RESEARCH AWARD for DR. JOAN CRANE

In 2010 Dr. Joan Crane received the Association of Professionals in Obstetrics and Gynecology (APOG) National Excellence in Research Award.

Her research interests include preterm birth predictions and prevention, obesity in pregnancy, the effects of environmental tobacco smoke in pregnancy, induction of labour, and the use of randomized clinical trials.

Dr. Crane said preterm birth occurs in about eight per cent of all births and can result in babies with cerebral palsy, vision problems and developmental delays. She noted that despite improvements in prenatal care, the rate of preterm birth continues to increase.

Half of women who deliver preterm have no known risk factors, said Dr. Crane. By using ultrasound to measure the length of the cervix, she is able to identify women at increased risk of preterm birth and offer treatments that may reduce the risk of preterm birth and improve the outcomes of preterm babies. The two questions she looks at in her research are if preterm birth can be predicted, and if it can be prevented.

Dr. Crane has over 80 peer-reviewed publications and has received research awards from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. In 2004 she received the University President’s Award for Outstanding research from Memorial University.

OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr. Sarah Healey, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, received the 2011 Carl Nimrod Educator Award, given by the Association of Academic Professionals in Obstetrics and Gynecology for outstanding educational achievement.

After receiving her medical degree from Memorial in 1996, Dr. Healey went on to do a residency at Memorial in obstetrics and gynecology, followed by two years fellowship training in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at McGill University. She worked as program director in the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology initially, and more recently as course chair of ISD2 Women’s Health. The course has been redesigned making use of webcasting, virtual patient tutorials and conjoint teaching with family physicians and specialists.

Current research pursuits include the development of a lifestyle program for women wishing to conceive, including a team approach with dieticians, psychologists, exercise professionals, and nursing and medical support; superovulation with a newer fertility drug, letrozole; transport IVF, uterine fibroid embolization in the premenopausal woman, and fertility preservation.
NEW CHAIR for DISCIPLINE of OBSTETRICS and GYNECOLOGY

Dr. Atamjit Gill took over as chair of the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology on Jan. 1, 2012, following Dr. Terry O’Grady. He is an associate professor with Memorial and urogynecologist and co-clinical chief of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Women’s Health, Eastern Health.

Dr. Gill said there are two main challenges facing the discipline in the near future. “We need to expand our services to accommodate the increasing number of students from the medical school expansion. Our discipline has taken the lead in the development of community satellite centers, such as Grand Falls and Corner Brook.”

The second major challenge Dr. Gill identified is the introduction of simulator based learning to foster professional development and enhance residents’ learning in communication and collaboration skills.

Since he joined the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial in 1993, Dr. Gill has served in a number of administrative capacities, including undergraduate co-ordinator for obstetrics and gynecology (1995-1998); undergraduate clinical skills co-ordinator for obstetrics and gynecology (1985-2001) and clerkship co-ordinator (September-December 2006). He served as residency program director for obstetrics and gynecology from June 1998-September 2001 and resumed this responsibility from January 2009-December 2011.

Dr. Gill has received numerous awards including the 2007 Dr. D.W. Ingram Award from the Class of 2007; the 2006 Educator of the Year Award from the Association of Professors in Obstetrics and Gynecology of Canada; the 2004 Excellence in Teaching Award from the Association of Professors of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Department of Women’s Health at Memorial; and the 1996 Excellence in Resident Education Award from the national Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Dr. Gill has contributed to curriculum development and education in numerous ways. Since 2010 he has been the organizer and preceptor of a suture workshop for the full class of clinical clerks during orientation week. He arranged finances to have software purchased for photo colposcopy capture, and collaborated with the Department of Pathology to develop combined colposcopy/pathology rounds to enhance resident learning. He started laparoscopy teaching labs for resident learning in minimally invasive surgery and introduced teaching associates to train clerks for pelvic exams.

