

# CENTRE ON AGING NEWS

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OF MANITOBA

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## Save the date!

- Research Seminar Series  
TBA, Fall 2013
- HLHP Research Institute Seminar Series  
Malcolm Smith, PhD & Christine Kreklewitz, PhD Candidate  
September 13, 2013, 2:30pm.  
Investor's Group Athletic Centre, Room 238
- 31st Annual Spring Research Symposium  
May 5, 2014  
Bannatyne Campus, University of Manitoba

## Centre on Aging

The Centre on Aging, established on July 1, 1982, is a university- wide research centre with a mandate to conduct, encourage, integrate, and disseminate research on all aspects of aging.

### Director: Dr. Verena Menec

Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging  
Professor, Community Health Sciences,  
Faculty of Medicine

The Centre on Aging News is published three times a year and is available on our web site and by request. Direct comments and inquiries to

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## Centre renewed for five more years

On June 19, 2013, the Senate approved the Report of the Senate Committee on University Research (SCUR) on the Periodic Review of the Centre on Aging, recommending that the Centre be renewed for a five-year period beginning September 3, 2013 until September 2, 2018.

On behalf of Dr. Verena Menec, Centre on Aging Director, a special thank you goes out to all the Research Affiliates; Deans, Department Heads, and Directors; Advisory Board members; undergraduate and graduate students (past and present); government departments and organizations; and community organizations who provided a letter of support on behalf of the Centre. The 89 letters of support received further strengthens the importance of the aging research and work conducted at the University of Manitoba by both Centre staff and its Research Affiliates.

Dr. Digvir Jayas, Vice-President (Research and International) and Chair, Senate Committee on University Research, said in his letter to Dr. Menec, "I would personally like to extend my congratulations to you on the success of the Centre."

## Like us on facebook!

The Centre on Aging is now on facebook! Visit our page to find out the latest information on Centre events, research, and important issues on aging:  
[www.facebook.com/CentreOnAging.umanitoba](http://www.facebook.com/CentreOnAging.umanitoba)

# Spotlight on research: Research affiliate profiles

By Arman Iranpour



*Editor's note: Over the summer, the Centre on Aging had a student volunteer interview a number of Affiliates about their research. These articles will appear in the newsletter over the next three issues.*

Arman Iranpour will be starting Grade 11 in September 2013 and is an International Baccalaureate student at Kelvin High School. He is actively involved in sports and volunteer activities. As part of his studies, he is completing community service work by volunteering. During the month of July, Arman interviewed Centre on Aging research affiliates about their research interests.

## Dr. Shahin Shooshtari



Dr. Shahin Shooshtari is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Family Social Sciences and Community Health Sciences and a St. Amant researcher. She has academic training in public health and community health sciences, with specialization in aging and population based studies. Dr. Shooshtari teaches graduate

and undergraduate courses related to family health, aging, and disabilities. Her graduate level courses include a research methods course, which teaches data analysis through Statistics Canada data collection and organization. Her courses and research are mainly quantitative, and she often deals with large population based data sets.

When asked how she got into this field of research, Dr. Shooshtari said that during her training, she had visited several rehabilitation/residence centres for children and adults with disabilities in her home country of Iran, and was shocked by the clients' living conditions and the little care that they had access to. Dr. Shooshtari saw that these people weren't treated equally and were

often neglected. This motivated her to step into the field of study to help raise awareness and support for people with disabilities, so that they can also enjoy a healthy and active aging experience.

Dr. Shooshtari now works within four main areas of research: community health, aging; intellectual and developmental disabilities; and knowledge translation. She said that 'most of her focus recently has been in trying to link aging with intellectual and developmental disabilities.'

An example is her *Report on the state of science on health risks and ageing in people with intellectual disabilities* publication, which summarizes relatively recent scientific research on the topic of health risks associated with ageing in people with an intellectual disability. The report states that 'as persons with intellectual disabilities survive and live into older age, the combination of life-long disorders and their associated medications use, and the "normal" ageing processes, puts them at a greater risk for ill-health.'<sup>1</sup> Lack of physical activity and bad nutrition leading to obesity and poor health, are key risk factors that can be, and must be addressed earlier to ensure a sense of wellbeing as they age. The information and research in this report however, is strictly based and focused on North American, European and industrialized Asian countries.

