**First Canadian Master’s degree in couple and family therapy**

A Master’s degree in couple and family therapy—the first of its kind in Canada—will be introduced at McGill University’s School of Social Work this fall, as a result of a partnership between McGill and the Jewish General Hospital. The two-year interdisciplinary program combines academic training with practical experience on treating complex problems within couples and families.

The program will blend the clinical expertise of the JGH’s Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry—a widely recognized centre for clinical training in marriage and family therapy—with McGill’s academic excellence.

Drawing from such disciplines as social work, transcultural psychology and counselling psychology, the program will feature courses on life-long human development, contemporary issues and diversity in couple and family therapy, and more. It will also provide an overview of some of the biological and neurological foundations of behaviour.

"Increasingly, couple and family therapy skills are needed for the practice of physical health and community mental health," says Dr. Sharon Bond, Director of the Master’s program and of couple and family therapy in the JGH Department of Psychiatry. "This program aims to prepare students to deal with the often complicated interplay of physical, psychological, cultural, economic and social factors faced by families and couples."

Graduates will earn not only a Master’s degree from McGill, but two professional permits: one as a couple and family therapist (approved by the Quebec Order of Social Workers and Couple and Family Therapists) and another as a psychotherapist (approved by the Quebec Order of Psychologists).

"This program will benefit society, because it enables many more qualified couple and family therapists to be trained than would have been possible if everyone had to have a Ph.D," says Dr. Michael Bond, JGH Chief of Psychiatry. "Given the permit requirements for psychotherapists and couple and family therapists, this program fills a true need."

**Dental team fills urgent need in the Philippines**

Young and old, they arrived in droves at a basketball court in a Philippines town this past February to see a team skilled not in dribbling, but in drilling.

The sports site had been transformed into a makeshift dental clinic staffed by dentists, dental assistants, nurses and technical and administrative support staff from Canada, who volunteered to help residents of two provinces devastated by typhoon Haiyan last November. Among the leaders of the delegation was Dr. Emilia Espiritu, a JGH staff clinician who heads the residency program in the Department of Dentistry.

"The team treated all ages, but I focused on the children in the hope of saving their teeth," says Dr. Espiritu, describing the free care for those who were impoverished by the catastrophe in her native country. "Tooth decay is rooted in the typical Filipino diet, which is very sugary. Also, many of the villagers were farmers and fishermen with little money or education. They aren’t familiar with oral hygiene and can’t afford a dentist. Many of the children’s teeth are rotten before they’ve fully grown in."

During the week-long tour, the 28-person team saw 3,000 patients in seven municipalities. Having heard about the clinic by word of mouth, the villagers streamed in on a first-come-first-served basis for extractions, fillings, cleaning and other care. Portable chairs, dental units and other equipment were provided by the University of British Columbia, while local pharmacies donated vitamins and medical supplies.

"Unfortunately, we didn’t have X-rays," says Dr. Espiritu, "and we removed so many teeth that we ran out of gauze. To stop the bleeding, we had to use donated sanitary pads that were cut into small pieces." She says she returned home exhausted, but “fulfilled and uplifted. It really reminds you how fortunate we are and how important it is to give.”

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**Significant genetic breakthrough in rare form of ovarian cancer**

Mutations in a single gene have been successfully identified in multiple cases of small-cell carcinoma of the ovary, hypercalcaemic type (SCCOHT), the most common undifferentiated ovarian cancer to strike women under 40. This finding was made by a research team led by Dr. William Foulkes at the Lady Davis Institute (LDI) at the JGH.

“Though rare, SCCOHT is important because the average age of victims is 25, with some as young as 2,” explains Dr. Foulkes, head of the Cancer Genetics Laboratory at the LDI and of the Program in Cancer Genetics at McGill University. “The oldest known patient was a woman of 48, but the prognosis is dismal unless there’s an early diagnosis.

“By identifying a specific genetic factor, we finally have the prospect of early genetic counselling for women with a family history of the disease. This will help to determine the presence of the mutation before the disease emerges, and it opens opportunities for new approaches to treatment.”

Using a technique known as whole exome sequencing (a revolutionary method of diagnosis and taxonomy developed only during the past five years), researchers identified a mutation in the chromatin-remodelling gene SMARCA4 that was common to three families, at least two of whose members were afflicted with SCCOHT. Further testing of a total of 40 cases revealed that this was the only important genetic alteration in any of the tumours.

“Treatment options remain limited to poisoning this cancer with DNA-damaging agents,” says Dr. Foulkes. “However, these are unlikely to be as effective as using novel therapies that function by modulating the expression of the mutant gene. Developing a drug that targets SMARCA4 could have widespread benefits, as this gene has been implicated in various primary cancers, including kidney and pediatric brain tumours.”

**Exploring the links between mental illness and brain disease**

When mental illness is categorized as brain disease, the diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems can be affected, attendees were informed at the 9th Annual JGH Department of Psychiatry Research Day. Featured as speakers were researchers from the Department of Psychiatry and the Lady Davis Institute (LDI), as well as Dr. Ian Gold (rear, right), the Canada Research Chair in Philosophy and Psychiatry at McGill University. Among those at the event were (rear, from left) Dr. Laurence Kirmayer, an expert on cultural psychiatry; and Dr. Amir Raz, who is conducting novel research on the effect of placebos; and (front, from left) Dr. Suparna Choudhury, a leader in critical neuroscience; Dr. Michael Bond, JGH Chief of Psychiatry; Dr. Phyllis Zelkowitz, LDI head of research into the Psychosocial Aspects of Disease; and event organizer Dr. David Dunkley of the Department of Psychiatry and the LDI.

**Investing in a healthy future for all**

Private support is vital to the LDI and its leading-edge research into the causes and potential treatments for the most common illnesses. Donations supplement the funding that public granting agencies provide. This enables the LDI to ensure the continued excellence and growth of existing research programs; recruit first-rank researchers and support their research in priority areas; pursue key areas of research that would not otherwise be funded; and provide critical support to foster new ideas and speed the development and access to novel treatments and therapeutics.

A new feature of the JGH Foundation’s Capital Campaign enables donors to target a particular area of LDI research—such as aging, cancer or HIV/AIDS—to support specific researchers and their infrastructure for a specified period. For more information or to make a donation, please visit jghfoundation.org and click on the Campaign tab, or call 514-340-8251.