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Northern Passages

Newsletter of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine

In this issue:
... research at NOSM

Northern Ontario School of Medicine

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Minister officially opens labs

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) now has two state-of-the-art research laboratories, one at each main campus.

The labs were officially opened by the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Minister for FedNor. Following the ceremony, Clement toured the East Campus facilities on March 31, chatting with student researchers and marveling at the leading-edge equipment.

"A short 12 months ago, FedNor made one of the largest commitments in its history in support of this innovative facility," said Clement. "It's wonderful to see the results of that $6M investment and to meet the researchers who will undoubtedly make their mark in biomedical research for the benefit of all Canadians."

Thanks to the support of FedNor each main campus now has approximately 20,000 sq. ft. of space supporting research and faculty offices. The labs provide world-class support for researchers engaged in many different types of biomedical discovery activities.

"This event will be a major milestone in the School's history," said Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM's Founding Dean. "These labs are two of the best-equipped in Canada, and will help us not only recruit internationally acclaimed faculty, but provide our students with the environment and tools they need to fully explore this ever-changing field of research."

Honourable Tony Clement (centre) announces the opening of NOSM's modern research labs, located at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and Laurentian University in Sudbury. Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM Founding Dean (left) and Dr. Greg Ross, NOSM's Associate Dean of Research (right) look on.

Part of FedNor's investment supported the installation of an information technology system at the School that will allow students to continue their research in rural and remote communities throughout the North. "Research performed in these labs will focus on Northern health issues and will equip future physicians with the skills needed to deal with the unique health concerns facing Northerners," said Dr. Gregory Ross, NOSM's Associate Dean of Research.

Over the last five years, FedNor has provided funding of more than $6,600,000 to help the Northern Ontario School of Medicine become a reality. Since day one, FedNor has provided substantial funding for the development of the School.

NOSM hosts second Open House event

- Thursday, April 20th, 2006.
- Tours take place from 4pm-7pm.

Everyone is invited!

NOSM will open its doors to the public at both campuses in Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

Dynamic School tours will exhibit some of NOSM's state-of-the-art technology, giving the public a taste of what students experience at the School.

Special information areas will be hosted by the School's Francophone Affairs, Aboriginal Affairs, and Admissions & Student Affairs unit.

For more information, contact: Joey McColeman at Joey.mccolema@normed.ca or 705-662-7275.

Memorial bursary makes a lasting gift

Dr. Avdesh Mathur recently enjoyed an unforgettable evening when a retirement celebration was held in his honour. Roasts and toasts to the Sudbury physician provided memories and highlights of a successful career. The evening's biggest surprise was unveiled when friends and colleagues of Dr. Mathur revealed a bursary, created in his honour, to benefit students of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Over $10,000 had been collected, and the bursary continues to grow.

Dr. Avdesh Mathur

Dr. Mathur is in good company. Proceeds from a March symposium on cancer awareness were donated to the *Dr. Dhaliwal Bursary*, which was created in honour of the doctor's service to cancer care in Northwestern Ontario. A similar bursary celebrates Dr. Rayuda Koka's service in Sudbury. It was established through support from Dr. Koka's friends, business associates and fellow members of the Sunrisers of Sudbury Rotary Club.

These living tributes, honouring the meaningful work of Northern Ontario physicians, will assist medical students in as they pursue a medical education.

Memorial bursaries commemorate the dedication, integrity and care provided by remarkable physicians during their lives. Colleagues, friends, family members and patients are establishing bursaries to honour the memories and contributions of departed physicians who, over the course of a career, touched the lives of hundreds of people.

Dr. Catherine Mitchell recently established the *Dr. Afrodite Tsianou Memorial Bursary* in honour of her late colleague. Dr. Tsianou was well known for her passion for the field of palliative care. She was the first internist in Ontario to be certified in that area by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. Fervently committed to her patients, Dr. Tsianou traveled throughout Northwestern Ontario to attend to them.

"By establishing a bursary in honour of Dr. Afrodite Tsianou, her memory and enthusiasm are kept alive," says Dr. Mitchell in Thunder Bay. "It is my hope that recipients of the Dr. Tsianou bursary will find inspiration in her dedication to her patients and community and her passion for health care, especially in the area of palliative care."

