



UBC REPORTS



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What makes kids happy?

UBC researchers surprised at the role spirituality plays

BY BUD MORTENSON

What makes you happy?

Spirituality typically accounts for four or five per cent of an adult’s happiness, but new research has found a much stronger influence of spirituality in children.

Mark Holder, Assoc. Prof. of Psychology at UBC Okanagan, and graduate student Judi Wallace recently tested 315 children aged nine to 12, measuring spirituality and other factors such as temperament and social relations that can affect an individual’s sense of happiness.

“Our goal was to see whether there’s a relation between spirituality and happiness,” Holder says. “We knew going in that there was such a relation in adults, so we took multiple measures of spirituality and happiness in children.”

The results were a surprise – 6.5 to 16.5 per cent of children’s happiness can be accounted for by spirituality.

“From our perspective, it’s a whopping big effect,” says Holder. “I expected it to be much less – I thought their spirituality would be too immature to account for their well-being.”

“Spirituality is easiest to describe as having an inner belief system,” Wallace notes. Although



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO/DEBIBISHOP

the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, she cautions that “spirituality is not religiosity, which is often more

organized, and may be church-based.”

To describe their daily spiritual experiences, private religious

practices, and whether they think of themselves as religious or spiritual, children in the study rated statements such as “I feel

a higher power’s presence,” and answered questions including “how often do you pray or meditate privately outside of church or other places of worship?” Parents were also asked to describe each child’s apparent happiness and spirituality, and teachers rated each child’s happiness level.

While the connection between spirituality and happiness in adults has been established, Holder says relatively little is known about the connection between spirituality and happiness in children.

Factors such as gender or money contribute very little to happiness, says Holder. “In fact, the contribution of money to happiness explains less than one per cent.” They found that whether children attend public or private school has virtually no impact on their happiness.

There are lots of new questions to explore – such as how to improve the well-being of children by applying this new understanding of what contributes to happiness.

“This research represents the first steps in that direction,” Holder says. With funding from UBC Okanagan and the

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Conquering AIDS — if we have a HAART

BY JULIE-ANN BACKHOUSE

One of the world’s leading researchers in HIV/AIDS, Dr. Julio Montaner, believes it is possible to completely eliminate the transmission of HIV in Canada, starting in British Columbia.

“We have come a long way in two decades of treating HIV/AIDS,” says Montaner, Director of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. “I really believe by expanding HAART (highly active anti-retroviral therapy), a therapy proven to work, we can finally control this epidemic.”

There are 12,000 people in British Columbia who are HIV positive. The B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS estimates that 2,000 are not receiving treatment even though most have access to free therapy.

HAART treats HIV with a combination of drugs (anti-retrovirals) that blocks HIV replication at different stages of its life cycle. As a result, HAART

dramatically reduces the amount of HIV in the blood, known as viral load, and this in turn helps to decrease the risk of HIV transmission.

“We have proven that among those who engage in care, 90 per cent show a vast improvement and transmission almost disappears,” says Montaner. “But this benefit is restricted to those who initiate and adhere to HAART treatment.”

The benefits of HAART are major and long lasting – life expectancy increases and quality of life improves. Further, transmission is greatly reduced. This means that HIV-infected women can give birth without transmitting the virus to their babies, as long as they are on HAART.

“The reality for the more vulnerable members of our community is that seeking treatment for HIV does not rank high enough to make it a priority,” says Montaner. “This creates completely unnecessary

pain and suffering for people and generates futile health care expenses.”

Most Canadians, if given a HIV-positive verdict, would seek treatment without delay. This is not the case, however, for many people who are homeless, mentally ill, substance abusers or all of the above.

Montaner believes that it’s possible to improve the situation. He believes that it requires rethinking the current passive approach to treatment and creating a more aggressive method of providing care for HIV sufferers in helpless situations. Montaner calls this approach “seek and treat.”


“It is not unlike what we did for tuberculosis in the past,” says Montaner. “We need to go out there, find the cases, and engage them in comprehensive education, prevention and care programs. We need a dynamic outreach program that will allow

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PHOTO: BRIAN SMITH

Dr. Julio Montaner: more aggressive AIDS treatment needed for those in helpless situations.




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IN THE NEWS

Highlights of UBC media coverage in January 2008. COMPILED BY BASIL WAUGH

UBC Astronomer Produces First Detailed Map of Dark Matter in a Supercluster

UBC astronomer Catherine Heymans has created the most detailed map yet of dark matter, the mysterious substance that fills space between galaxies.

