

Modern Diets Cause Modern Diseases: New TBRRRI Researcher Investigates Prevention and Management of Cardiovascular Disease

by Janine Chiasson

As consumption of high-sugar and high-fat food increases worldwide, the prevalence of metabolic syndrome – a group of clinical symptoms caused by disordered metabolism of sugar and fat in our body, including hypertension and diabetes – is rising dramatically. Research suggests that 19% of Canadian adults have metabolic syndrome and World Health Organization data indicates that, worldwide, nearly one billion people have hypertension and 250 million people have type 2 diabetes. By 2025, global numbers are expected to increase by over 50%.

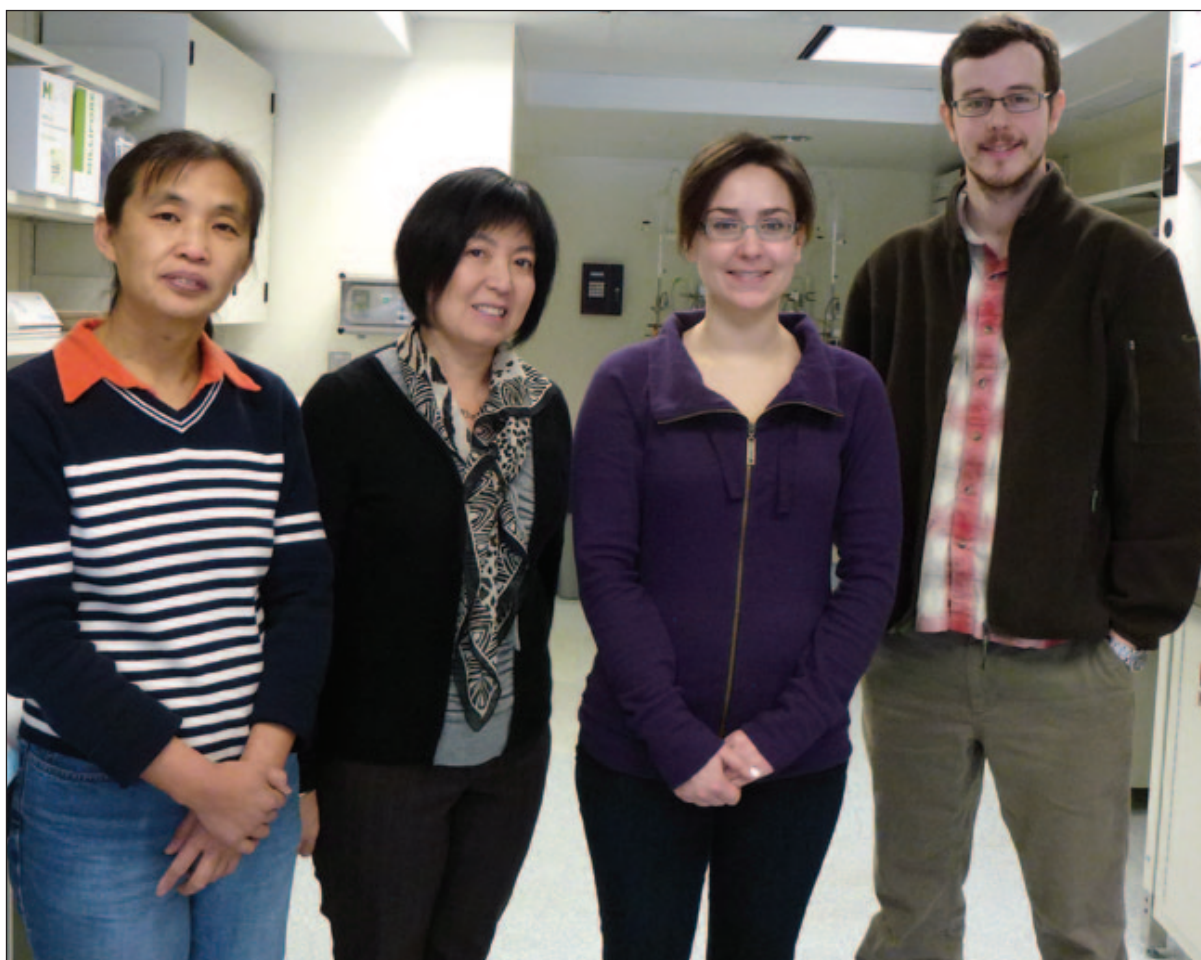
We need to know more about how metabolic syndrome develops in order to find more specific and potent ways to intervene and reduce deaths related to cardiac disease and diabetes.

Recently, Thunder Bay had the good fortune to welcome Dr. Lily Wu, one of the world's leaders in research focused on the causes and treatment of cardiovascular disease, which causes more than 35% of deaths in Canada every year. A medical scholar with remarkable research accomplishments and a string of prestigious awards, Dr.

Wu comes to Thunder Bay from the University of Saskatchewan where she was the Leader of the Cardiovascular Research Group and a tenured full professor in the College of Medicine's Department of Pharmacology.

Dr. Wu adds new depth to the research pool at the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute and at Lakehead University's Department of Health Sciences, where she is a tenured full professor. Wu embraces a team approach and is already working with other TBRRRI scientists to advance techniques for earlier diagnosis and prevention of metabolic syndrome. Dr. Wu will collaborate with cardiac care professionals like Dr. Chris Lai to bring new treatments and screening approaches to patients through TBRRRI's Translational Research Program.

Because of researchers like Dr. Wu who live and work in Thunder Bay, Northwestern Ontario residents benefit from early access to innovative treatments. Donations to the Health Sciences Discovery Fund support the work of researchers like Dr. Wu. To learn more about the Health Sciences Foundation Discovery Fund, or to make a donation, please visit www.healthsciencesfoundation.ca.