Memorial Bursaries at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine have been created as a lasting legacy to mark the contributions of the following exemplary physicians:

Dr. George Simon Doubilet, Sudbury
Dr. Nicholas Haddad, Sudbury
Dr. Shirley Inouye, Thunder Bay
Dr. J. Campbell Pearson, Thunder Bay
Dr. J.J. Sheahan, Sudbury
Dr. Brian Sherman, Sudbury
Dr. Isaac Uy, Sudbury
Dr. Keith Wilkes, Terrace Bay
Dr. C.G. Wilson, Thunder Bay

To contribute to a bursary, or for information concerning the creation of one, please contact Jennifer Fawcett toll free @ 1-866-376-1718 or nosmdevelopment@normed.ca.

Class of 2009 Bursary challenge

Tara Spicer, a member of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's Charter Class, is challenging her classmates. In the spirit of pay it forward, Spicer's dream is for a student bursary named for the Class of 2009.

This is an opportunity for the Charter Class both to say thank you to past bursary donors and to "pay it forward to the next group." With a knowing smile she says, "There are other things this class is known for. I'd like to see a bursary being one of them."

While some students have responded to Spicer's call, and the pot is growing, she hopes for more. "Contribute now and double your money!" is her invitation. Contributions to the Class of 2009 Bursary will be matched by the province's Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC).

For more information, or to contribute to the Class of 2009 Bursary, contact Jennifer Fawcett, Senior Resource Officer (toll free @ 1-866-376-1718 or nosmdevelopment@normed.ca).

Upcoming NOSM Symposium

Times: 12:00 – 13:30 Eastern, 11:00 – 12:30 Central

The NOSM Symposium Series consists of presentations provided by nationally and internationally recognized experts. Presenters are selected by the Heads of the Clinical Sciences, Medical Sciences and Human Sciences Divisions at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

The Division Heads identify presenters that promote the exchange of information on key topical issues, developments and trends in medicine and medical education. The Symposia Series enables communities, students, academics and researchers to network and explore opportunities to collaborate.

The NOSM Symposium sessions are presented live, via video conference and as webcasts. For further information go to www.normed.ca or contact Sherry Carlucci at 705-662-7257 or sherry.carlucci@normed.ca.

Thursday, April 20, 2006
Speaker: Dr. Craig McKinley
Topic: Telerobotic Research Program

Thursday, May 18, 2006
Speaker: Dr. Alan Shepard
Topic: History of Autopsy

Thursday, June 22, 2006
Speaker: Dr. Roger Strasser
Topic: NOSM Update

Thursday, September 14, 2006
Speaker: Jacklin Duffin
Topic: TBA

Thursday, October 12, 2006
Speaker: TBA
Topic: TBA

Thursday, November 16, 2006
Speaker: TBA
Topic: TBA

Founding Dean's Summer Research Awards

Omodele Ayeni will be examining the communication of information to patients in the context of telemedicine. Specifically, how "bad news" is communicated has major implications for health care in this setting. Mr. Ayeni will be examining methods for communication in a traditional patient/physician relationship and determining how these methods may best be transferred to a model of remote interactions.

Nicole Beauvais will be reviewing the use of fibrinolytics and other cardiac medications in the treatment of acute myocardial infarctions in remote, Northern communities in comparison to the care received in larger, more urban, Northern communities in Ontario in a similar circumstance. Ms. Beauvais will be looking at what tools/resources can be used in these remote communities to improve the care given in situations involving heart attacks.

Brigitte Carriere will study the impact pollution has on many aspects of our lives including our health, our environment, our health care system, politics and technological advances. Her research involves characterizing the effects of diesel exhaust particles on cells and the role of molecular signals in mediating such changes.

Abdel-Kareem Chehadi will examine the history of psychiatry and asylums in Ontario. He will utilize a number of primary sources of the period, and will report on the nature and development of psychiatric care in Ontario circa 1890-1910. The late nineteenth century was a challenging time for psychiatry, making it a particularly interesting period for study.

Lyndsay McFadgen will be investigating the factors influencing treatment of breast cancer. In particular, Ms. McFadgen will be examining the role of exercise during treatment. While there are significant opportunities for exercise regimes in a tertiary care setting, there may be significant issues with regard to exercise in rural and remote settings such as Northern Ontario.

