



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, DR. JUAN CARLOS ZUNIGA-PFLUCKER

A couple of weeks ago we received news from the Dean's office that the next Chair of the Department of Immunology will be our very own Prof. **Jennifer Gommerman**. We are all excited and look forward to her term starting on Oct. 1, 2023. Congratulations Jen!

This issue marks the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Volume of the *Immunology Newsletter*, and we will be back with the next issue in Sept. 2023. Until then, here is what else we have to look forward to and to celebrate. So please mark your calendars.

Our next *Summer/Fall Retreat* will be on Sept. 10-11, 2023, at The Fern Resort. A photograph from last year's retreat is shown to encourage and remind you of all the fun activities and excellent presentation that take place during our IMMazing Retreat. This year we have Profs. **Rafi Ahmed** (Emory U.) and **Sara Suliman** (UCSF, & UofT IMM grad



alumna) joining us as our keynote speakers.

On May 6-7, 2023, the Immunology Student Association (IMMSA) hosted the *Ontario Quebec Undergraduate Immunology Conference* (OQUIC), with terrific presentations from undergraduate researchers across both provinces. OQUIC's keynote speakers, Profs. **Martin Oliver** (McGill U.) and **Michele Anderson** (UofT IMM) gave inspiring presentations about their scientific journeys and significant discoveries. The event was a resounding success, all thanks to IMMSA and the tremendous leadership from **Vicky Xie** and **Momo Lin**. I was also pleased to present **Momo Lin** with the Department of Immunology's *Undergraduate Service Award*. As you will see below, we are delighted to welcome the new IMMSA co-presidents, **Catherine Chi** & **Jason Yang**, with whom I look forward to work with over the Summer and early Fall.

I am delighted to announce that this year's winner of *The Immunology Undergraduate Prize*, which is given to a student with the best academic standing in both IMM340/1 and IMM350/1 courses, is **Aly Muhammad Al-Karim Ladak**, who had a perfect set of marks for both courses. Congratulations to Aly, who will be presented with this award at the *Department of Immunology Winter Retreat*, to be held on Thursday, December 7, 2023, in the Hart House.

More happy news, I am pleased to announce that the winner of the *11th Annual BD-Biosciences Immunology Post-Doctoral Award Lecture* is Dr. **Sabelo Lukhele** (Brooks lab), and as noted below, the BD-BIPDAL will take place on Monday June 12th. Congratulations to Sabelo, and we look forward to an exciting talk, which will be take place during the *1<sup>st</sup> Annual Immunology Postdoctoral Research Day*. Please be sure to register and attend that looks like a great day to celebrate the amazing and talented postdocs at UofT Immunology.

Speaking of celebrations, please join me in Congratulating Profs. **Lena Serghides**, **Adam Gehring** and **Arthur Mortha** on their promotions to Associate Professor.

Best wishes to all for a great summer, and hope to see you soon at the *Postdoctoral Research Day* event.



## UPCOMING SEMINARS

### JUNE 1<sup>st</sup> YEAR STUDENT SEMINAR DAY

June 5, 2023

#### Presenters:

Jennifer Ahn (Gommerman lab)

Melanie Bercovitch (Rojas lab)

Maye Cheng (Buechler lab)

Sai Chung (MacParland lab)

Beth DeConinck (Dunn lab)

Cora Geiger (Wall lab)

Mahdieh Golzari-Sorkheh (Zúñiga-Pflücker lab)

Ash Hagerman (Robbins lab)

Boyd Johnson (Wang lab)

Alex Lac (Epelman lab)

Lewis Liu (Dunn lab)

Siavash Mashhouri (Crome lab)

Erika McCartney (Buechler lab)

Jinny Tsang (Kaul lab)

Alara Tuncer (Wang lab)

Victoria Visser (Buechler / Philpott labs)

Xinyu Wei (Hirano lab)

Reese Whittaker (Juvet lab)

Vivian Xie (Gommerman lab)

## POSTDOC Events

### Immunology Postdoctoral Research Day & BD Biosciences / Immunology PDF Award Lecture

June 12, 2023

MSB 2170

We are looking forward to our first annual Immunology Postdoctoral Research Day on Monday June 12, 2023. The research day will highlight 9 short talks (15 minutes+5 discussion) from the post docs. This will be followed by the BD Biosciences Immunology postdoctoral award lecture from 4pm to 5pm.

The detailed schedule is [here](#).

