



Message from the Chair

In this season of giving thanks, my gratitude is threefold. First, to the amazing Executive Committee who commit their time and energy to organizing our group. This spectacular newsletter and our other amazing events could not happen without them. I am excited to announce that, in lieu of our Spring Tour this coming year, there will be a talk by Dr. Jane Philpott on April 23, 2025, where she will share details from her book, Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada. Dr. Philpott is an accomplished family physician, educator, and global health champion, and is best known for having held several senior cabinet positions with the Government of Canada. I know it will be a really great event! Second, I am grateful for the hard work and generosity of the UHKF and their staff. They help coordinate all of our efforts, produce our brochures, and manage our finances at absolutely no cost to our group. Together with the generosity of our luncheon



Rachel Koven, Chair

sponsor, Karina Vaghela, Pharmacist/Owner -- Shoppers Drug Mart, this means that 100 % of our membership dues can be used without any operational expenses. Last, and certainly not least, I am indebted to all of you, our membership, who continue to make a financial contribution toward this important initiative. Our collective support allows over \$35,000 to be given out each year to fund new and innovative medical research projects. Since 2013, collectively, we have raised close to \$450,000. We currently have 98 members and would love to reach our goal of 100+ women in 2025!

Fall Luncheon Recap

Dr. Stephen Vanner summarized the process of awarding WGC monies raised



Dr. Stephen Vanner, Professor, Department of Medicine, School of Medicine, Queen's University, presented on behalf of Dr. Steven Smith, Deputy Vice-Principal Research, Queen's University, and President and CEO, Kingston General Health Research Institute (KGHRI). The presentation focused on the processes for selecting the research field and adjudicating proposals in the annual Women's Giving Circle grant cycle.

Each September, Dr. Smith meets with members of the executive committee of the WGC and provides insight into current research. He then narrows the field by suggesting, in alignment with the wishes of the WGC, three areas of interest, which will become the template for our ballot. Each member of the WGC

has the opportunity to vote for one of these three fields of research. Dr. Vanner summarized the focus of each of the three fields featured on the 2024 WGC ballot, a paper copy of which was distributed to luncheon attendees. An electronic version was later sent to members not in attendance. The three fields are: ovarian cancer, healthy aging, and bleeding disorders. The field with the largest number of votes becomes the focus of the granting process.

Each January, the WGC funding opportunity is announced as part of the larger Queen's Health Sciences Internal Grant competition. Once the application process closes, the research projects are reviewed by a panel of experts from the Institute, who ultimately make a decision on which project will be awarded the grant.

Breaking news: The results of the WGC vote are in. The successful research field is ovarian cancer!

Submitted by:

Jan Linscott, Membership Chair, Executive Committee

Presentation by grant recipient

Dr. Fernanda De Felice



Attendees of the October 15 Fall luncheon were treated to a presentation by Dr. Fernanda De Felice, entitled "*Exploring the impact of social environment on brain inflammation and brain architecture*". Dr. De Felice is a biological chemist with specialization in the neurobiology of Alzheimer's Disease (AD). Her recent studies show that irisin, a hormone produced by muscles during exercise, has protective actions in AD. This groundbreaking discovery is leading to an understanding of how a simple lifestyle choice, such

as exercise, can lead to maintaining brain health, and to delaying or preventing AD.

Dr. De Felice is also studying changes in brain biology that may result from a change in social environment. With our Women's Giving Circle grant, Dr. De Felice will study the role of two types of nerve cells: microglia and astrocytes, and their possible detrimental effect on healthy nerve cells under inflammatory conditions. A progressive loss of healthy nerve cells leads to impairments in cognitive functions, which are symptoms of AD.

Dr. De Felice showed a slide depicting a healthy nerve cell -- a beautiful glittering image resembling a galaxy of stars. It was stunning to see photographs of cells that are tangible physical components of this disease. We look forward to Dr. De Felice's return visit to a meeting of the WGC to share what new knowledge she has gleaned to unravel the puzzle that is Alzheimer's Disease.

Submitted by:

Lucille Davies, Past Chair, Executive Committee

Save the date!

Presentation by

Dr. Jane Philpott

Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Queen's University
when she will share details from her book

Health for All:

A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada

April 23, 2025, 4 - 6:30 pm
Cataraqui Golf and Country Club

Invitation will be sent early in the New Year

Research updates

1) Role of enzyme calpain in cancer metastasis

Principal Investigator: Dr. Peter Greer, Cancer, Biology and Genetics Division, Sinclair Cancer Research Institute, Queen's University

Dr. Greer's research focuses mainly on breast cancer, but also on ovarian, prostate, and bladder cancers.