Jeffrey Middaugh will be investigating the physiological and biochemical basis of blood pressure regulation. Using state-of-the-art molecular methods for gene characterization, Mr. Middaugh will be examining the influence fetal hypoxia may have on the development of hypertension later in life.

Robert Pastre will be focusing on the relationship between primary health care providers and Aboriginal communities in Northern Ontario. Mr. Pastre will employ epidemiological methods and specific determinants of health to study the complex societal factors involved in specific medical conditions within Aboriginal communities.

Lana Potts will be examining how interprofessional (eg. physician and nursing) issues shape health care delivery in Northern and remote communities. Ms. Potts will be studying archival collections and reports of health care delivery in remote settings (during the development of the North) to evaluate historic role of interprofessional contributions in care.

Elaine St. John will be examining the history of nursing in eighteenth century England. Ms. St. John will be examining archival records from 1730-1760 on the treatment of naval ex-servicemen to develop an insight into social and medical life of the period. The relationship between nurses and medics with respect to training and responsibilities will be evaluated.

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario Summer Student Research Awards

Philip Berardi will study a gene that has been identified as a possible cause of high blood pressure. This gene plays a role in the production of epinephrine, a hormone that increases blood pressure. Mr. Berardi will study the position and output of this gene in individuals with high blood pressure. The aim is to further understand how high blood pressure develops and to identify new targets for treatment and prevention.

Teresa Furtak has three aims in her research project: she will conduct a time-motion study on the performance of echocardiograms in the emergency department; she will determine the usefulness of using ultrasound on the jugular vein to help diagnose congestive heart failure; and she will determine the feasibility of developing an emergency department echocardiography program.

Tracy Michano-Stewart is using existing data to study the relationships between measures of health (obesity, blood sugar levels, and blood pressure) in aboriginal school children and established risk factors and other determinants of health. Ms. Michano-Stewart will especially focus on high blood pressure in these children. The results of this analysis may then be used in making recommendations for practice in treating individuals from this community.

Natalie Moreau will study whether exposure to air pollution can accelerate the development of type 1 diabetes. Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease, and learning what triggers or accelerates development of the diabetes could have important implications for preventing or delaying the onset of heart disease.

Justin Porter will be coauthoring a review of the literature concerning the effects of catecholamines and the development of high blood pressure. Catecholamines include hormones that increase heart rate and blood pressure. He will also study the regulation of a gene that may be involved in the development of high blood pressure.

Tracey Ross will screen natural compounds from the boreal forest in Northern Ontario for their antioxidant potential. These compounds may have the potential to reduce the damaging effects of free radicals. Free radicals cause oxidative damage, an early event in the development of atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular disorders.

Tara Spicer will study the educational model of training family physicians in Northern Ontario, focusing on some of the difficulties experienced by medical residents within the context of a one-on-one preceptor relationship, the physician responsible for training the resident. Family physicians are usually the main medical contact for individuals with cardiovascular disease, supervising prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Ms. Spicer will perform a literature review on the subject of problem placements and survey medical residents in Northern Ontario for their views and experiences.

Ella Wiebe will study knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about diabetes in an aboriginal community in Whitefish Bay, Ontario. Diabetes is three times more prevalent in the aboriginal community than in the rest of the Canadian population, and therefore the risk of cardiovascular disease is that much higher. Ms. Wiebe will combine a literature review and existing blood data with survey information on local determinants of health to develop a strategy to promote health and prevent disease in this community.

Student Research Awards - 2006

Research at NOSM

Explorations of the mind

At the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), research is recognized as a critical component of medical education … Research at NOSM is reflective of the School's mandate to be socially accountable to the diverse cultures of Northern Ontario. The School's unique research program targets areas that have a direct relevance to Northern populations.

Excerpt from NOSM's official policy on research

Research is an important part of most medical schools, but for NOSM, it goes much deeper.

"It cuts to the very core of the School's mandate," says Dr. Greg Ross, Associate Dean (Research). "Research is embedded in absolutely everything we do here at NOSM. It is why we are all here."

NOSM was founded on a couple of basic principles. One is training physicians in the North increases the chance they will stay in the North. The second principle stresses research which addresses the actual health needs of Northerners.