Heymans and her colleagues used the Hubble Space Telescope to map dark matter at a better resolution than has ever been achieved before.

Heymans is a postdoctoral fellow in the Dept. of Physics and Astronomy. *USA Today*, *BBC* and *Canadian Press* reported her findings.

Popular Osteoporosis Drugs Triple Risk of Bone Necrosis

A UBC study has found that popular osteoporosis drugs nearly triple the risk of developing bone necrosis, a condition that can lead to disfigurement and incapacitating pain.

The research, reported by *United Press International*, *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *CTV* and *CBC's 'The National'*, is the largest epidemiological study of bone necrosis and bisphosphonates, a class of drugs used by millions of women worldwide to help prevent bone fractures due to osteoporosis.

"Given the widespread use of these drugs, it is important that women and their doctors know the risks," said principal investigator Mahyar Etmian of the Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation at UBC and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute.

Pop Culture Roundup: Starlet in Distress and 'President Bling-Bling'

The *National Post's* coverage of January's two major pop culture stories – Britney Spears' hospitalization and French President Nicolas Sarkozy's supermodel romance – featured media commentary by UBC English professor Gisele Baxter.

Baxter said young stars like Spears often suffer in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood in the glare of the spotlight. She cited actress Drew Barrymore, who weathered years of drug addiction after her role in *E.T.* before finding success and stability more recently.

In the case of Sarkozy, Baxter said the President has quickly chosen a partner likely to thrive in the role his former wife

rejected. "I suppose romantics might say they simply met and fell in love, but that's too convenient. It almost seems Hollywood invented the couple."

Shad K: Canada's Best Rapper

UBC arts student Shadrach Kabango is "Canada's best rapper," according to a column in the *National Post*, *Vancouver Sun* and *Montreal Gazette* by arts critic Ben Kaplan.

Known as Shad K, the Kenyan-born MC said he is closely following the elections in Kenya and hoping to communicate that with his growing crowds.

CBC Radio 3 called 2007 "the year of the Shad." In January, the 25-year-old began a cross-Canada tour with Halifax rapper Classified.



COURTESY: SPACE TELESCOPE SCIENCE INSTITUTE

UBC astromer Catherine Heymans mapped dark matter in Supercluster Abell 901/902.

CLARIFICATION

The Dec. UBC Reports described the late Dr. Frank Calder as "the first Status Indian elected to Canada's Parliament." In fact, Calder – who became a B.C. MLA in 1949 – was the first Aboriginal elected

to any parliament in Canada. The nation's first Aboriginal MP was the Hon. Leonard Marchand, Sr., who served in the House of Commons from 1968 to 1979 and later as a senator from 1984 to 1998. Both Calder and Marchand are UBC alumni.

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Death by degrees

UBC fish researcher uses treadmill to test optimum temperatures for salmon

BY LORRAINE CHAN

Just how hot is too hot for fish?

To find out, UBC researcher Erika Eliason is using a “fish treadmill” to put salmon through their paces. At a research lab in Cultus Lake, Eliason has fish swim through a white tunnel that measures 15’ long, 8’ high and about 9” wide. She tests different stocks using variables of water speed and temperature, from 15° to 22°C.

Her study probes possible links between climate change and the increasing number of fish deaths in the Fraser River, which in some years have been as high as 70 per cent for some stocks.

“This is the first study of its kind to look at the optimum temperatures for the swimming and cardiovascular performance of Pacific sockeye salmon,” says Eliason, a PhD candidate in the Dept. of Zoology.

Eliason monitors how hard fish hearts are working using a flow cuff around the heart. She tests the oxygen levels in the blood using catheters. She also records oxygen levels in the water to measure metabolism, all within variables of temperature and speed.

“This way, I’m hoping to look at the mechanism of the collapse in addition to characterizing the thresholds and optimums for swimming and cardiovascular performance.”

Eliason’s preliminary results show that swimming and cardiovascular performance is hindered above 18°C. At 20°–22°C, the fish are visibly flagging.

“We think that the fish’s heart is no longer able to cope with the high temperature and oxygen becomes limited. The high temperature makes it harder for the heart to get oxygen to the muscles.”

Her research encompasses salmon physiology, ecology,



PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Erika Eliason: preliminary findings show that salmon perform best at temperature closest to those in their spawning grounds.

evolution and conservation and is carried out jointly with the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Pacific Salmon Forum and UBC colleagues working with Tony Farrell, a professor in the Dept. of Zoology and Faculty of Land and Food Systems.