An active researcher, Dr. Gill has designed a reusable pubovaginal sling device for minimally invasive pubovaginal sling procedures and has a patent in process for this device. He is continuing research on the pubovaginal sling, and is also involved in a pilot project with Dr. Daniel Fontaine on self pap using a self-collection device.

Dr. Gill earned his MBBS at Ranchi University, India and after moving to Canada did a rotating internship with Memorial University. He completed his residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Memorial in 1994 and following this did a fellowship in urogynecology and pelvic surgery at McMaster University. In June 1994 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada; in 1996 he became a Diplomate of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and in May 1997 became a Fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. He served as a member of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Examination Board from 2000-2009; and as an examiner and member of the Royal College Nucleus Committee from 2005-2009.

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Cover photo: Dr. Atamjit Gill, chair of the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

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RESIDENT RESEARCH DAY

The 22nd Annual Resident Research Day was held on June 3, 2011. The Annual Research Day is divided into three parts consisting of general oral presentations and quality assurance projects, an invited guest speaker, and poster presentations of case reports. Following the day’s activities, awards were presented at an evening reception.

General oral presentations and quality assurance projects award winners:
- Dr. Karen Splinter — Does Uterine Septum Repair Increase Live Birth Rate Compared to Women with Otherwise Unexplained infertility?
- Dr. Susan Avery — A Retrospective Study on Wait Times for Pelvic Ultrasound in Women Diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer: Do Wait Times in NL Meet the Provincial Standard as Determined by Professional Opinion?
- Dr. Kim MacDonald — A Pilot Study to Determine the Accuracy of Non-invasive, Fetal Rh Genotyping in Nova Scotian Women.

Top poster presentation award winner:
- Dr. Karen Splinter — Laparoscopic Management of Bilateral Ureteric Obstruction Due to Endometriosis.

HONOURABLE MENTION

As part of its 2011 Annual Clinical Meeting, held in Vancouver from June 21-25, 2011, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) offered a Research and Innovation Program to highlight and share the latest research in women’s health. Dr. Karen Splinter’s poster presentation, titled Laparoscopic Management of Bilateral Ureteric Obstruction Due to Endometriosis, was accepted as a Best of Four poster presentation in its category — Gynecology (Junior Member).
FROM the RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

By Dr. Colleen Cook

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Memorial University and our academic and clinical chairs for my recent appointment as residency program director. I graduated from our training program in 2008 and have been practicing as a generalist obstetrician/gynecologist since that time. I am excited to start in my new role and am thrilled to have the pleasure of working closely with our residents as they navigate through their five years of training.

We are fortunate to have a multifaceted training program with focuses on academic and surgical excellence, resident research and community based experiences. Techniques for training surgical residents around the world continue to evolve and program curriculums must adapt to meet the needs of current and future trainees. The Obstetrics and Gynecology Program at Memorial is certainly excited to move forward with technology through the expansion of our dry and wet lab laparoscopy experiences. There are also big plans for the further development of our simulator training opportunities.

Another change as we move forward in this academic year and into the next is the development of rotation specific evaluations for our residents. Such an endeavor should better assist staff and trainees in ensuring an optimal educational experience through the assimilation of rotation objectives with the Royal College recognized CanMEDS framework.

To cultivate true physician leaders, the maintenance of our current culture of camaraderie amongst staff and residents combined with recognition of the importance of family and work-life balance is essential. The overall mission of Memorial University's Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program is to train well-rounded clinicians and surgeons who take pride in their skills and knowledge and who will advocate for women's health through their future practices across Canada and beyond. I am grateful to be allowed the opportunity to have a small role in making this happen.

FROM the OUTGOING RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

By Dr. Atamjit Gill

It was a pleasure to serve the program during my second tenure as residency program director. While hectic at times, especially prior to accreditation, it was very satisfying that the program came through the external Royal College review, with full approval for us.