"Northerners have a different health profile than the rest of Ontario," explains Dr. Ross. "We have higher rates of cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. We smoke more and drink more. And we engage in more high-risk activities, resulting in higher traumatic injury rates."

But more than that, says Dr. Ross, Northerners tend to live in a hostile environment when it comes to advance health care. Many live more than six hours away from primary services, and some even further.

All of this adds up to a public health and disease profile that is different than the rest of the province. Yet "the rest of the province" is where the other five medical schools are located.

So NOSM has a special responsibility to the people of the North – a responsibility that Dr. Ross and the rest of the NOSM team take very seriously.

This fact can be seen in the newly opened "state of the art" laboratories on both main campuses. These labs were made possible thanks to a $6 million grant from FedNor.

It can also be seen in the support many of the students are receiving to begin their own research careers. For example, the *Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario (HSFO)* recently announced a commitment of nearly a quarter of a million dollars over five years. This money will directly support medical students engaged in research at NOSM.

This year's eight award recipients were presented the HSFO Summer Medical Student Award for NOSM, each valued at $6,000.

In addition, a further nine students received the *Founding Dean Research Awards*, again valued at $6,000 each.

Dr. Hoyun Lee

Delving deep into the blueprint of life

Deoxyribonucleic acid, or simply DNA, is a celebrity amongst molecules. Everyone knows it as the blueprint of life and can see the little biology-101 cartoon movie of how it untwists and replicates itself. It's all perfectly well understood.

Not so, says Dr. Hoyun Lee, (PhD). "The interesting thing is that we don't really know how DNA replication all works."

Lee is a scientist and researcher and Associate Professor of Biomolecular Sciences at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. He is also affiliated with the Northeastern Ontario Regional Cancer Program at the Sudbury Regional Hospital, and is an Associate Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry with the University of Ottawa Medical School.

For the past number of years Lee has studied the actual mechanism that governs DNA replication. His work has focused on three replication proteins, two of which act as the molecular switch connecting cell cycle progression and DNA replication. The third, known as proliferating cell nuclear antigen (PCNA), is essential for DNA replication and repair, and is often used in cancer diagnosis.

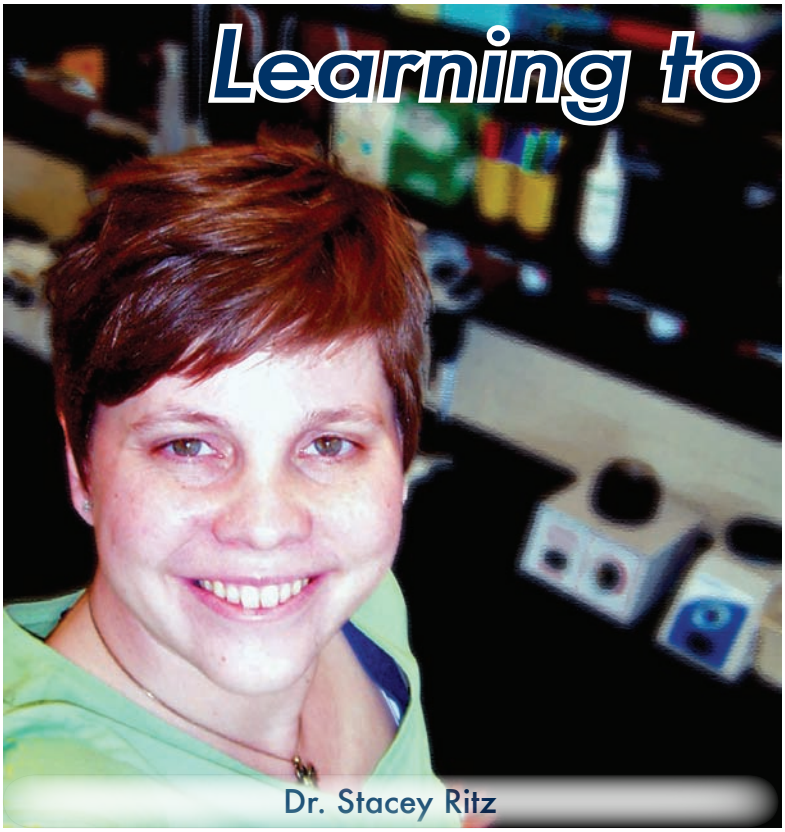
According to Lee, his recent studies suggest that a PCNA complex actually coordinates replication and other cellular functions. "This work is considered a landmark study by many scientists in the field," he says.