*Continued on page 3...*

## Dr. Benedict Albensi

Dr. Benedict Albensi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, and also works as a researcher at St. Boniface Hospital. Dr. Albensi has received training in both basic and clinical research and has contributed to drug discovery in the industrial sector. He received his PhD in neuroscience at the University of Utah. He was recruited and encouraged to join the St. Boniface Research Centre in Winnipeg by friends and fellow research colleagues.

Currently, his research focuses on neurobiology, and the mechanisms of memory and the nervous system. Through comprehensive animal and human testing and research including MRI's, molecular tests, behavioural tests, and electrophysiological tests (investigating the electrical properties of biological cells and tissues), Dr. Albensi studies the effects of different forms of memory impairment including Alzheimer's, epilepsy, head trauma, stroke, and aging.

Through this research, his goal is to understand how memory is affected, and to develop ways to prevent the damage to the brain. On top of prevention, he also hopes to develop treatments to heal or reverse memory impairments.

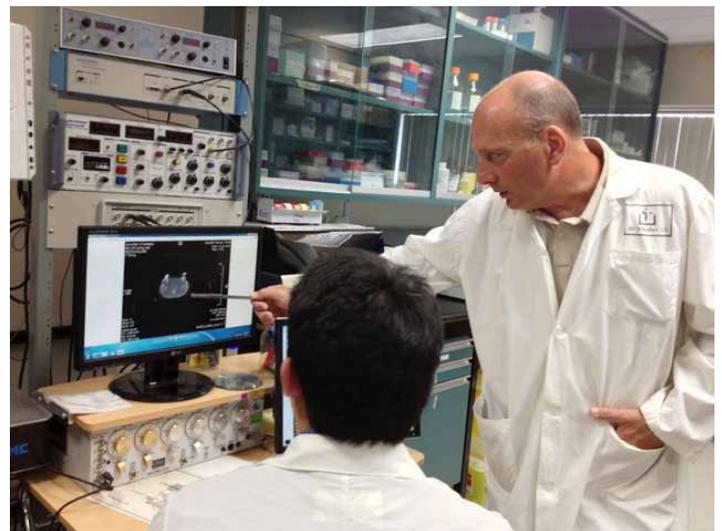
For example, through lab research, Dr. Albensi and his colleagues were able to identify a new biomarker (an indicator of a biological state) that is released after stroke. They are conducting clinical human trials and if they return positive results, then a new diagnostic test can be used for the rapid detection of stroke using blood samples. This study will be released soon.

*Dr. Shahin Shooshtari continued from page 2 ...*

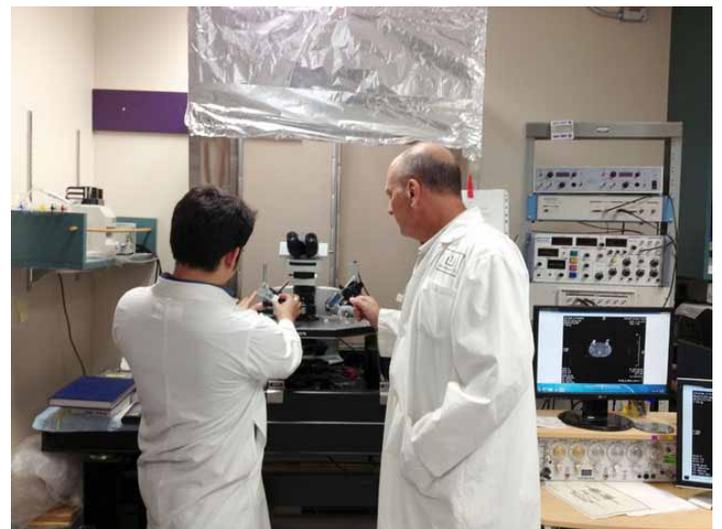
When asked about her research at St. Amant and how she feels it impacts the public, Dr. Shooshtari said "intellectual and developmental disabilities are forgotten in terms of research." She said the research conducted at St. Amant aims at improving the quality of life for people with disabilities and also helps raise awareness. Dr. Shooshtari believes that this area of research is often neglected, and that through linking aging with disabilities, she can help create a more age-friendly environment for disabled people.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.iasid.org/pdf/SSCA\\_on\\_Health\\_Risks\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.iasid.org/pdf/SSCA_on_Health_Risks_report_final.pdf)

When asked how he got into this field of research, he said he 'had been excited about brain research in college and was fascinated by the different functions of the brain and human intelligence.' Dr. Albensi's "interest in figuring out how things work" is his main motivation behind his research. He believes that finding out how things work is important for medical research and development. He said that his studies have returned positive results.