The Fraser River is a critical watershed that supports more than 100 distinct sockeye species. Records show that since the 1950s, temperatures in the lower Fraser River are steadily climbing. For example, the mean temperature at Hells Gate on August 6 has increased from 17°C in the 1950s to 18.2°C in the 2000s.

“While that may seem like

a minor change, it can make a big different to salmon,” says Eliason, explaining that unlike mammals, fish cannot regulate their body temperature.

“If the water is 15°C, the fish is 15°C. If the water is 20°C, the fish is 20°C.”

During the past five years, the mean temperatures in some areas of the Fraser River have exceeded 19°C.

“In 2004, an especially hot year, the in-river mortality was more than 70 per cent for some stocks.”

Eliason says under normal circumstances, about 20-30 per cent of adult salmon will die before making it back to

their spawning grounds “due to disease, fishing, seals, insufficient energy stores and just plain exhaustion.”

And given that some species migrate as far as 1,000 km upstream, higher temperatures could be a factor in their decreased resistance to disease and their ability to make it through difficult conditions upstream.

Eliason says DFO telemetry shows that a percentage of adult fish are entering the mouth of the Fraser River, but they don’t make it to the spawning ground. Each time, spikes in the Fraser River’s temperatures coincide with missing fish.

“A whole bunch of fish aren’t showing up at DFO monitoring check points after Mission.”

The B.C. coast has about 300 Pacific salmon stocks, whose life spans about four years. On average, they spend three years in the ocean. Once they successfully reproduce, their hatchlings remain in the river or nearby lakes, which act as a nursery during their first year of life.

Eliason’s preliminary findings support previous research that suggests that salmon perform best in temperatures that are closest to the average found in their natal spawning ground. **R**

HAPPY *continued from page 1*

Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, he has formed a research group nicknamed the Happy Lab to examine the biology, psychology and assessment of happiness.

The researchers have identified several possible reasons why spirituality and happiness are linked. Spirituality produces a sense of meaning, it stimulates hope, reinforces positive social norms, and can provide a social support network – all things that can improve a person’s well-being.

Wallace, who conducted the in-school testing, envisions a day when activities that improve happiness are built into the school experience.

“We would love to have a way to apply our research findings in the schools,” she says. “A program in elementary schools promoting positive psychology might involve giving students

cameras to take pictures of things they think are beautiful or give meaning to their life.”

“It creates a ‘search image’ – an anticipation – to look for beauty in the world,” Holder explains, adding that a number of simple activities can go a long way to promote student happiness.

“Rather than a child saying ‘this is what I did today,’ they could be asked to come up with three things they’re thankful for – different things each day. That greatly increases happiness,” he says. “Or students could list daily activities that contributed to the community, or teachers could have them look at what they do that makes a difference.”

Happier people are more tolerant, creative, and productive, Holder says. “If we could promote happiness in children, it might come with these attractive traits.”

The team’s findings were presented at the World Congress

on Psychology and Spirituality in India in January. “People from Portugal, Australia and India are interested in our research and possibly trying to duplicate it in their own countries,” says Wallace. But, she says, the findings are also having an impact much closer to home.



“What we’re learning is useful in our own lives,” Wallace says. “At the dinner table, we ask our own children to list all the good things that happened that day. It’s actually pretty easy to increase the happiness of your family.”

“We do take the research personally,” Holder agrees. “It’s not just academic to us.”

The next phase of the study will look at families, not just the children. “We have collected data on the parents’ happiness and spirituality,” Holder says, “so we will be able to look at the relation and independence of parents and their children’s spirituality.” **R**

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PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Student advisor Winnie Pang remembers her paper-filled past.

Going paperless: here's how it's done

BY BASIL WAUGH

The world's loneliest printer just might reside in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems' (LFS) undergraduate advising office.

Despite working in the typically paper-heavy world of academic advising, the unit has weaned itself off paper, becoming UBC's first paperless workplace.

It took two years, an acceptance of online technologies and an openness on the part of employees to new ways of working, says Lynn Newman-Saunders, the faculty's Assistant Dean, Students.

"The benefits of not generating paper through our routine advising practices have been so clear and so immediate," says Newman-Saunders. "In addition to the environmental

advisors Winnie Pang and Joshua Robertson that made it a reality. "Our staff really bought into the system and deserve the credit for the implementation and for developing creative ways to cut paper out."