Lee's work is not only improving the understanding of the cell division process, but may also open up new and better cancer therapies.

"Radiation treatment and chemotherapy often kill cancer cells by damaging their DNA. However, cancer cells can develop amazing abilities to survive this damage, resulting in the failure of cancer therapy," says Lee. "By understanding the mechanism which governs DNA replication we can hopefully improve the success rates of cancer therapies."

Lee is pleased with the development of NOSM, and with the added opportunities it brings to researchers like him. "With NOSM we have a tremendous opportunity to build new collaborations and to build the capacity for research here in the North."

Learning to breathe easy


Dr. Stacey Ritz

According to Health Canada nearly 6000 Canadians die prematurely each year due to air pollution, with many thousands more suffering from non-terminal impacts. But while the epidemiological links are obvious, what is less clear is the actual mechanism that leads to disease.

This is where Dr. Stacey Ritz (PhD) steps in. As Assistant Professor of Immunology at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine she is keenly interested in studying the impact of bad air at a deeper level – at the level of the immune system.

"It is clear that breathing polluted air can affect the cardiovascular and respiratory systems," says Dr. Ritz. "My hypothesis is that the impact goes deeper than that. We know that exposure to certain pollutants can affect the immune system, and I suspect it could lead to autoimmune disease as well."

Air pollution is a smorgasbord of various noxious chemicals and particles. But it is the particulate matter, especially the small stuff, that is of concern for Dr. Ritz.

Particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter – far smaller than the eye can see – can lodge deep within lung tissue and initiate an immune response. Over time this continual exposure and response can lead to the immune system becoming confused, eventually turning on the body it is supposed to protect.

"It's kind of a case of 'blaming the messenger'," explains Dr. Ritz. "It's possible that long term exposure to microscopic particulate matter may lead to the development of autoimmune diabetes and other autoimmune diseases."

Using NOSM's new labs and support, Dr. Ritz plans to undertake a series of research projects to examine her theories. Using experimental models, she will look at whether chronic exposure to particulate pollution will accelerate the development of autoimmune diabetes. She will also examine how exposure to air pollution affects a certain type of cell in the lungs that is responsible for initiating immune responses.

"This is an unparalleled opportunity for a young researcher like myself," she says. "NOSM has provided me with a world-class lab and with terrific support. If I had to start from scratch, well, I just couldn't."

The "free radical" of cardiovascular research

The mention of cardiovascular disease usually brings to mind issues of cholesterol, smoking and obesity, but a relatively new line of investigation indicates that free radicals may be a major contributor to the problem.

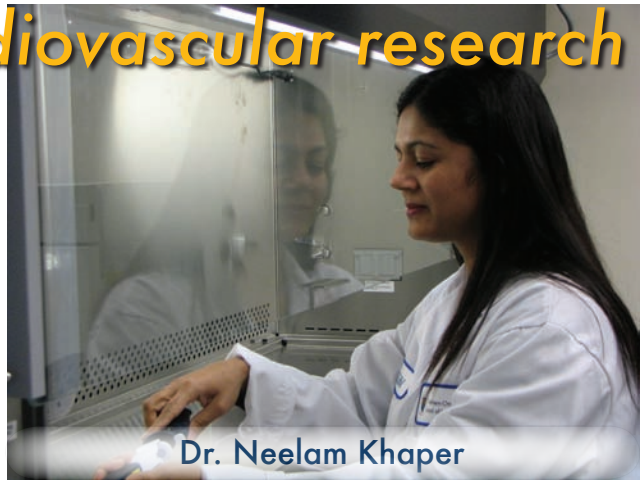
Dr. Neelam Khaper (PhD) is Assistant Professor of Physiology at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Her research is focused on the cellular, biochemical and molecular bases of cardiovascular diseases. In particular, she is zeroing in on the role anti-oxidants play in keeping the system healthy.

"When we look at patients with cardiovascular disease compared to healthy subjects we find that free radicals are in balance in 'normal' cases, but in disease conditions the balance is disturbed," explains Khaper. "This suggests that free radicals in the system may play a large role in the clinical outcomes we observe."