**Dr. Albensi (standing) and Chris Cadonic discuss an MRI image taken from a mouse brain that is genetically engineered with Alzheimer's disease mutations**



**Dr. Albensi (right) and Chris Cadonic (left) look at equipment used for the electrophysiological recording of nerve cell activity. This sort of method is used for simulating memory encoding.**

# Aging in Cameroon

By Arman Iranpour

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is an international non-government based organization composed of “NGOs, the corporate sector, academia, government, and individuals”<sup>1</sup>. Their mission is to “improve the quality of life of people as they age”<sup>2</sup> through the collection, analysis, and spreading of information and research. Policies, rights and practices aimed at increasing the quality of life of the aging population are protected and encouraged to create a better global environment for aging people.



## Cameroon drum and dance group greeting workshop delegates

The IFA recently held a two day workshop in Yaoundé, Cameroon with funding and support from the Friends of IFA Japan (FOIFA). The International Workshop on Aging and Age-Friendly Environments took place on May 27–28, 2013. The workshop was divided into four theme sections: health and wellbeing into old age; elder abuse; older persons and crisis management; and age-friendly environments. Speakers aimed to educate the audience and the panel about issues, resources available, and solutions. Presentations were mainly focused on issues in Africa, addressing its faster rate of population aging.

According to a report published by the United Nations Population Fund, Cameroon’s percentage of population aged 60+ was 5.4% in 2012. Projections show that by 2050, this number will rise to 9.5%<sup>3</sup>. Although this number is still lower than most western countries, African countries, like Cameroon, are plagued with poverty, illness and little resources. Figures from 2007 show that along with their increasing rate of population aging, 39.9% of the population is affected by poverty<sup>4</sup>.

Cameroon is an example of a developing country that is experiencing accelerated population aging and struggling with poverty, with little resources and solutions to support them.



**National Congress Centre where the workshop was held in Cameroon, May 2013**

Mr. Jim Hamilton is the Associate Director at the University of Manitoba’s Centre on Aging. He was a speaker at the International Workshop on Ageing and Age-Friendly Environments, focusing on two of the four theme sections. Mr. Hamilton’s research and presentations covered age-friendly environments; rural areas and communities; and older persons and crisis management. He said that it is important not to judge what is “rural” based on our own personal experience, or lack of it. Mr. Hamilton believes that all communities should be age-friendly and suitable for aging people to participate in society.

## References

<sup>1</sup> IFA “About Us” <http://www.ifa-fiv.org/about/>

<sup>2</sup> IFA “About Us” <http://www.ifa-fiv.org/about/>

<sup>3</sup> UNFPA Report “Ageing in the twenty-first century: A celebration and a challenge”

<sup>4</sup> Rural Poverty in Cameroon “Modernizing agriculture to reduce rural poverty in Cameroon” <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/en/country/home/tags/cameroon>

# Research Affiliate updates

## Funding

**Drs. Judy Chipperfield, Michelle Lobchuk, Phil St. John** and colleagues received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research Operating Grant funding for their project entitled *Psychosocial predictors of health and survival in late life*. (\$256,758)

**Dr. Shahin Shoostari** and colleagues received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research Operating Grant funding for their project entitled *Comprehensive health assessments for adults with intellectual disability (ID) in Manitoba: A feasibility study*. (\$40,000)

**Dr. Genevieve Thompson** and colleagues received a Manitoba Centre for Nursing and Health Research Grant funding for the project entitled *Developing and testing a PCH resident end of life chart audit tool*. (\$3,963.72)

**Dr. Grant Hatch**, Canada Research Chair in Molecular Cardiolipin Metabolism, was renewed as a Tier 1 chair. Dr. Hatch is conducting research into cardiolipin metabolism that will potentially lead to new therapies for heart disease, diabetes, obesity, neurological disorders and Barth Syndrome (a rare genetic disorder in boys that causes a dangerously weakened heart muscle as well as a weakened immune system). He will receive \$1.4 million over the next seven years.

## Media

**Dr. Colleen Millikin** discussed her research team's new grant at Deer Lodge Centre on March 12, 2013. The grant was one of the health research projects announced during MP Joy Smith's visit to the CLSA offices at Deer Lodge Centre.