Advisors now use reusable laminated forms (using acetate reclaimed from overheads) and dry-erase markers to illustrate course options for students. The office photocopier is used, not to make copies, but to create PDFs of documents. Instead of sending letters, they E-mail.

The changes have enabled Newman-Saunders and her team to do away with physical files for the faculty's 1,200 students. They now only use paper when required by law or faculty policy, such as confidential medical files or failure notices.

able to telecommute to work one day per week.

LFS students are noticing the difference. "Before I came to UBC, phoning advisors meant getting an answering machine and appointments, made a week or more in advance, meant filling out forms," LFS student Stephen Ford says.

"If my experience is any indication, less paper means more human," adds Ford, who is in the faculty's Food, Nutrition and Health program. "The advising staff are ultra-accessible and there are no forms to fill out or hide behind. My friends in the faculty unanimously agree that we are a part of something special."

Why has this office succeeded in breaking its paper habit, where others have failed?

If my experience is any indication, less paper means more human – LFS student Stephen Ford

aspect, it has led to increased job satisfaction and helped us to serve students better."

Newman-Saunders says the paperless path began in 2005, when UBC implemented enhancements to its Student Information System (SIS), which gave advisors an online repository to track interactions, such as advising sessions, grades and student-teacher evaluations.

"That was the crossroads for us," says Newman-Saunders. "It was time to start creating hard-copy files for our new students and we decided to really change paths and explore the paperless possibilities of the online system."

But first they had to ensure the system was reliable and confidential. "With all information backed up hourly and password protected, we really felt the benefits outweighed the risks," says Newman-Saunders. "I have more faith that a computer isn't going to crash than I do about a piece of paper not going missing."

While SIS made a paperless workplace a possibility, Newman-Saunders says it was the ingenuity and energy of

"Managing files is incredibly time consuming," says Newman-Saunders. "Every time a student came to us, we would have to find their file, update it, and then file it again. Now, we are actually getting rid of our filing cabinets."

Newman-Saunders estimates these changes have resulted in savings of more than \$4,000 per year in paper costs alone. The office has also embraced CourseEval, an online student-teacher evaluation pilot program that replaces labour-intensive paper forms, which is saving the office an additional \$1,000 per semester.

The three-person office has also experienced marked improvements in employee and student satisfaction, Newman-Saunders, says. "Let's be honest, no one wants to push paper around," she says. "It has freed up our staff to spend more time with students."

"Instead of filing paper, our advisors are finding innovative ways to increase their accessibility to students," says Newman-Saunders, adding that advisors communicate with current and prospective students on Facebook and will soon be

"It helps that we are a small office, but I think this system is adaptable to any size of organization," says Newman-Saunders.

"It's really a matter of embracing change and innovation," she adds. "A series of small changes eventually leads to a really significant one."

For more information on LFS, visit www.landfood.ubc.ca. **R**

Seven steps to a paperless office

- Commit: Promote a paperless workplace.
- Be creative: Solicit ideas from front-line employees.
- E-mails: Don't print e-mails. If you have trouble reading, increase monitor settings.
- Photocopies: Instead of making copies, use the photocopier to make PDFs and email digital file to yourself.
- Trust: Back-up computer files regularly.
- Innovate: Laminate forms and use dry erase pens.
- Invest: Allocate resources to paperless systems.



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How information gets to be free

BY GLENN DREXHAGE

Scholarly publishing is starting to come full circle at UBC thanks to the development of an online storehouse known as an institutional repository (IR).

Dubbed cIRcle (circle.ubc.ca), the site is designed to help store the vast array of UBC's research output. It's currently in pilot mode but an official launch is planned for spring 2008.

"It's a digital archive of a university's intellectual output," including peer-reviewed research, teaching and learning materials, and administrative items, explains Hilde Colenbrander, UBC Library's IR Coordinator.

"I think it increases UBC's contribution to the public sphere of knowledge, to a greater openness of knowledge, both locally and globally," adds John Willinsky from UBC's Department of Language and Literacy Education (he also has an appointment at Stanford University).

Dean Giustini, a Reference Librarian at UBC Library's Biomedical Branch, has a similar view. "It means that UBC can begin to build its own free digital resources that reflect research excellence," he says.

cIRcle is based on an open access model, which means the site's contents are freely available to users anywhere. Embargoes



Hilde Colenbrander: institutional repository increases UBC's contribution to the public sphere of knowledge.

may need to be placed on certain types of material depending on aspects such as publication dates and publisher permissions, but access for all remains a crucial underlying concept.

