

Bringing Research to LIFE

Upcoming events

Health Canada Clinical Trial Inspections -The Local Experience-

This educational event will profile local research team experience with the Health Canada Clinical Trial Inspection process.

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 2010

1 p.m.

Frederic Gaspard Theatre (formerly Theatre A) Bannatyne Campus

There will be audio-visual connections with St. Boniface Hospital (NG002) and the Fort Garry Campus (Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals).

FREE ADMISSION EVERYONE WELCOME

Register at www.lsam.ca/calendar_details.cfm?id=381

Registration closes Oct. 22, 2010

Bringing Research to Life Speaker Series

Healthy Aging: Making the World More Age-Friendly

Dr. Verena Menec (Director, Centre on Aging and Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging)

Wednesday, Nov. 3, 2010

7 p.m.

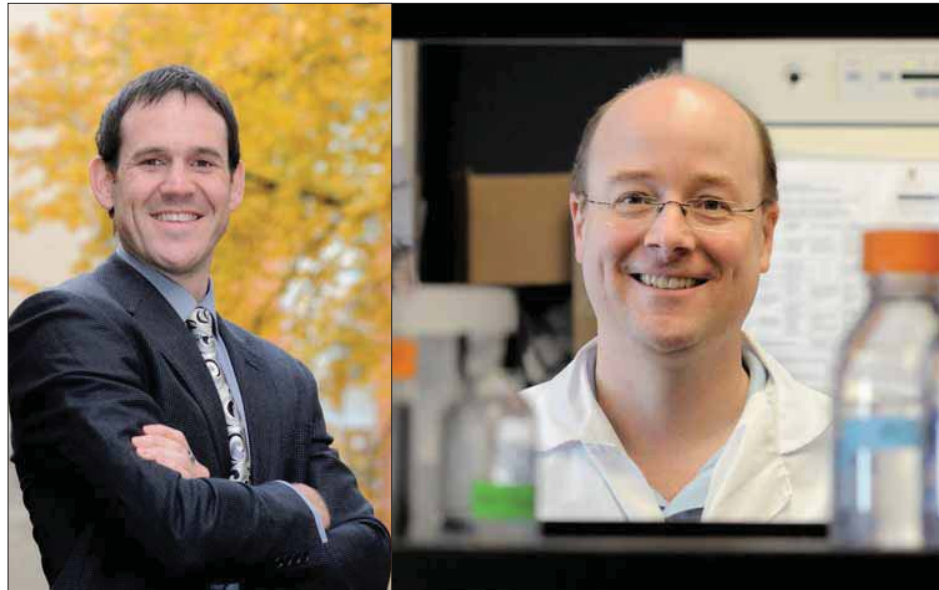
Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre

St. John's College Fort Garry Campus

FREE ADMISSION EVERYONE WELCOME

Research Now a Reality

Projects set to launch for Thorlakson Fund recipients



Photos by Katie Chalmers-Brooks

Faculty of Arts professor James Bolton (left) and Faculty of Medicine professor Kirk McManus wrote the two top-ranked proposals submitted for the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Foundation Fund.

BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS

Which gene mutations are linked to cancer? And does having a serious physical condition put you at a greater risk of dying by suicide?

Two University of Manitoba researchers determined to answer these questions now have the financial means to push forth with their investigations; they are among the 2010 award recipients of the Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Foundation Fund.

Prof. James Bolton (psychology) and Prof. Kirk McManus (biochemistry and medical genetics) wrote the two top-rated proposals for their individual projects. Ten faculty members will share seven awards totaling more than \$192,000. Eight students from the B.Sc. medicine program—exploring topics as varied as H1N1 and the driving skills of seniors—will share an additional \$40,000.

McManus's research seeks to identify the genetic origins of cancer in order to develop more advanced therapies. Many genes that are mutated in tumors bring about increases in chromosome numbers, which distinguishes normal cells from cancer cells. If scientists can identify the specific genes involved in specific types of cancers, they can better target and attack those enemy cells, explains McManus.

"The long-term goal is to look for conditions which will allow the specific targeting of cells containing an abnormal genotype or cancer mutation," he says.

McManus will spend the next year further investigating a particular gene involved with colorectal cancer. He will

Ten faculty members will receive funding awards:

- James Bolton and Gregory Finlayson
- Silvia Cardona
- Donna Martin and Roberta Woodgate
- Kirk McManus
- Zahra Moussavi and Karen Ethans
- Malcolm Xing
- Steven Whyard

Eight students will receive funding awards:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Alicia Barnard | James Bras |
| Lisa Freeman | Brett Houston |
| Kailun Jiang | Lynda Kong |
| Mark Lipson | Elaine Liu |

"knock out" the gene RNF20 from mice and see how that affects tumor growth.

"It's the foundation for which a number of future goals can be realized, depending on what occurs in the mouse," McManus says.

Bolton will look at health information of the entire population of Manitoba from 1995 to 2007 to find out whether having a physical illness puts someone at greater risk of killing

themselves, regardless of whether they have an underlying mental disorder.

"It's never been done before in this degree of completeness," Bolton says.

He'll examine anonymous medical information housed at the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy data repository. This database records all diagnoses—of both physical and mental conditions—made at every doctor's appointment or hospital visit, and links to vital statistics like suicide. "Manitoba has this state-of-the-art database that really is one of the most advanced databases in the world," Bolton says.

He will look at physical disorders like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes, cancer, multiple sclerosis, and asthma. He anticipates mental disorders accounting for some increased risk of suicide but not all, and that any link to suicide will differ depending on the physical condition.

"These findings stand to have a major impact on clinical medicine," says Bolton, noting doctors could better gauge suicide risk in their patients. "Ideally, findings from my study will help prevent suicides in the future."

The \$3.3 million Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson Foundation Fund was established in 1994. The fund supports new researchers as well as established scientists who are embarking on research projects in new territory.

Beginning next year, the fund will provide a \$5,000 travel award for students or speakers to attend the Canadian National Medical Student Research Symposium, hosted by the Faculty of Medicine.