## EASTON SEMINARS

We have 25 seminars are scheduled for 2023-2024 Charles Gould Easton Seminar Series.

Please check out our website for future speakers who are scheduled to visit us.

Talk titles will be updated later. [Easton Seminar Listings](#)



## HELLO FROM THE W.I.D.E. COMMITTEE

With the beginning of June, summer is here – officially! Here are important dates and commemorations to recognize, celebrate, and reflect on this month, brought to you by WIDE.

- **June is Pride Month in Canada**, where we celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. For many in Canada and around the world, sexual and/or gender identity can be a burden internalized as shame due to the prevailing homophobia and transphobia in politics, schools, media, religion, and even from family and friends. [The recent refusal of the York Catholic District School Board in the GTA to raise the Pride flag is a reminder of that.](#) Pride month reminds queer folks to reclaim our identities in “pride” rather than “shame”. The Sexual & Gender Diversity Office has compiled a list of Pride events at UofT [here](#), including [Raising the Progress Pride Flag at Varsity Centre](#), the ["Rainbow Rendezvous" Researcher Mixer](#), and the [UofT Pride Pub](#). Read about the Government of Canada’s stance on the human rights of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community [here](#). Additionally, most off-campus Pride events in Toronto are compiled officially [here](#).



- **June is also National Indigenous History Month, and June 21 specifically is National Indigenous Peoples’ Day.** During this time, we recognize and celebrate the heritage of Canada’s diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and remember the history of colonialism, which has led to the genocide of Indigenous peoples, including cultural and spiritual genocide evident in Residential Schools. [Read more about how Government of Canada is supporting Indigenous communities this month](#) and find ways to take action with this [list of resources and actionable steps for non-Indigenous folks](#). Support and participate in local Indigenous non-profit organizations based in Toronto such as [Indspire](#) and [Canadian Roots Exchange](#).
- **Canadian Multiculturalism Day is June 27.** On this day, we celebrate all the rich and diverse cultural communities in Canada. Read more about how this day is celebrated in Canada, including in a city or community near you, [here](#).
- **Eid al-Adha starts on June 28** and ends on the evening of July 2. The WIDE Committee and the Department of Immunology wish a blessed Eid to all that celebrate. Read more about the cultural significance of this celebration [here](#) and find upcoming events at UofT with the Muslim Students’ Association at UofT [here](#).

**WIDE would like to hear from you!** If you have suggestions, feedback, comments, or questions for us – please visit our new [Suggestion Box](#) and leave us an **anonymous** comment to let us know how we can better serve our community. You can also access the Suggestion Box on the [updated WIDE page on the Department’s website](#).

EDIIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigeneity, Accessibility) requires a state of humility – recognizing that we are all learners – and a constant state of introspection and reflection, in which we confront our own discomfort, ignorance, and gaps in knowledge or understanding. Only then can we work to unlearn any negative beliefs or ideas we may have been taught.

We wish you all a bright and splendid June!

-Your WIDE Committee

Follow us on Twitter [@IMM\\_WIDE](#) for more updates!



## Immunology Summer Student Research Program Update

This year's ISSRP presentations will take on a new twist. At the end of July, we will have our ISSRP participants present a poster on their work and a selection of students will give a brief seminar on their findings. There will be prizes! Keep your eyes on your inbox in the coming weeks for details.

We look forward to seeing you there!

## GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATE

### **Congratulations PhD Qualifiers!**

Damra Camat (MacParland lab) – May 18, 2023

Zhewei Liu (Mallevaey lab) – May 24, 2023

Evey Zheng (Hirano lab) – May 29, 2023

Robyn Loves (Grunebaum lab) – May 29, 2023

Clay Qiu (Zúñiga-Pflücker lab) – May 31, 2023

Tianning Yu (Watts lab) – May 31, 2023

...and more to come.

### **Welcome to our new Advanced Standing MSc students!**

Kieran Coppens (Saibil lab)

Irene Fang (Ehrhardt lab)

Ariel Orozco (Ehrhardt lab)

Jennifer Sahadeo (Martin lab)

Sila Usta (Berinstein lab)



## UPDATES FROM IGSA

Hello fellow Immunologists!

We hope this newsletter finds you well and thriving as we transition into the vibrant month of June. As we bid farewell to May, let's take a moment to reflect on some of the remarkable events that unfolded over the past month.

Nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers, rejoice! In May, we organized an exhilarating hike at the breathtaking Scarborough Bluffs. Many of you joined us on this awe-inspiring journey along the bluffs, where we marveled at the stunning views of Lake Ontario and immersed ourselves in the tranquility of the surrounding greenery. The hike offered a much-needed escape from our academic endeavors, allowing us to connect with nature and rejuvenate our spirits. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated, making it a memorable experience.

Things have also been picking up for our second-year Fundamental Immunology students, who have been preparing for reclassification or qualification into their PhDs. To help with this, our mentorship representative, Salma, has been organizing practice talks throughout the month of May. Thank you to all the upper year students and fellow second-years that have sat into each of these sessions to give feedback. We wish everyone the very best for their exams and congratulations to those who have already successfully qualified!

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend a special thanks to our UTGSU representative, Zoha, for her outstanding work in securing the UTGSU Head Grant for our graduate students throughout this academic year! Zoha's work in securing this grant provides IGSA with even more opportunities to host events. We are excited to put the funding to good use throughout the remaining months.

In addition to the exciting updates and congratulations, we have some fantastic news to share! As a way to unwind and celebrate the successful completion of qualifying exams, we are organizing a fun-filled bowling event for all students in June. It's time to put down your textbooks and show off your bowling skills while enjoying the company of your fellow peers. Stay tuned for the official announcement with all the details, including date, time, and location. Get ready for strikes, spares, and lots of laughter!

Finally, we are excited to announce that our summer retreat will be occurring again in-person this year in early September! Please stay tuned for more information regarding this much-anticipated departmental favorite.

Lastly, we would like to remind all thesis-based graduate students to complete the Graduate Supervisor Experience Survey so the faculty can help improve student-supervisor experiences in every graduate unit. To complete the survey, go to <https://meded.utoronto.ca/medicine/>

*Disclaimer: This newsletter was proudly written using ChatGPT. Let us embrace the next generation of communication together.*

Bobby and Meggie  
IGSA Co-Presidents 2022-2023



## UPDATE FROM IMMSA

Hello fellow Immunologists!

Whether you are taking classes, doing research, or relaxing at home, we hope everyone has been enjoying their summer so far!

We are Catherine Chi and Jason Yang, the new Co-Presidents of the Immunology Students' Association (IMMSA) 2023-2024 school year. We are excited to take on this role as past members of IMMSA and cannot congratulate Momo and Vicky enough for their hard work this past year. They have done an amazing job at transitioning IMMSA back into in-person events and have brought so many valuable events for immunology students this year. Most notably, they did a phenomenal job at bringing OQUIC back in-person!

In this coming year, we will continue to organize events that connect Immunology students to the department and with one another. A bit of what we hope to do includes continuing: professor lunches, research talks, research seminars, and OQUIC! As well, we hope to encourage more students into immunology research and provide them with the information and guidance necessary to secure research positions. Additionally, we will plan more student bonding activities to bring together immunology specialists, majors, and minors!

We are open to any feedback or ideas from those in the department and would love for you to get in touch with us!

Best regards,

Catherine Chi & Jason Yang  
Immunology Students' Association (IMMSA) Co-Presidents 2023/24

**Website:** <http://immsauoft.com> | **Instagram:** @immsta | **Facebook:** <http://facebook.com/IMMSA.UofT>



## Highlight in our Faculty Publication

May was National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. We would like to highlight the recent UofT Immunology and SickKids Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Program publications.

- A multinational study involving U of T and SickKids Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Program researchers Dr. Thomas Eiwegger and Dr. Julia Upton called Epicutaneous Immunotherapy in Toddlers with Peanut Allergy (EPITOPE) has found immunotherapy in the form of skin patches to be an effective treatment for peanut allergic children 1-3 years old.
  - [Video](#) Summary
  - [Article](#) published in The New England Journal of Medicine
  - [NEJM Editorial](#) summarizing research findings
- Lisa Hung, Alper Celik, et al. (PI: Thomas Eiwegger) [Precision cut intestinal slices, a novel model of acute food allergic reactions](#) (Allergy)
- Christina Ditlof, Roxanne Hummel, et al. (PI: Thomas Eiwegger) [Identification of motivators and barriers impacting successful food introduction or reintroduction after negative oral food challenges](#) (JACI: In Practice)
- Carmen Li, Ekaterina Kabak (PI: Thomas Eiwegger) [An alternative path to oral tolerance](#)(Allergy)
- Arielle Locke & Lisa Hung, et al. (PI: Thomas Eiwegger) [An update on recent developments and highlights in food allergy](#) (Allergy)



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