Indeed, many studies have shown that open access articles are cited more frequently than those in restricted journals. Also, by making their work openly accessible, authors contribute to the world's knowledge without copyright or financial restrictions. Nor do cIRcle contributors assign their

copyright to the IR. Instead, they give cIRcle a non-exclusive licence to make their work openly available. Authors retain the moral rights in their works, so they must be properly attributed and cited when used by others.

Close to 1,000 IRs from around the world are registered with the Registry of Open Access Repositories. The U.S. leads with 222; Canada features 42. Yet as IRs have become more prevalent in recent years, so too have debates about access.

More than two decades ago, technology sage Stewart Brand wrote: "Information wants to be free. Information also wants to be expensive." Today, these competing interests are defining publishing and other media sectors that have been transformed by the Internet. Subscription costs of scholarly journals have surged, and so have efforts to distribute such information in more accessible, affordable ways.

Some critics question the economic feasibility of the open

access approach, and worry that IRs will erode the quality of scholarly publishing.

Willinsky acknowledges such issues, but notes that during the past decade, publishers whose content has been heavily archived in IRs have not seen a corresponding decline in journal subscriptions.

However, he does have other concerns, such as the difficulty of convincing faculty members to submit peer-reviewed material to an IR. "They're so focused on publishing, they think their job is done when the work gets in the journal," Willinsky says.

Currently, cIRcle features two "communities" – the Faculty of Graduate Studies and UBC Library – that are submitting work to the site. A content recruitment group is busy pitching cIRcle to departments across campus. Although Colenbrander says it's too early to list adopters, she's encouraged by the feedback. "I'm actually overwhelmed by the amount of interest," she says, adding that many unsolicited inquiries have come her way.

In the meantime, Willinsky and Giustini – both long-time advocates of using technology to further education and research – plan on submitting materials to cIRcle. **R**



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Faculty of Medicine

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ASSOCIATE DEAN, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Internal/External

Closing date: March 7, 2008

The Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia invites applications for the position of Associate Dean, Professional Development. This part-time position with a 5 year term is available May 1, 2008 and will report to the Senior Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs.

The successful candidate will provide strategic leadership through a coordinated and innovative approach to career and professional development for all faculty members in the integrated, province-wide Faculty of Medicine, establishing synergistic relationships with internal and external agencies to respond to identified needs for skill development in different roles.

This position will create a clear linkage between professional development and the Centre for Health Educational Scholarship and will create a supportive environment for modification and innovation of a provincial Faculty Educational Development program.

This position will oversee and explore synergies between the portfolios of Faculty Educational Development and Continuing Professional Development as well as responding to the Faculty Development needs of researchers.

A demonstrated track record in leadership in an academic health environment and excellent communication skills are essential. Opportunities for skill development related to the portfolio will be provided. Salary for this position will be determined by qualifications and experience. This position is open to all applicants.

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Internal/External

Closing date: February 29, 2008

Applications/nominations are invited for the position of Senior Associate Dean, Clinical and Community Partnerships. The position is open to all applicants and is expected to be part-time (.5 FTE) with a five-year term, with an anticipated start date of April 1, 2008.

The incumbent will report to the Dean of Medicine as the leader of one of five key portfolios for the Faculty. He/She will be responsible for facilitating and maintaining positive and constructive relationships on behalf of the Dean with provincial Health Authorities and those engaged in health care service delivery. Additionally, it is expected that this person will assist the Dean in nurturing relationships with the University, Provincial government, other Universities, agencies and other public sector institutions as appropriate related to clinical matters. The intent is to enhance and maintain positive and constructive relationships with these partners in order to nurture the environment for high-quality education and research in health and life sciences.

Candidates must have a graduate degree preferably in a health-related discipline and also professional experience working in a complex environment. It is expected that the incumbent will have at least 10 years of experience working in a health environment. Remuneration will be commensurate with experience and qualifications. This position is open to all applicants.

A more detailed position description is available for review at the Point Grey Dean's Office.

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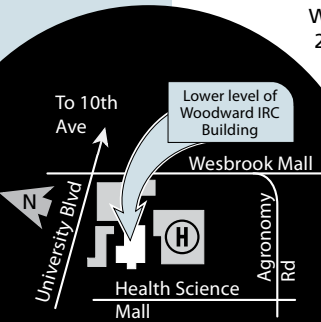
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HAART *continued from page 1*

us to find, through trial and error, effective ways to engage these hard to reach populations in care. Only then we will be able to stop HIV in BC.”

