Welcome to the second edition of the Vascular Dynamics Lab (VDL) newsletter. Over the last six months, we have been busy in the VDL advancing and initiating several research projects, saying goodbye as some lab members moved on to new opportunities, welcoming new members to the lab, celebrating successes and achievements, engaging in knowledge translation and learning from each other through interactions in, and out of the lab. I encourage you to read through our newsletter to hear more about these activities and then connect with us. We initiated the VDL newsletter as a collaborative process with all members to ensure we are reflecting on what we do and how we do it and we look forward to hearing from you.

In the last six months, we saw substantial turnover in our personnel as some longstanding lab members moved on. It is a wonderful feature of the lab that we often see students first engage with us in their second or third year of their Undergraduate degree in a volunteer or research placement capacity and sometimes stay on through their Undergraduate thesis, and their Masters and PhD. The downside to this long connection and involvement is that when they go, we miss them terribly!

Last year I took on the administrative role as Dean of Science and, as such, I find I am not in the lab often. I try to stay connected with weekly lab and individual meetings and participation in all of our lab events. One effective research supervisory strategy I learned from Dr. Maria Hopman during my PhD is that I ask students to “practice” their research protocols on me as their first participant. While I think this is sometimes nerve-wracking for the students, it reminds me how diligent and dedicated our student researchers are and how generous our participants are with their time and efforts. This fall I was busy preparing my NSERC Discovery Grant submission for the first time in six years. I tried to engage all lab members in this process and was reminded, once again, how wonderful and unique this Canadian funding mechanism is that allows us to conduct curiosity based science in the natural sciences and support many aspects important to us including advancing science, and influencing the lives of our students and trainees.

Dr. Maureen MacDonald
Principal Investigator
### Current Lab Members

#### Staff

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<th>Photo</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Todd Prior</td>
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<td>Dr. Emily Dunford</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Fellow</td>
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<td>Dam Nguyen</td>
<td>Computer Specialist</td>
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<td>Jessica Sadri-Gerrior</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
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#### Graduate Students

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<td></td>
<td>Nicole Proudfoot</td>
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<td>Jem Cheng</td>
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<td>Jennifer Williams</td>
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<td>Joey Bacauanu</td>
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Current Lab Members

Graduate Students (cont’d)

Vanessa Rizzuto
MSc Student

Sydney Valentino
MSc Student

Undergraduate Students

Roma Dhamanaskar
Thesis Student

Christopher Gupta
Thesis Student

Hanieh Rahimi
Thesis Student

Noura Balbaa
Placement Student

Jaime Gardner
Placement Student (Fall 2018)

Emily Koseck
Placement Student (Fall 2018)
Incoming Lab Members

Undergraduate Students

Joshua Cherubini
Placement Student
(Winter 2019)

VOLUNTEERS

Brianna Essaye

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication!

Lab members at the annual Gingerbread House Decorating Party 2018. Top row: Chris Gupta, Vanessa Rizzato, Jessica Sadri-Gerrior, Jaime Gardner (from left to right); bottom row: Jem Cheng, Nicole Proudfoot, Maureen MacDonald (from left to right).
EMRG Orientation Day
May 7, 2018
By: Jem Cheng

On May 7th, 2018, the Exercise Metabolism Research Group (EMRG), composed of the labs of Drs. MacDonald, Phillips, Gibala, Parise, and Ljubicic, gathered together for the annual orientation day to prepare for the upcoming academic year. Undergraduate placement and thesis students, graduate students, PIs, and our lab manager Todd were invited to this full day event. We began with some team building activities with the McMaster Altitude Outdoor Program. The EMRG was divided into three smaller groups and we participated in several challenges. Favourites included Helium Stick wherein each individual in a group held out two fingers to lower a light tent pole to the ground (a lot harder than it sounds!), and the Obstacle Course where each group had to transfer “radioactive material” from one end of the course to the other by holding strings attached to a metal ring with a tennis ball balanced on top. It was a lot of fun to challenge our minds by problem solving in a different way, and the activities were a welcome break from our usual lab and research work. Afterwards, we had lunch at The Phoenix Bar and Grill, the university graduate student pub, for a chance for old and new students to get to know each other better. In the afternoon, we had an orientation session where each PI provided an overview of their research program and current projects and introduced their lab group for the 2018-19 academic year.
**Events**

**VDL Paint Party**
**July 18, 2018**

This summer, current and incoming VDL members used their creativity skills and painted ‘heart’ paintings. It was an enjoyable afternoon had by all!