One of his projects is the study of the role of an enzyme, calpain, in cancer metastasis.

Metastasis results when a cancer cell leaves a tumour and travels to another part of the body and establishes a new tumour in its new location. It appears that the enzyme calpain may be involved in metastasis. The role of calpain in a healthy body is to move cells to where they are needed, such as to an injury, to begin healing. However, when calpain is present in a cancerous tumour, it appears that it may be unwittingly facilitating the movement of cancer cells from the tumour to other parts of the body.

Dr. Greer's lab is studying the approach of developing inhibitors of calpain, thus disrupting its activity, and controlling or reducing metastasis. Using genetic modelling systems, Dr. Greer has found that breast cancer cells with low calpain levels show correspondingly low levels of metastasis. This strategy, in combination with other cancer therapeutics, may lead to future clinical trials that would be life-changing in combatting metastasis.

Submitted by:

Lucille Davies, Past Chair, Executive Committee

2) Occupational performance coaching helped people with MS achieve daily activity goals

Principal Investigators: Dr. Dorothy Kessler and Dr. Marcia Finlayson, School of Rehabilitation Therapy, Queen's University

People with multiple sclerosis experience a wide range of disabling symptoms, including difficulty walking and maintaining balance, extreme fatigue, pain, and changes in memory and thinking abilities. These symptoms can negatively impact their ability to engage in daily activities. With support from the Women's Giving Circle award in 2021, Dr. Dorothy Kessler and Dr. Marcia Finlayson conducted a randomized controlled trial to determine if people with multiple sclerosis who received Occupational Performance Coaching improved their satisfaction with their ability to perform daily activities.

Occupational Performance Coaching is a form of coaching that builds skills for managing chronic

health conditions and improving participation in daily activities. This form of coaching was designed for use in the context of rehabilitation, and helps people achieve meaningful activity goals that they set for themselves. Through Occupational Performance Coaching, people build skills and find solutions that enable them to meet their goals, and enhance resilience, confidence and overall self-management capacity.

Thirty-one (31) people with multiple sclerosis, who were not receiving any other coaching interventions, were recruited to this study, where they were randomly assigned to receive Occupational Performance Coaching, or to be in a control group. Those people who received coaching participated in six telephone sessions with a trained facilitator over a 10-week period.

To determine if coaching was successful, we compared people who received coaching to people in the control group. The group who received coaching had significantly higher Canadian Occupational Performance Measure scores for both satisfaction with, and the ability to carry out, the daily activity goals that they had set -- compared to the control group. The coached group maintained the benefits of coaching at two months. These results support the fact that Occupational Performance Coaching is helpful for people with multiple sclerosis and enables them to work toward their daily activity goals and increase their satisfaction with their goal achievement. Of note, Occupational Performance Coaching was also provided to the control group at the end of the study. These individuals benefitted as well, even though they waited for the intervention.

The results of this research were published in 2024 in *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* - <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38851554/>.

Submitted by:

Dr. Steven Smith, Deputy Vice-Principal Research, Queen's University, and President and CEO, Kingston General Health Research Institute (KGHRI), with the assistance of the KGHRI



(Most of) the attendees of the Spring luncheon, held at the Cataraqui Golf and Country Club last June. A few members had slipped away before this photo was taken!

Join us at the Women's Giving Circle!

Membership in the WGC currently stands at 98. We welcome new members to join us in our efforts to support state-of-the-art medical research taking place right here in our local hospitals. Every dollar of our membership dues goes directly to research through our annual research grants. Please check out our webpage for more information and click 'Join'!

We are also inviting current members to join our Executive Committee. We meet once a month to plan upcoming events – with tremendous support from the team from University Hospitals Kingston Foundation. We would very much appreciate input from our members. Please email us if you are interested.

Our webpage:

<https://www.uhkf.ca/Ways-To-Give/Women-s-Giving-Circle>

Link to sign up or renew:

<https://uhkf.akaraisin.com/ui/womensgivingcircle/donations/start>

Membership is \$42 a month for women 40 and over. The monthly membership of \$21 is for women under the age of 40. If you would prefer to pay once a year, please contact our office by email foundation@uhkf.ca or by phone 613-549-5452.

Newsletter editor: Barbara Yates, Executive Committee

Research
today for
better
health care
tomorrow



Women's Giving Circle
In support of research at Kingston's hospitals