As Professor of Medicine and Chair of the AIDS Research Division at UBC and also President-Elect of the International AIDS Society, Dr. Montaner has worked on treating HIV/AIDS since 1981.

He was the lead investigator of a seminal clinical trial

that demonstrated that non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) – based HAART could render HIV plasma levels undetectable and lead to full remission of the disease. Montaner unveiled this groundbreaking research at the International AIDS Conference held in Vancouver in 1996.

“Clearly HIV is readily preventable,” says Montaner. Still, HIV/AIDS is ranked fourth on the Top 20 Causes of Death Worldwide list created by the World Health Organization. Traditional prevention

strategies (including safer sex, harm reduction, etc) are the number one priority. But when prevention fails, treatment can be lifesaving. HAART treatment of those in medical need is the next priority.

“When HAART was introduced as a treatment, the incidence of HIV was reduced by 50 per cent. But since 1998 these figures have reached a plateau,” explains Montaner. “When you put all the facts together a new model for prevention and treatment is required.” **R**

Exchange makes campus chemicals sustainable



PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Graduate student Jonathan Chong makes the Chemical Exchange Database his first stop when looking for chemicals.

BY BASIL WAUGH

Jonathan Chong and Sally Finora don't know each other, but they swap fluids regularly thanks to a new program at UBC.

They share research chemicals through UBC's Chemical Exchange Database (CED), an online tool that is helping UBC scientists reduce lab waste and get more bang for their research buck.

The site connects those looking for research chemicals with those who have too much of a given substance. Think of it as a Craigslist for scientists.

“It's the first place I go when I'm looking for a chemical,” says Chong, a graduate student who is developing new materials that will enable future cars to store hydrogen more efficiently. “It's faster than going through an external supplier because everything is already on campus.”

The substances have already been paid for, so everything in the database is available for free. “That is obviously a major plus,” says Finora, a lab technician in UBC's Norman B. Keevil Institute of Mining Engineering. “It helps to make the most of research funding.”

Burdena Shea, senior manager

in UBC's Health Research Resource Office (HeRRO), says most major universities grapple with how to deal with surplus chemicals.

“An experiment may only need 10 milligrams, but the chemical may only come from suppliers in four-litre quantities,” says Shea, who created the database with colleague Andre Liem. “Scientists often need to buy more of a substance than they require.”

The initiative is a collaboration between three UBC units – HeRRO, the Dept. of Health Safety and Environment (HSE) and the Sustainability Office.

“UBC is one of North America's 'greenest' universities – and the chemical exchange allows researchers to play their part,” says Shea. “And this is doubly important because chemical disposal is very expensive.”

The database, launched in 2004, processed 300 exchanges (1,500 kilograms in chemicals) last year alone and has helped to save an estimated \$74,500 in disposal and purchasing costs. In other waste minimization efforts, UBC recycles more than 8,000 litres in solvents and 5,000 litres in photographic waste annually.

“New science students, staff and faculty hear about the

exchange during the extensive lab orientations that they receive,” says Noga Levit of HSE. “We think it's an important program and are really working to increase participation.”

Levit notes that paper-based chemical-sharing systems have existed at universities since the early 1990s. “Basically, you sent in a request form, and heard back a few days later whether they had it or not. The database moves us into real time.”

The database, which can be viewed at www.herro.ubc.ca/ced.aspx, currently lists more than 200 available chemicals, from Ammonium hydroxide to Zinc sulfide. To make a request, researchers simply log on using their Campus Wide Login (CWL) and place an order online. Within 1-2 days the materials will be delivered.

To post a surplus chemical, a researcher simply needs to log on with their CWL and enter the substance, amount and producer. Within 1-2 days, the research services staff will arrive to safely store the materials – or to deliver them to new owners if another lab has already made a request.

For more information on UBC sustainability initiatives, including the university's 2007 Sustainability Report, visit www.sustain.ubc.ca. **R**



PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Ruth Martin’s brainwave resulted in prison inmates using research to generate policy options.

Community research gets a prison perspective

BY LORRAINE CHAN

As a family physician to women prisoners, Ruth Martin says she longed to find a way to improve health outcomes. Since 1994, Martin has been making weekly house calls to her patients in a B.C. correctional centre for women.