Thank you to Dr. MacDonald for hosting and to the staff from Paint & Cocktails.

From left to right: Jem Cheng, Stacey Priest, Patrick McPhee, Nicole Proudfoot

From left to right: Joshua Cherubini, Christopher Gupta, Hanieh Rahimi, Vanessa Rizzuto, Emily Dunford, Sydney Valentino

From left to right: Noura Balbaa, Jaime Gardner, Emily Koseck

VDL members working on their paintings. Jennifer Williams looking on.

VDL members holding up their creative ‘heart’ paintings from the summer paint party. Back row (from left to right): Sydney Valentino, Emily Dunford, Hanieh Rahimi, Maureen MacDonald, Stacey Priest, Emily Koseck, Patrick McPhee, Jem Cheng, Jessica Sadri-Gerrior, Joshua Cherubini. Front row (from left to right): Jennifer Williams, Christopher Gupta, Jaime Gardner, Vanessa Rizzuto, Roma Dhamanaskar, Nicole Proudfoot, Joey Bacauanu, Noura Balbaa.
A Trip to Japan
September 22nd-23rd 2018
By: Dr. Maureen MacDonald

This September 22-23, I was an invited speaker at the International Symposium of Sports Medical Science for Persons with Impairments in Wakayama Japan. This symposium was jointly organized between Wakayama Medical University and Loughborough University and was a wonderful opportunity to connect with other researchers in the area of sport science in people with disability. The title of my talk was “Cardiovascular Outcomes with Exercise Training in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury.”

This trip provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with the colleagues who hosted Dr. Jason Au (lab alumnus) during his MITACs and Japan Science Society sponsored research visit during the summer of 2017. The location of the symposium on the harborsfront in Wakayama was outstanding and many scientific connections were made. Following the 2 day symposium the invited speakers and our local hosts embarked on a two day bus tour to the Kumano Kodo area and had an amazing experience in this unique cultural area of Japan. During the tour we hiked a UNESCO world heritage site, had an opportunity to try “forest-bathing” under the watchful eye of our guide Sunshine, sample traditional Japanese meals even try our own version of heat stress in a hot spring (Onsen spa). One highlight of the visit was attending the newly opened Katsuura Onsen Hospital where in the rehabilitation centre we observed many examples of active healthy living and innovative rehabilitation programs linked to the scientific expertise at Wakayama Medical University. Many thanks to my host Professor Fumihiro Tajima and to Professor Vicky Tolfrey for making the connection.
Exercise is Medicine Symposium in Toronto
November 29, 2018
By: Joey Bacauanu

On November 29th, I had the opportunity to present a poster discussing some of my preliminary data at the Exercise is Medicine Symposium at Sick Kids (EIM@SK) in Toronto. The symposium was designed to provide a comprehensive overview of exercise physiology and its clinical applications in paediatrics. There were a handful of well recognized keynote speakers and experts in the field which provided a large variety of discussion topics from cardiovascular responses to exercise, exercise testing and prescription and challenges/barriers paediatric populations may face to exercise.

While attending large conferences always provides me a well-rounded and often broad scope of the current research taking place in exercise physiology, I really liked the very specific approach the EIM@SK symposium offered in the field of paediatric exercise medicine. Since my master’s thesis is looking to better understand vascular endothelial function in a paediatric population, I was able to learn a lot from a conference with a narrow focus.