There were many steps taken to further strengthen resident teaching. This includes introduction of photo colposcopy and colpo pathology rounds in collaboration with the Department of Pathology to enhance residents’ skill in colposcopy; arranging minimally invasive surgery in Grand Falls under the supervision Dr. Steve Parsons (a very well accepted and established rotation); organizing a resident community rotation in obstetrics and gynecology in Corner Brook; starting the
Principles of Surgery Program for our residents; and taking a lead in launching quality assurance learning for our residents with initiations of quality assurance projects.

We all should be proud of the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Memorial University as being one of the most sought after programs in the country, the real strength being our cohesive, dedicated and hard working group of residents.

RESIDENT RETREAT 2011

By Michael Hartman, PGY IV

The annual Obstetrics and Gynecology Resident Retreat took place on Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2011 at the Wilds at Salmonier River. This is a wonderful opportunity for the residents and attending physicians to relax and get to know each other outside of the confines of work. It is also a time to reflect on the residency training program.

Everyone who attended the event had an enjoyable time. The retreat commenced with a yoga session which helped everyone loosen up. Following this, our former residency program director, Dr. Atamjit Gill, spoke on professionalism. Then there was a wine-tasting session with Grape Expectations, where most of us learned a thing or two about wine; it was a wonderful lead to our supper.

After supper, the Residents versus Staff Competition began! The two teams had to compete with each other playing games, doing physical challenges and playing an intense game of charades. The night closed with some music and dancing. The next day included a workshop with Dr. Michele Neary, psychologist, where we discussed issues pertaining to professionalism and ethical dilemmas. The retreat concluded after a round of golf.

The annual retreat is a wonderful time for residents to bond, socialize with each other and our attending physicians outside of work, and have fun. This is always an event residents look forward to, and we cannot wait for the next retreat!

A good time was had by all at the 2011 Obstetrics and Gynecology Resident Retreat.
SURGICAL SUTURE LAB

The Surgical Suture Lab is a clinical skills lab offered during clerkship orientation. It runs throughout the day in three separate rooms. The curriculum includes the first didactic session on various types of sutures, needles, and knot tying with different closure techniques. Next, is a session on knot tying techniques, such as single hand tie and instrument tying, using suture boards. Then, there is a practice session using closure techniques on animal models such as pig skins. The closure techniques include different types of interrupted versus running sutures. The students are enthusiastic about the Surgical Suture Lab and feedback is very positive.

MENTOR of the YEAR AWARD for NEWFOUNDLAND OBSTETRICIAN

Dr. Elias Bartellas, clinical associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, has been selected by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada as Mentor of the Year for 2011 for the Atlantic Region. The Mentor of the Year award, conferred annually in five regions across Canada, acknowledges medical specialists who have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the welfare of patients and to high standards of excellence in clinical care and ethical conduct. In addition, the award recognizes physicians who have acted as role models to both medical residents and colleagues alike.

Dr. Bartellas moved to Canada in 1974 after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974 and repeated his residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Memorial University. Since 1981 he has been teaching and practicing obstetrics and gynecology in St. John’s. He has been involved in numerous research projects and has co-authored publications in areas such as sexuality and sexual activity in pregnancy, the management of nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, laparoscopy assisted vaginal hysterectomy, and cervical cancer screening.

For more information about Royal College awards, please visit http://www.royalcollege.ca/public/awards.
Mun Program a Winner

Memorial’s Obstetrics and Gynecology Program is a favourite among residents. The Program Promotion by Residents in Obstetrics for Medical Students (PPROM) award is selected by participants in the medical student track at the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) Annual Clinical Meeting (ACM). The award, selected during the residency fair, is given to the students’ favourite program. Memorial University was the recipient of the 2010 PPROM award at the ACM in Montreal.

From left: Dr. Terry O’Grady, past chair of the Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology, with residents Drs. Nadean Caines, Carrie Ferguson and Stephane Foulem.

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