In 2005, she had a brainwave: why not ask women in prison to conduct health research by and for themselves? The results have pointed to the enormous potential these women have to make change within themselves and around them, says Martin, a clinical professor in the Dept. of Family Practice, Faculty of Medicine.

“We had up to 15 women in prison sign up for the research team each day. They each wrote a paragraph of passion, whatever they wanted to research and why.”

The Alouette Correctional Centre for Women (ACCW) is the province’s main facility for women serving sentences of less than two years. Located in Maple Ridge, ACCW houses 140 prisoners, 25 per cent of whom are Aboriginal.

“Many are dealing with abuse and violence, homelessness and poverty,” observes Martin, adding that women in prison experience a higher incidence of cervical cancer, HIV, hepatitis C, sexually transmitted diseases and other infections.

As well, recidivism rates are high, she says, with an estimated 40 per cent of women returning to prison within one year and 70 per cent within two years.

Martin floated the idea of community-based research to the ACCW inmates who immediately embraced the initiative as their own. ACCW’s then prison warden gave the women the go-ahead to count their research as part of daily prison work, the same as laundry, horticulture or kitchen duty. With Martin’s help, the prison research team submitted their proposal to the UBC Research Ethics Board for approval. The team set the research agenda and proceeded with orientation packages to

fellow inmates, followed by surveys, interviews and forums.

Between 2005 and 2007, more than 200 women at ACCW took part in the project. Participants listed their top concerns, among them addiction, chronic illness, living with disabilities, fetal alcohol syndrome, methadone use, the parole process and parenting skills. The research team as a whole and the majority of study respondents emphasized spirituality as an essential component of healing.

The women generated useful policy recommendations such as the need to improve first and second stage housing for prison leavers, says Martin. Their data showed that 78 per cent of their survey respondents reported that homelessness contributed to their return to crime.

Another major finding was the gap in resources for women exiting prison. Without stable housing or job training, many are thrown back into the chaos and environment that first led to drug use or prostitution, says Martin.

Overall, the participants found that peer research boosted their self-esteem while honing their life and job skills.

“Many reported that it increased their hopes of integrating into society,” says Martin, adding, “As far as I

For Jennifer McMillan, the ACCW research project gave her, “a hardcore addict for 15 years,” the strength and courage to get off drugs and stay clean. McMillan has been in and out of prison “eight to 11 times – I can’t remember exactly how many.”

“Dr. Martin helped us break the code of silence that’s in the prison and on the street,” says McMillan. “When you’re just released from prison, you’re terrified.”

Women are given the clothing they were arrested in, a bus ticket, and “a couple hundred dollars welfare cheque if you’re lucky,” says McMillan.

“You feel hopeless and helpless, that you’ll just end up doing what you were before. But if you see other women doing well, it really helps.”

Intent on community development, McMillan distributes clothing and information about education and housing to former inmates and friends in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

And although the prison no longer runs participatory research, McMillan, along with 45 alumnae, maintains frequent, if not daily, contact. Their network spans the Lower Mainland, northern and interior

For more information, visit:
www.accwalumniresearch.org

know, this is the only women’s prison research project of its kind in the world.”

Although few had computer skills at the start, by the end many had gained enough proficiency to discuss their findings using PowerPoint. Others gained confidence and public speaking skills since their forums often included prison administrators, funders, academics and provincial health authorities.

“We’ve seen amazing transformations,” says Martin. “I feel very honoured and privileged to be a witness and a part of that in a small way.”

B.C. and Vancouver Island. A core group has set up an office in Vancouver. They recently launched a website, stating nine goals that include safe and secure housing, education, job skills, support from family, friends and community and contributing to society.

Martin is currently applying for funding from the Canadian Institute for Health Research to follow the cohort of women who designed the survey and interview for the prison research. She says the funding will allow her to pay the women for their work instead of relying on them to do volunteer hours. **R**