Using an experimental model, Dr. Khaper will be focusing on the role of an amino acid called taurine. Taurine is one of the most abundant amino acids in the body. It is found in many areas, but is concentrated in the brain and heart.

"The ultimate goal is to identify novel molecular targets involved in the progression of heart failure and to develop new effective therapeutic agents," she says.


Dr. Neelam Khaper

Dr. Khaper has nothing but praise for NOSM's new labs, and for the support the School is providing her, both as a researcher as well as a teacher. "We really do have state-of-the-art facilities here at NOSM. It's simply wonderful to be at ground-zero, helping to shape this new school."

Aboriginal community experience: the students ...

Challenges unique as Charter Class itself

For some, it is almost like a homecoming, for others it is a completely new adventure. No matter where students fall on this spectrum, the Aboriginal community experience will be an exciting learning opportunity for everyone.

A total of 28 communities are taking part in Module 106 Integrated Community Experience (ICE) that will see all 56 of NOSM's students spend at least four weeks living and working in Aboriginal communities.

As Orpah McKenzie, NOSM's Director for Aboriginal Affairs says, "This is going to be an exciting event for the School and for the communities."

This is certainly the case for Justin Porter. His placement has him heading north to Moose Factory on the James Bay coast. Having spent most of the last decade in large cities like Toronto and Vancouver, just visiting a small remote town is different enough. But the fact it is an Aboriginal community adds to the unknown for him.

Justin Porter

"While I've certainly known Aboriginal people, especially while living on the west coast, I've never really experienced an Aboriginal community in the way I expect to on this placement," says Porter. "I don't really know what to expect, but it's going to be very exciting."

For Lana Potts the Aboriginal placement is eagerly anticipated, but for completely different reasons. As a Blackfoot from the Peigan First Nation in Southern Alberta, the placement is a bit like going home.

"I'm really looking forward to making some connections with a community," she says. "That's one thing I've really missed since coming to Thunder Bay – the lack of community connections."

While Potts knows more of what to expect from the community placement, she faces a slightly different challenge. Being Aboriginal herself, the community may expect her to know and understand plenty.

The 106 placement is intended to familiarize NOSM students with Aboriginal lifestyles as well as the practice patterns of professionals serving these communities. Students will immerse themselves in their chosen community, and learn from a diverse body of clinical practitioners including Registered Nurses, Health Directors, and Traditional Healers.

And it is this immersion that enticed Porter. That, and the chance to live and learn in a remote community; "This is what attracted me to NOSM in the first place!"

"When have I ever gone to James Bay? Well, never! So this is really exciting. But what I really look forward to is the chance to be part of an Aboriginal community – to learn from them."

Lana Potts

Potts also expects to learn plenty from her experience. Her placement has her in Fort Francis, a town of about 8,500. This urban Aboriginal community presents whole new opportunities for Potts who grew up on the Piikani First Nation.

"It's going to be very different for me," she says. "But mostly I'm looking forward to finding my place again. I really miss my community. Aboriginal people love to laugh and to enjoy life. I miss that here in Thunder Bay."

The Module 106 placement officially begins on April 22, when students arrive in their host communities. It runs for seven weeks, with students living in the communities for four of those six weeks.

Aboriginal community experience: the communities ...

Excited by the chance to share

For the 28 Aboriginal sites that NOSM has recruited for the School's first Module 106 Integrated Community Experience (ICE), the four-week immersion program is a chance to highlight who they are, and also to invest in their own health care future. The school is pleased that two of these sites are in Métis Nation of Ontario centres in Thunder Bay and Timmins.

Beginning on April 22, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's 56 students will begin four weeks of living and learning in various communities across Northern Ontario. Students will immerse themselves in the community and the culture, hopefully coming away with a deeper understanding of the people and their diverse needs.

"They see it as a way to build for the long-term," said Tom Terry, Regional Aboriginal Community Coordinator (RACC) for First Nations in the Northwest -- usually referred to as the Sioux Lookout Zone. "By introducing students to their communities they get to impart who they are as people. The other benefit is that they also expose their own young people to the idea that they too can become doctors."