Additionally, I was really excited to take my 3RP3 research placement student Jaime Gardner to the symposium. I have been working with and mentoring Jaime throughout the semester and was thrilled to be able to provide her with an opportunity to experience a science communication event to culminate the work she has done in VDL over the last four months.
McMaster Institute of Research on Aging (MIRA) is a network that promotes and funds science on aging, that is interdisciplinary in nature and engages with the community. MIRA has become the over-arching organization that brings together different disciplines that study aging at McMaster, including the Labarge Centre for Mobility in Aging (LCMA). As a member of the MIRA Trainee Network, I presented the preliminary results of my Master’s thesis titled, “The effects of exercise on heart structure and function in cardiac rehabilitation”. It was really proud moment for me to show this work as MIRA was also the organization that funded the first year of the Master’s degree. Much of the research displayed would have not been together at any other conference, the one aspect that united our work was the theme of aging. A unique component of this event was having judges that were researchers in other departments at McMaster University, which challenged all the poster presenters to work on their knowledge translation. Although the poster session was jammed with engaging listeners, it was awesome to be conveniently placed near a friend, Alexis Bullock, another MSc Candidate in Kinesiology who work with Dr. Jennifer Heisz (see photo below). Many of the VDL members were also in attendance to support my presentation, and some even contributed the effort to help judge other posters. The day ended off with a presentation of upcoming interdisciplinary projects that MIRA has funded, and the design thinking model they used to structure these large research projects. MIRA is truly a unique organization and I think this conference I think brings out the amazingly diverse and talented community of researchers we have at McMaster.
**Projects**

**3RP3 Research Placement Experience in the VDL**  
By: Emily Koseck, Jaime Gardner, and Noura Balbaa

The Vascular Dynamics Lab fosters a welcoming environment that is conducive to collaboration and learning from one another. As research practicum students we integrated smoothly as new members of the lab by participating in weekly lab meeting and attending events outside of lab to get to know other members. Graduate students took the time to organize skills training sessions and journal club meetings which helped us to develop skills necessary for research. They also met with us regularly to check in and guide us through the process of writing our literature reviews.

Translating anatomical and physiological cardiovascular concepts into practice has been mind-blowing. This has helped to solidify previously learned information while introducing an application component. We have been able to see the diligence and amount of work required in research to come out with a single fact learned in class, that we so often take for granted.

The knowledge and skills gained from this experience and our mentors are lifelong. Thank you Dr. MacDonald, our graduate supervisors: Dr. Dunford, Sydney and Joey, and the other Vascular Dynamics Lab members for making our research practicum experience so memorable!

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**An Update from 4RR6 Students**  
By: Chris Gupta

Throughout my first semester as an undergraduate thesis student in the VDL, I have been given many opportunities to learn and grow as a student researcher. This experience has given me insight into the world of academia and has provided me with a chance to learn independently outside of the classroom to enhance my practical skills. On November 19th, my fellow undergraduate thesis students and I presented our thesis proposals to demonstrate the literature reviews we had generated, as well as propose our planned projects, methods and analyses for our upcoming studies. We look forward to continuing our thesis projects in the new year. The 4RR6 students this year include Chris Gupta, Hanieh Rahimi, and Roma Dhamanaskar.

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**Total Vascular Reactivity of the Brachial Artery Study**  
By: Vanessa Rizzuto

This study aims to assess low flow mediated constriction (L-FMC) and total vascular reactivity (TVR) in a diverse population of individuals to determine the repeatability of L-FMC and TVR. As well, we aim to further examine the relationship between L-FMC and shear stress and how the relationship between flow mediated dilation, L-FMC, and TCR changes across the lifespan.