Dr. Lily Wu's research team (l-r): Quibui Cao, Research Assistant; Dr. Lily Wu, TBRRRI Scientist; Ashley Untereiner, Lakehead PhD student; and Samuel Stevenson, Lakehead Master's student.

New physician assistant graduates now working in Thunder Bay

by Graham Strong

A new program designed to help reduce the impact of the doctor shortage has passed another major milestone.

The first class of the new Physician Assistant (PA) program, delivered collaboratively through a joint initiative of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, and the University of Toronto, completed their program this past December. PA students ultimately earn a Bachelor of Science Physician Assistant (BScPA) degree from U of T.

Britton Sprules and Tiffany Oddleifson, who will officially graduate from program during convocation in June, are already working here in Thunder Bay assisting doctors with many of their primary care tasks.

As the name implies, a Physician Assistant is a skilled healthcare professional who helps physicians

with any number of medical tasks, depending on the physician's own practice. These are "delegated tasks", which means that PAs cannot practice medicine on their own. They have the advanced learning and experience needed to provide these services under the supervision of a physician.

Ultimately, PAs will improve patient care and allow doctors to see more patients.

It is a gruelling course, covering about three-quarters of the material a medical student would learn in about half the time.

"I am glad the program was difficult, because it prepared me for the job," Sprules said.

"It was time-consuming and intense in the amount of information we were learning," Oddleifson said. "By the end of my clinical rotations, I felt that I was well-prepared to go out into the workforce."

Oddleifson started working at the St. Joseph's Care Group this past January, helping with geriatric care

and rehabilitation. Although her duties will likely change over time, at first she will be working with one doctor, seeing patients during rounds and consulting directly with the doctor.

Sprules' role is very similar, though she is working in a completely different environment. As a PA at the Superior Family Health Organization, she is working with the four Family Physicians at the practice, seeing patients and lightening the workload. This will allow doctors there to see more of their patients per day – and allow them to see patients faster.

"Hopefully patients can get into see us faster now that I have joined the team," Sprules said.

PAs are so new that many people working in healthcare aren't quite sure what their role is, and how they can help. The program itself has become something of its own promotional tool, showing doctors how useful Physician Assistants can be.



Tiffany Oddleifson (left) and Britton Sprules both completed their Physician Assistant program this past December and are already working in Thunder Bay. Ultimately, PAs will help improve patient care by relieving some of the doctor's workload.

"The doctors that I worked with during my clinical rotations in Thunder Bay were aware of the PA/physician model but had not previously worked with a PA," Oddleifson said. "By the end of each rotation, they were all very interested in the PA role, so it definitely helps getting the word out."

To help raise awareness about PAs and their role in the healthcare system, HealthForce Ontario provided funding for institutions and independent practices who wanted to

hire a PA. That created over 70 positions province-wide – almost double the 40+ PAs who graduated in Ontario this year.

Although PAs are still new to the healthcare system in Thunder Bay, everyone from patients to healthcare professionals seems to be excited about the new position.

"I've been very well received by the physicians and by the patients," Sprules said. "Everyone has been very open to my role, and the patients have been great."

Shoppers Drug Mart supports women's health

by Maryanne Matthews

Shoppers Drug Mart has once again joined forces with their employees and customers for this year's Tree of Life campaign. Thanks to this year's efforts, the Northern Cardiac Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation will receive \$11,441 in support of Women's Heart Health.

The Shoppers Drug Mart Tree of Life campaign is a four-week program held across Canada each autumn. In support of leading women's health organizations, customers, staff and Pharmacist-Owners at over 1,180 Shoppers Drug Mart/Pharmaprix stores raise funds through the purchase of Tree of Life paper icons.

"Shoppers Drug Mart has partnered with women's health organizations at national, regional, and local levels in order to provide direct support, ensuring that essential funding, resources and education are available to meet the needs of Canadian women," says Vali Orchard, Owner of Shoppers Drug Mart, McIntyre Centre. "We are extremely pleased to present this year's Tree of Life campaign proceeds to the Northern Cardiac Fund."

100% of the funds donated to the Northern Cardiac Fund of the Health Sciences Foundation stay in Northwestern Ontario to support



Vali Orchard, Owner of Shoppers Drug Mart McIntyre Centre, presents a cheque for \$11,441 to Athena Kreiner, Senior Development Officer, Health Sciences Foundation. The money was raised from the Shoppers Drug Mart Tree of Life campaign and the funds will support the Northern Cardiac Fund. Also pictured (from left to right): Adrienne Semple, Edoardo Veneruz, Daniel Beange, and Natasha Adcock.

cardiac care at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Northwestern Ontario has the highest rates of cardiac disease in the province.

"Being able to improve the health of women in Thunder Bay truly takes the commitment of our whole community and we thank Shoppers Drug Mart, their employees and customers for coming together and supporting us through the 2011 Tree of Life Campaign," says Glenn Craig, President & CEO, Thunder Bay

Regional Health Sciences Foundation. "The advancements we have made in cardiac care, including the addition of a second Catheterization lab, could not have been possible without such support."

Since 2002, the campaign has raised more than \$14.7 million for Canadian health charities. In 2011, over 400 women's health charities across Canada will benefit from the campaign's proceeds, with 100% of funds staying in the community where they are raised.



**Your business partner,
your squash buddy,
your dad.**

World-class cardiac care can save his life. Your donation helps us get the job done, right here at home.

Together, we bring cardiac care closer to home.



**Northern
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