Terry and his fellow RACC colleagues are part of an interdisciplinary NOSM team. Together they have been working hard over these past number of months, building the connections between communities and the School. Terry says one of the interesting challenges has been in bridging these two worlds.

"A medical school, by its very nature, is highly regulated, highly planned, highly structured. Aboriginal communities have very different governance systems and ways of doing things. We've had to make sure each understands the other," he explained.

It's been challenging work, and while Terry expects a few hiccups, he says the communities are ready and excited about the arrival of the students.

Community as teacher

Part of being a school like no other includes using new and novel methods of learning. The Community Learning Sessions (CLS) are a prime example of this approach. In pairs, the medical students spend a half morning each week of their studies in community settings whereby they are able to augment and integrate classroom learning.

Sue Berry is the Director of Undergraduate Community Learning at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. She explains the CLS allows students to experience the wide range of available community-based health care and social services and cultural learning situations.

"The CLS gives students a chance to observe and interact with health care providers, patients or community users of a service in different settings and in a wide variety of community conditions," says Berry. "Under the direct guidance of a Community Learning Facilitator students get early exposure to the role of various health care providers, services provided, and patients in settings including home visits, in hospitals, long- term care centres, doctors' offices, pharmacies, rehab centers, nursing homes, or other community agencies and organizations."

"It's a great opportunity to bring their own perspectives as a future physician to different situations."

Dr. Brad Jacobson, a second year family practice resident, participated as a Learning Facilitator with CLS. As a current resident and active learner himself it was an interesting challenge working with first year medical students.

He says that while the CLS offers learners a wide range of opportunities to observe clinical situations, the thing most students went away with is the need to communicate.

"Making a real connection with patients, hearing what they say and being able to discuss their situations with them – these are the cornerstones of any physician-patient relationship," he explained. "The CLS allow students to begin learning these skills right from the start of their education."

As a recent medical graduate himself, Jacobson says he can understand and appreciate where the students are coming from. This allows him to act as a bit of an unofficial mentor for some of NOSM's charter class, given that there are no 2nd, 3rd or 4th year students around yet.

Dr. Brad Jacobson researching a CLS question.

"I try to tell them not to get too caught up in the minutia. Learn what you need to learn, but always remember to keep it real," he says.

Employee Relations Review (ERR) looks at NOSM from ground up

The task of building a medical school in three years is nothing short of monumental. But with the arrival of the first class of students in September 2005, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has been able to take a short breath, and to begin assessing how it functions from an employees' standpoint.

As part of this self-assessment the School began an Employee Relations Review process (ERR). The purpose was to take a comprehensive look at the School from the employees' perspective.

"The bottom line is that we wanted to examine whether the School was creating an environment for employees that is consistent with our mission our values and our guiding principles," said Dr. Roger Strasser, Founding Dean.

Using the services of Western Management Consultants, the School began a process of self-evaluation that included one-on-one interviews and focus groups with staff members. The five key conclusions were:

- It is clear that NOSM is an organization of committed and highly qualified employees who have challenging and leading edge work.
- There continues to be an excitement among employees to follow through on the mission of the School.
- Communication is an area perceived by employees as needing significant improvement.
- As the organization transitions from a project start up mode into more of an operating environment, there is a need to modify leadership and management practices.
- Employees are dissatisfied with several aspects of the work. environment including: compensation practices, organizational structure and work life balance.

The School has responded to this report with a clear action plan. As Dr. Strasser explains, the plan lays out a process that is led by employees.

"This is not a centrally determined series of initiatives, this is a 'ground up' approach," he says. "We want staff to take the lead in transforming NOSM into a truly great organization that is staff, faculty and learner friendly."

> ***"We want staff to take the lead in transforming NOSM into a truly great organization."***
>
> **Dr. Roger Strasser, NOSM Founding Dean**

To bring this to reality the School is organizing a series of implementation groups, each charged with addressing a specific area of concern highlighted in the consultant's report.

Groups created include ones looking at: a compensation review, job transparency, the role and function of the Senior Leadership Group, and internal communications, just to name a few. The complete list is available on NOSM's intranet.

These groups have formed and will begin work to analyse each respective issue and develop recommendations for enhancement.

Dr. Strasser: "Now is the time to transform this organization into a truly great medical school."