Vanessa is the primary VDL member that will be involved in this study.
Projects

Stair Climbing Outcomes in cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise Study
By: Dr. Emily Dunford

The Stair Climbing Outcomes in cardiac Rehabilitation Exercise (SCORE) study will investigate whether completion of a stair climbing-based HIIT program improves fitness, increases perception of health and wellness, enhances cardiac rehabilitation adherence and induces positive changes in key markers of cardiovascular (flow-mediated dilation and left ventricular twist) and muscle health. While stair climbing-based HIIT has the potential to be an effective exercise strategy in cardiac rehabilitation that can easily transition to an at-home program, the translation of this time-efficient, laboratory-based interval protocol to a "real world" setting remains largely unexplored in individuals completing cardiac rehabilitation. Information gained from this study will be valuable in the development and refinement of cardiac rehabilitation programs that are effective in reducing CVD risk and increasing long-term exercise participation. Stair climbing-based HIIT may be more engaging to patients which could increase exercise enjoyment, overall adherence, quality of life, post-operative survival rates, and reduce the associated health care costs.

The VDL members involved in this study include Dr. Emily Dunford and Sydney Valentino.

HEAT Study
By: Jem Cheng

The application of heat has been shown to change the structure and function of arteries, but we need to understand how these changes happen before we can effectively use heat as therapy. Limb heating protocols (e.g., leg bath) in contrast with whole-body heating modes (e.g., sauna), are appealing as therapies because they generally cost less and are easy to use; but evidence is needed to demonstrate that they work before widespread use is considered. The HEAT study seeks to determine if heating the legs using a 42°C water bath for 45 minutes is sufficient to elicit acute systemic changes in arterial stiffness and endothelial function.

Jem Cheng is the primary VDL member that will be involved in this study.
Collaborations

A Trip to Loughborough, United Kingdom for Research Collaboration

In the following Q&A article, Stacey Priest asked Sydney Valentino, a MSc. Year II student in the VDL, a couple questions about her recent trip to Loughborough, UK. Read on to learn more about her recent trip to continue collaboration with Prof Vicky Tolfrey-Goosey at the Peter Harrison Centre (PHC) in Loughborough University.

Q: What brought you to the UK?
A: This amazing opportunity was organized by Dr. Maureen MacDonald and Prof Vicky Tolfrey-Goosey to continue their on-going collaboration. Both McMaster and Loughborough University have unique learning environments paired with high quality research, which has led to many collaborative projects for students to travel and experience both. Previously, I helped Michael Hutchinson with one of his studies for his PhD assessing the use of RPE-guided maximal exercise testing in individuals with spinal cord injury. Needless to say, I was quite delighted to hear that I could go to the Loughborough University and see state-of-the-art wheelchair treadmills, amongst many other equipment that has led to high-quality research on Paralympic sport. There I helped review and screen articles for two on-going projects specific to individuals with spinal cord injury.

Q: Tell me about the research project you were working on.
A: While in Loughborough, I met Dr. Jan Van der Scheer, a Postdoctoral Fellow who has established himself as a strong researcher in the area of applied spinal cord injury, whom taught me a lot about systematic reviews. Through this collaboration, I have been fortunate enough to be at two fantastic research institutions, especially for the field of exercise science. When working with Dr. Jan van Der Scheer throughout my stay, I gave my time to help develop his project in return for learning new skills. This has now equipped me with the knowledge and process on conducting a systematic review, in addition to all my training at McMaster University.

From left to right: Dr. Jan van Der Scheer, Prof. Vicky Tolfrey-Goosey, Sydney Valentino, Michael Hutchinson.
Collaborations

Q: What were some of the highlights of your trip?

A: Additional to all the opportunities for learning, one event that was novel for me was their ATHENA Swan coffee morning. One Friday per month they pause all work mid-morning to take a minute and congregate in a common area, profs and students, alike. We all chatted over coffee and delicious catered baked goods in spirit of ATHENA Swan’s establishment: "to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research”, something I was proud to be a part of. Another afternoon, I experienced a small taste of life in Loughborough and their quaint single floor hospital as I travelled to a backyard barbecue for Jan’s birthday which was one of the evening excursions. I was able to celebrate Jan and chat with a great group of people. Additionally, just like our kinesiology department, I kept up my exercise as I ran sprints with the weekly Tuesday group of researchers, which resulted in a surprising visit to a challenging hill and I attended a spin class with Vicky and Jan which was fantastic. It was a week packed with lots of fun experiences.