## Centre news

On March 12, 2013, Joy Smith, Member of Parliament (MP) for Kildonan-St. Paul, on behalf of the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, past Minister of Health, announced funding for 18 health research projects in the province of Manitoba at the Deer Lodge CLSA site. The funding will support researchers working in many areas, including end of life care, and Alzheimer's disease.



**From left to right: Dr. Harvey Chochinov, University of Manitoba, MP Joy Smith, Dr. Colleen Millikin, Research Affiliate, and Dr. Verena Menec pose for a photo at the CLSA offices at Deer Lodge on March 12, 2013**

After the announcement, Centre Director, **Dr. Verena Menec** gave MP Smith and Dr. Harvey Chochinov a tour of the CLSA site. The announcement was mentioned on local news and media articles are available online: [www.newswire.ca/en/story/1128029/harper-government-invests-in-manitoba-health-research](http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/1128029/harper-government-invests-in-manitoba-health-research).

## New Research Affiliates

The Centre welcomed two new Research Affiliates over the summer

- **Dr. Gina Sylvestre**, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg
- **Dr. Tuula Heinonen**, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba

## Advisory board update

Thank you to outgoing advisory board members **Dr. Ben Albensi, Dr. Kristen Roger, and Dr. Michelle Lobchuk** for their contributions to the Centre's advisory board over the past six years. A new Chair and four new advisory board members (Centre on Aging Research Affiliates) will be appointed later this summer and will begin their terms in September 2013.

# Another successful symposium!

The Centre on Aging held its 30th Spring Research Symposium on May 6, 2013. Thank you to all those who presented and attended our event to help make it another success! Over 400 people came out to hear a diverse line of speakers.

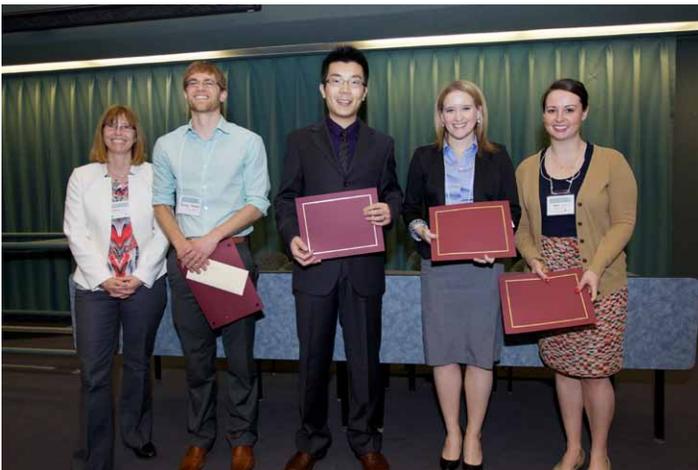
## The next generation of aging researchers

Two students completed their requirements for the Graduate Specialization in Aging (GSA), which is administered by the Centre. Congratulations to Kristina

Zawaly and Joanne Scott, both whom received their certificates from Centre Director, **Dr. Verena Menec** at the Symposium.

The Centre on Aging continues to support students in their aging focused research. This past May, six graduate students received scholarships and fellowships to assist in their studies. The Centre on Aging awarded four scholarships and presented two additional scholarships on behalf of the Alzheimer Society. The names of the award recipients are listed on the following page.

Here is a look at some of the sights and sounds from the research symposium held on Bannatyne Campus.



Photos starting at top left to right: Dr. Digvir Jayas, Vice-President (Research and International) brings greetings on behalf of the University of Manitoba; Dr. Menec and Research Fellowship recipient, Dr. Shawn Bugden; Dr. Menec and GSA certificate students Joanne Scott (Centre) and Kristina Zawaly; Dr. Menec and Centre on Aging scholarship recipients: Jeremy Hamm, Shengua Zhu, Julie Erickson, and Maia Kredentser; City of Winnipeg Councillor Ross Eadie discusses his experiences with the arts.