"We want NOSM to be known, not only for its outstanding health sciences and medical education, research and service, but also for its excellence as an inclusive, responsive, dynamic, learning organization for the students, faculty and staff."

L'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario pose les jalons du renforcement des relations avec la population franco-ontarienne

Le 22 mars dernier, l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario (EMNO) a tenu une conférence de presse pour à la fois présenter son Unité des Affaires francophones et lancer son rapport intitulé *Une vision communautaire : Rapport du Symposium – Les Francophones et l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario*.

Jeremy Larouche est interviewé par les médias.

En partenariat avec le Groupe témoin francophone (GTF) de l'EMNO et avec un appui financier du Consortium national de formation en santé, volet Université Laurentienne, l'EMNO a parrainé le symposium qui a eu lieu en 2005 à Sudbury. Ce dernier avait pour but de rassembler la communauté francophone du Nord de l'Ontario afin de recueillir ses commentaires et suggestions sur la façon dont l'École pourrait au mieux faire participer les Francophones à son développement. Les plus de 160 participants se sont penchés sur une variété de thèmes de discussion tels que : les besoins et l'engagement de la communauté francophone, la promotion de la profession médicale et le recrutement des étudiants francophones, la formation scolaire et la formation clinique ainsi que l'appui et l'aide financière aux étudiants francophones.

Selon le Dr Roger Strasser, doyen fondateur de l'EMNO, « le symposium a constitué une importante étape de l'établissement de l'École. Tous les Ontariens du Nord ont eu l'occasion de se renseigner sur l'École et de donner leurs points de vue sur les initiatives francophones. La réponse enthousiaste de la communauté francophone était simplement fabuleuse. »

Suite au symposium, le GTF a présenté une liste de 17 recommandations à l'EMNO fondées sur les recommandations des participants.

Le GTF a tenu une séance de planification stratégique le 30 mars dernier ayant pour but d'élaborer un plan de travail qui tient compte des recommandations présentées à l'EMNO. Ce plan de travail servira aussi d'appui au secteur des Affaires francophones de l'EMNO dans la mise en œuvre des initiatives francophones au sein de l'EMNO. Des initiatives ont déjà été mises en place pour répondre à certaines des recommandations du GTF. En voici quelques-unes : la sensibilisation des étudiants, de la faculté et du personnel de l'EMNO à la culture franco-ontarienne (célébration et reconnaissance de dates importantes aux Francophones de l'Ontario comme l'anniversaire du drapeau franco-ontarien, la Sainte-Catherine, la semaine de la francophonie, etc…), l'élaboration d'un répertoire de médecins francophones du Nord de l'Ontario, le développement de stages cliniques en milieux francophones à Sudbury , à Thunder Bay et dans les communautés à travers tout le Nord de l'Ontario, la formation hebdomadaire pour les étudiants qui désirent améliorer le niveau de leur compétence linguistique en français, et l'acquisition d'une grande gamme de ressources pédagogiques en français, entre autres.

Vous pouvez obtenir une copie du Rapport en consultant le site Web de l'EMNO au www.normed.ca.

Class of 2010 admissions interviews held recently

Four hundred prospective students recently underwent the admissions interview process at both Thunder Bay and Sudbury campuses of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Again this year, over 2,000 applications were received for the 56 seats available. Of the prospective students interviewed, 5.6% self-identified as being Aboriginal, 16% self-identified as being Francophone, 39% are male and 61% are female.

Dr. Dan Hunt, Vice Dean, Academic Activities, says the exhilaration surrounding the interviews will never fade. "This is an exciting time for the School. The interview process allows us to become acquainted with the people who will become our students in the fall."

At each interview site students were given ten questions. For each question, they were given two minutes to consider a response, and eight minutes to deliver. The process is challenging; prospective students are very aware of the competition for the available seats.

While some displayed obvious signs of nervousness, others seemed most comfortable and at ease. "I'm glad it's over," one interviewee remarked. "The interviews are tough, but the anticipation preceding them is somehow worse. Now I can relax and wait for good news."

With interviews completed, the challenge now lies again with the Admissions committee members who will review the scores and ultimately select the top 56 interviewees who will make up the Class of 2010. Provisional offers of admission will be mailed on May 15, 2006.