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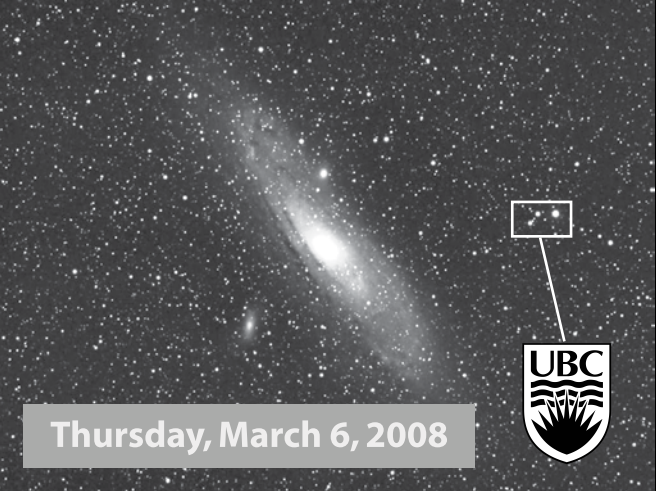
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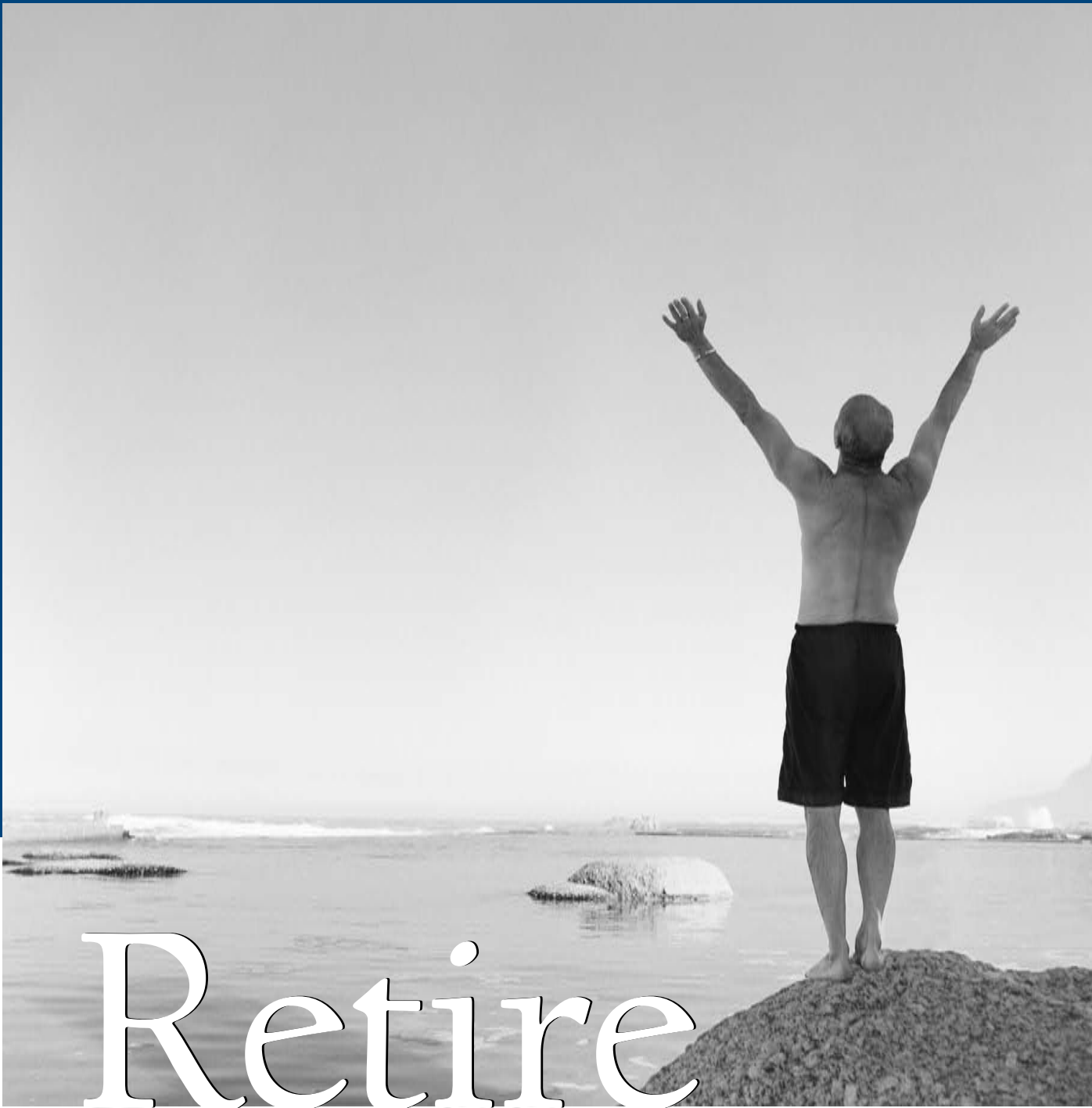
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