Fellowship/scholarship awarded	Award recipient
<b>Betty Havens Memorial Graduate Fellowship</b>	Jeremy Hamm, PhD student, Department of Psychology <i>Goal engagement and disengagement in older adults: Implications for 3-year physical health and 9-year survival</i> Advisor: Raymond Perry, PhD, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts
<b>Jack MacDonnell Scholarship for Research in Aging</b>	Shenghua Zhu, PhD student, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics <i>Role of astrocyte in the pathophysiology and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease</i> Advisor: Xin Min Li, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine
<b>Barbara Jean Payne Memorial Award in Social Gerontology</b>	Julie Erickson, PhD student, Department of Psychiatry <i>Defining the psychosocial needs of newly admitted nursing home residents with and without dementia</i> Advisor: Malcolm Doupe, PhD, Department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine; Senior Research Scientist, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy
<b>Esther and Samuel Milmot Scholarship</b>	Maia Kredentser, PhD student, Department of Clinical Psychology <i>Keep in touch: Using computer-mediated communication to support palliative inpatients experiencing barriers to social connection</i> Advisor: Harvey Chochinov, OM, MD, PhD, FRCPC, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine
<b>Alzheimer Society of Manitoba Fellowships</b>	Sheila Novek, PhD student, Department of Community Health Sciences <i>Understanding the care pathways and health service needs of people with early-onset dementia: A mixed methods study</i> Advisor: Verena Menec, PhD, Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging; Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine
<b>Alzheimer Society of Manitoba Fellowships</b>	Bethany Craig, Master's student, Department of Psychology <i>Functional analyses of problem behaviour in dementia: Are standard methods effective?</i> Advisor: Javier Virués-Ortega, PhD, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts

## CLSA news and notes

- The Centre on Aging is one of 11 data collection sites located at universities and research institutes across the country. Housed at Deer Lodge Centre, 865 Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) study participants in Winnipeg have visited the data collection site since August 2012. The Winnipeg team has completed more than 3,000 telephone interviews.
- The CLSA research team has developed a newsletter to keep participants and others informed on the study's progress. The newsletter, *Aging Gracefully* is available online at: [www.clsa-elcv.ca/newsletters-0](http://www.clsa-elcv.ca/newsletters-0)
- The CLSA has marked a major milestone with 25,000 participants taking part in the study. As of June 7, 2013, the total was over 27,200 participants.
- The CLSA was featured on CBC's *The National* on July 16, 2013. You can read about the story "Living longer and better?" on CBC News: [www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2013/07/16/aging-brain](http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2013/07/16/aging-brain)
- This past June, the CLSA team welcomed **Dr. Philip St. John** who has been named co-lead for the Winnipeg site. Dr. St. John is the Head of the Geriatric Medicine section in the Faculty of Medicine.

# Alzheimer Society Graduate Fellowship recipient: Sheila Novek

Republished with permission from the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba

Sheila Novek’s interest in doing research on dementia grew out of her own personal experiences.

When Sheila was a teenager, her mother began showing signs of early onset dementia at the age of 50. Sheila’s mother, who has since passed away, lived with dementia for 11 years.

“The challenges my mother and our family encountered through the health and long term care system inspired me to pursue an education and career focused on improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers,” Sheila says.

While Sheila was always interested in doing research for her career, her experiences with her mom inspired her focus.

Sheila completed her Master’s degree in Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba where she conducted research and examined the experiences of immigrant health care aides working in personal care homes. As a research assistant at the Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba, she has also contributed to a number of projects related to aging and family



(Left to right) Dr. Verena Menec, Centre on Aging Director; Wendy Schettler, Alzheimer Society of Manitoba CEO; Sheila Novek and Bethany Craig, 2013–2014 Alzheimer Society Fellowship recipients

caregiving. She will begin her PhD program in September 2013.

Most recently, Sheila received the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba’s Graduate Student Fellowship. The fellowship is intended to support research that enhances knowledge about the cause, treatment, cure and effects of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. For her Ph.D., Sheila will study dementia care and focus her research on the care pathways and service needs of people like her mother with early onset dementia.

“Younger people with dementia have many of the same needs as older adults, but because (it) affects people during a different phase of the life course, they tend to have additional needs and challenges,” Sheila says.

Sheila’s research study will look at administrative data to profile the health and needs of people with early onset dementia living in personal care homes in Winnipeg. She will also interview caregivers to explore how people living with early onset dementia and their caregivers navigate the health and social care system, including access to diagnosis, community supports and personal care homes.

Sheila also hopes her research will help raise awareness of early onset dementia, as she feels there isn’t enough awareness about its existence and the needs of those who have it.

“By advancing understanding of the health and care needs of people with early onset dementia, (my) study is intended to contribute to the development of effective and accessible services for people living with this form of dementia and their caregivers,” said Sheila.

Sheila says being awarded the Alzheimer Society’s Graduate Student Fellowship is extremely meaningful because of the personal connection she has to her studies.

“I am excited about winning the award, and very grateful,” Sheila says.