Q: Do you have any plans for continuing the collaboration with the Peter Harrison Centre and/or plans to return to Loughborough?

A: Yes! My trip to the PHC was a great opportunity to create relationships with the researchers. I will continue to work with Dr. Jan van Der Scheer on evaluating the current evidence on functional electrical stimulation cycling for individuals with a spinal cord injury. I found that the visit to PHC was timely because I was able to learn about PHC's research and the research environment they work in. I left knowing the researchers on a personal level that has, now, led to productive work, despite being separated by multiple time zones.

Q: Would you recommend an international and/or collaborative experience to other students?

A: Most definitely. Every university is going to have different personnel and equipment that can make your work more efficient. Whether it’s sharing ideas about how to get the work done or delegating tasks to individuals with different expertise, this is a major advantage to having research connections. The opportunity to travel to a university and completely immerse yourself in the culture of a different research environment, as well as, their work and communication style can make collaboration really efficient, especially in the early stages of a project.

Thank you to everyone at the Peter Harrison Centre for making my visit so enjoyable and I hope to find my way back in the future.
Stroke Rehabilitation Research Team: MacStroke Canada
By: Kevin Moncion, Elise Wiley and Kenny Noguchi

MacStroke Canada, the McMaster Stroke Rehabilitation Research team led by Dr Ada Tang, is moving forward with activities with our latest CIHR-funded exercise trial. The “Intensity Matters” study is examining interventions aimed at improving cardiovascular health and function in individuals post-stroke.

As a multi-site trial, we are working closely with our collaborators at McGill University to develop standardized operating procedures, and have commenced initial testing of our study assessments and protocols, including our measures of arterial function and aerobic capacity with the gracious help of Vascular Dynamics Lab members. We are very grateful for the collaboration as we ramp up this research study.

Collaborations

Members of the MacStroke Canada team (from left to right): Elise Wiley, Kenny Noguchi, Kevin Moncion.

Dr. Ada Tang, PhD
Principal Investigator
Conferences

VDL @ CSEP 2018: “Health in Motion, Science in Exercise”
By: Jennifer Williams and Vanessa Rizzuto

From October 31st to November 3rd, members of the VDL attended this year’s national CSEP gathering hosted by Brock University in beautiful Niagara Falls, Ontario – just a short drive from Hamilton. The annual event brings together exercise physiology researchers from all across Canada. Highlights from this year’s symposia included topics such as: the newly released Canadian Guidelines on Physical Activity during Pregnancy, challenges and opportunities in reproducibility of exercise physiology research, and the importance of fitness in clinical settings. The latter two symposia had Dr. Maureen MacDonald as a co-presenter.

Also, a highlight of this year’s CSEP was the McMaster Alumni night. Hosted at the Niagara Brewing Company, the event was packed with past and current McMaster graduate students. It was exciting to see everyone together under one roof, reconnecting over a pint and some sliders. Thank you to all who attended and made the event a success!

Another highlight from CSEP this year were the four awards received by members of the McMaster contingent at the CSEP banquet:

- **Dr. Maureen MacDonald** received the CSEP Mentorship Award in Honour of Enzo Cafarelli as an “exemplary mentor to graduate student trainees” – well deserved!
- **Dr. Audrey Hicks** received the CSEP Honour Award as CSEP’s highest recognition for “outstanding contributions to exercise physiology in Canada”
- **Lauren Skelly**, PhD candidate, received the PhD Poster Presentation award
- **Hilary Cladwell**, PhD candidate, was a finalist for the Graduate Student Award - Oral Presentation competition

Finally, many members of the VDL presented their recent work in oral presentations on a wide variety of topics ranging from basic cardiovascular physiology to rehabilitation sciences. Having the opportunity to share our work with other researchers and receive feedback is always a valuable and rewarding experience. We look forward to hopefully attending CSEP next year in Kelowna, British Columbia!
ECSS 2018

Dr. MacDonald attended the 23rd annual congress of the European College of Sport Science in Dublin (July 4th to 7th).

