of the Northern Ontario Medical School is to increase the number of health care practitioners in the rural, remote and northern urban communities of Northern Ontario. The School is encouraging applications from students from these areas, and has developed an admissions system to support that. “We are making it clear that students from the communities of Northern Ontario will have the most advantage at this school,” says Konkin.

The School's admissions process has been designed to eliminate some of the barriers that can exist for northern students at other schools. “A lot of these barriers are unintentional,” says Konkin. “During the interview process, for example, schools look for involvement in activities such as playing in a national orchestra or on a

national volleyball team. Many rural remote students don't have those opportunities. Even volunteer work can be limited. When you come from a little town that has no hospital, you can't volunteer at a hospital. We are still going to expect that students be involved in volunteer



Anali Dadgostar, a student working in Admissions, displays the School's Admissions brochures, available in English, French and Oji-Cree.

work, sports and other activities during the time they are acquiring their undergrad degrees,” Konkin explains.

Work opportunities can be limiting for some northern students as well. “We know that many rural students return home for the summer to work on the family's farm, instead of working

in a clinic,” says Konkin. “The School will ensure the admissions process takes into account the lifestyles of rural, remote and northern urban people.”

With an estimated two-to-three thousand people applying for the 56 available spots, the admissions process will not be relaxed, but it will be more enabling for students from these communities.

The charter class of the Northern Ontario Medical School will be welcomed in August, 2005. Applications will be taken through the Ontario Medical School Application Service's website at www.ouac.on.ca starting in July 2004. Initial screening of applications will be based on grade point average and responses to an admissions questionnaire. Visit our website at www.normed.ca for further information about admissions.

Northern Ontario Medical School

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A new medical school for the whole of Northern Ontario, the Northern Ontario Medical School is a joint venture of Lakehead and Laurentian Universities. With main campuses in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, we will have multiple teaching and research sites distributed across Northern Ontario, in large and small communities. The School contributes to improving the health of people in Northern Ontario.

Congratulations Joanne

A faculty member of the Northern Ontario Medical School has received a national award. Joanne Muellenbach, Director of Health Information Services, was presented with the BC Decker Research Prize for the article “Assessing the Needs of Rural and Remote Health Practitioners in Northern Ontario: Process and Outcome”. The presentation took

place at the Canadian Health Libraries Association Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland in May. The article was published in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of *Bibliotheca Medica Canadiana*. Muellenbach will share the \$500 cash award with her two co-authors, Dorothy Fitzgerald and Liz Bayley of McMaster University.



Joanne Muellenbach received the BC Decker Research Prize

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