ACSM 2018

Dr. MacDonald attended the 65th annual meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine in Minneapolis (May 30-June 2). During the meeting she was an invited symposium speaker for a symposium in the Basic Science World Congress. Her talk was titled “Pump Up Your Blood Vessels and Heart: Myths and Realities”.

Jason Au (lab alumnus) also presented some of the work from his PhD in a “late-breaking” poster session.
Recent Publications

Journal Articles


Recent Publications

Journal Articles


Podcasts

AJP-Heart and Circulatory Podcast – “Sex, Cycle and Contraceptive Phase on Endothelial Function”
Link: https://ajpheart.podbean.com/e/sex-cycle-and-contraceptive-phase-on-endothelial-function/
CONGRATULATIONS!

On June 14, 2018 three VDL alumni graduated at McMaster University’s Faculty of Science convocation. Dr. Ninette Shenouda was a PhD graduate, and Megan Bittner and Jessica Morris were Honours Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology graduates. Good luck to Ninette, Megan and Jessica in all their future endeavours.
Achievements

Working in the VDL as a Summer NSERC USRA Student
By: Jessica Sadri-Gerrior

Over the course of the Summer 2018 semester I had the opportunity to work in the Vascular Dynamics Lab as an NSERC USRA student. After doing a research placement the term prior, I was able to build on some of the skills I had acquired and develop new skills as well. Under the guidance of other graduate students in the lab I learned how to use various analysis software to measure things like artery diameter and mean blood velocity. One topic that I had been interested in while doing my research placement during the school year was low flow-mediated constriction (L-FMC), which I was able to actually analyze using recent data from participants in the SCORE trial this summer. The SCORE trial is one of the active studies in the lab and was another one of my primary roles during the summer. I worked closely with Emily and Sydney from the SCORE trial to train cardiac rehabilitation patients at Hamilton General Hospital and had the chance to observe and aid in testing visits such as muscle biopsies, oral glucose tolerance tests, and cardiovascular ultrasound imaging visits at McMaster University. The experience was very hands-on and allowed for the development of skills relevant in both a research and clinical setting. Perhaps one of my favourite experiences this summer was interacting with the SCORE participants and being given the independence to oversee their exercise visits and scheduling towards the end of the summer. As a whole, I got a good taste for the different projects currently active in the lab and experienced a much-appreciated balance of mentoring and self-directed learning as a USRA student in the lab. Thank you to Dr. MacDonald and the entire VDL for the valuable experience!

30 Years of Service Milestone

Congratulations to our Lab Manager, Todd Prior, who attained a 30 Years of Service Award Milestone at McMaster. Todd was formally recognized in a ceremony on June 4, 2018. Thank you to Todd for all that he does for the EMRG lab group daily.

Graduate Student Association (GSA) Award Recipient 2018

Todd Prior was the recipient of the 2018 GSA Award for Contributions by Non-Academic Staff. This award honours the extraordinary contributions that members of McMaster University’s support staff extend to its graduate students. The GSA Award Reception was held at The Phoenix on November 8th, 2018.
Goodbye to the VDL
By: Stacey Priest

When I started as an undergraduate thesis student in the VDL in September of 2014, I had little idea what to expect. It turned out to be the most fulfilling learning experience of my undergraduate degree and led me to pursue an MSc degree, which I also completed in the lab. Now, I am currently finishing my role as a Research Assistant. Over these last 4 years as a VDL member, I have learned more than I could have ever imagined. Thinking back to when I first became a member of the lab, it’s safe to say that I have grown immensely – both professionally and personally. I am very fortunate to have gained the knowledge and skills that I have now, through my time as both a student and an employee in the VDL, that will be valuable in my future endeavours.

I have recently accepted a new position as a Clinical Research Assistant and will be leaving the lab at the end of August. While I am very excited for this new opportunity, I am also going to miss the VDL. Below are a few photos of some of my favourite memories during my time in (and out) of the lab. From learning how to use the ultrasound, to data collection and analysis, conference banquets and social activities, defending my MSc thesis, graduating with my lab mates, and lab bonding activities and get-togethers, my experience as a VDL member has been very enjoyable and rewarding. I am going to miss many things about the VDL – even the analysis room where I spent a lot of my time, but I will especially miss my lab mates (both past and present) that I have had the chance to meet and work with everyday.

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to be supervised by an accomplished researcher and wonderful mentor, Dr. Maureen MacDonald, and to work alongside some of the most intelligent, passionate and fun people that I have ever met. I look forward to future VDL reunions and to see where our career paths take us.
Dr. Maureen MacDonald recipient of 2018 CSEP Mentorship Award
November 2, 2018
By: Jem Cheng

In November, at this year’s CSEP Annual General Meeting in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Dr. Maureen MacDonald was honoured as the recipient of the 2018 CSEP Mentorship Award in honour of Enzo Cafarelli. This award intends to recognize a Professor who functions as an exemplary mentor to graduate student trainees and/or young investigators in the field of exercise science/physiology in a recognized Canadian institution. Currently, Maureen holds the positions of Professor and Dean of Science, but it is in her role as our supervisor that we most feel the impact of her mentorship. Maureen’s mentorship style is student-focused, transparent, and communicative. She truly cares about the well-being of each of her students, and wants nothing more than to see them pursue their passions and achieve their goals. She models healthy work-life balance and is a wonderful example of a successful woman in the field of science. We are all so fortunate to have her as our mentor.

Congratulations on this well-deserved honour, Maureen! Thank you so much for your dedication and commitment to mentorship in and out of the lab. We are all better for it.

Maureen MacDonald (right) receiving the 2018 CSEP mentorship award.
VDL members celebrating Dr. MacDonald’s award. Back row (from left to right): Lisa Cotie, Nicole Proudfoot, Jem Cheng, Vanessa Rizzuto. Front row (from left to right): Emily Dunford, Joey Bacauanu, Maureen MacDonald, Sydney Valentino, Jason Au, Julia Totosy de Zepetnek.
We recently caught up with Andrew Levy to hear about his whereabouts in the years after his time in the VDL. After completing his MSc at McMaster in 2005, Andrew did his PhD at the University of Waterloo, then moved to work in Steffen Bolz’s lab at UofT. After 3 years there, he transitioned out of academia and into a small digital health startup where he found a passion for digital health, which has now blossomed into a career in digital health strategy. Andrew now works for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the Digital Health Secretariat. Jessica, the lab RA, corresponded with him over email to inquire a little more about this new career path:

*How would you define the field of digital health?*

Digital health is the clinically guided use of technology to support the delivery of health care.

*How did you get involved in the field? Did it translate from your previous experience?*

During my post-doctoral fellowship with Dr. Bolz, I had the opportunity to work towards commercializing the Artery-on-a-chip platform in addition to the traditional lab based research. I started exploring other options for what my next career move would be. I spent a little over a year post-doc meeting with people from various industries from consultants, pharmaceutical companies, government, medical devices. I tried to speak to as many different people as I could to learn from how they had moved from academia out. During this time, I was inspired by the start-up/entrepreneurship world. I thought that there was a real opportunity to leverage the problem solving analytical skills we learn throughout grad school, to help grow companies.

We wish Andrew all the best in the exciting field of digital health and are very happy to hear about his family life in Toronto, including his 4 beautiful boys, pictured below.

Andrew’s 4 sons: Dylan (8 yrs), Ryan (6 yrs), Jason (4 yrs), and Austin (~15 months).
Congratulations to Jessica Morris, former VDL thesis student, for her acceptance into the McMaster Global Health Master’s program. We wish you the best of luck in your future studies!

CALL FOR VDL ALUMNI UPDATES!

We would love to hear from VDL alumni! Please inform us if you have any news that you would like to share with us so that we can include it in future VDL newsletters to update other readers. We are looking forward to hearing from and learning all the exciting endeavours of VDL alumni.

Please contact vdl@mcmaster.ca with any updates, comments, or inquiries.

Thanks for reading!