

THE SYNAPSE



THE CCNA TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM NEWSLETTER
CONNECTING CCNA TRAINEES ACROSS CANADA

Welcome to the 2017 Spring Issue of **THE SYNAPSE**

Now connecting over 60 CCNA-Affiliated Trainees across Canada, The Synapse shares Trainee profiles, news, upcoming events, and programming.

In this issue we provide an overview of the sessions offered to Trainees at the 2016 CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum (including tips on how to transition to a non-academic job from the second of two professional development sessions), and tell you about a survey on organizing a CCNA trainee society.

CCNA SCIENCE DAY AND PARTNERS FORUM 2016 VANCOUVER, BC

Twenty Trainees attended the 2016 CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum in Vancouver, BC. This compares to 13 who took part in 2015. With



appreciated funding from the CIHR Institutes of Aging and Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction we were able

to support the attendance of [8 Trainees](#) through competitive travel awards. The 2016 annual CCNA meetings featured a Trainee poster session and two professional development workshops in addition to the other educational and networking opportunities offered by attending. The professional development sessions were "Building Authentic Relationships" (Presenter: Tony Botelho, Director, SFU Career and Volunteer Services) on how to network effectively at conferences and "The Non-Academic Career Path" (Presenter: Kate Williams, Scientific Director, Krembil Foundation) that introduced attendees to non-academic employment opportunities. Seventeen Trainees presented posters. This session



CCNA Trainees, Science Day 2016

was a great success. With funding kindly provided by the [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#) we were able to have a poster awards offered in three categories (Master's, PhD, and Postdoctoral Researcher). The job of the judges was made difficult by the quality of the posters presented. The following Trainees received awards:

- **Chen Xiong**, Master's Student, Team 15
Title: *Needs and Preferences of Technology Among Chinese Family Caregivers of Persons with Dementia: A Sex/Gender Perspective*
- **Wai Hang (Tom) Cheng**, PhD Student, Team 3
Title: *CHIMERA (Closed-Head Impact Model of Engineered Rotational Acceleration) Traumatic Brain Injury Exacerbates Neuropathology in APP PS1 Mice*
- **Natalie Kozyrev**, Postdoctoral Researcher, Team 4
Title: *Sex Differences in Markers of Neuroinflammation in a Mouse Model of Alzheimer's Disease*

We would like to thank the Trainees who attended the 2016 meetings, especially those who presented posters, and hope to see many of you at the 2017 Science Day and Partners Forum in Toronto.

THE NON-ACADEMIC CAREER PATH: A CCNA TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION

Making the transition from a graduate science program to a non-academic job was the topic of the second of two professional development sessions organized by the CCNA Training and Capacity Building Program for CCNA-Affiliated Trainees during the 2nd Annual Science Day and Partners Forum. Kate Williams, Scientific Director of the Krembil Foundation led the session. Kate began the presentation by describing her personal path to the position she holds with the Krembil Foundation. Kate obtained her PhD in Neuroscience from McMaster University in 2014 focusing on neurobiological changes underlying cortical vision loss. Her summary highlighted the importance of demonstrating to potential employers that you've been preparing for a non-academic job by acquiring skills transferrable to their work environment. In her case, Kate broadened her skill-set by working in a lab where there was an industry-academic partnership in place and pursuing opportunities in science communication. While working on her PhD, Kate co-founded an educational outreach group that strove to communicate information about brain science to the community at-large, and she wrote for online science publications like [Let's Talk Science](#) and [Science Nutshell](#).

Kate noted that a critical juncture for many graduate students comes when they must decide whether to pursue an academic career or opt for a non-academic position. During the last two years of her PhD, she decided not to go down the academic path and began her job search early—six months before defending her thesis. The transition from a graduate program to a non-academic position can be challenging. The critical first part of the challenge is the job search. Visiting job resource sites and reviewing postings weren't very helpful for her. Kate noted that about 70% of jobs are filled without being advertised. When it comes to finding a position,



networking is crucial. Her transition was aided by a six-month internship offered by the [Ontario Brain Institute](#) in partnership with the Krembil Foundation as a Grants Manager. This ultimately led to Kate's current role as Scientific Director for the Krembil Foundation. In her current position she manages a portfolio of medical research grants, acts as a liaison between researchers and the Foundation, prospects and reviews granting opportunities, and develops

strategic funding plans. The experience she gained in science communication while working on her PhD has proved to be very helpful because part of her role is translating medical research findings into everyday English and then communicating them to the Krembil Foundation Board.

Kate spoke about the market for non-academic jobs for graduate science Trainees. She drew on data from the McMaster University Neuroscience

Graduate Program to discuss the different types of post-PhD careers. The McMaster University data showed that within 5 years of obtaining a PhD in neuroscience 29% of graduates were in an academic research position (primarily postdoctoral fellows) while 14% had trained as a physician and 57% were working in other fields. The most frequent positions for neuroscience graduates in the latter category were in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sector, research management, and science communication. Kate gave an overview of each category, including examples of jobs available in each, and the types of skills and knowledge base that are desirable from an employer perspective. She closed the session with tips on searching for a position and being competitive for non-academic positions.

The Krembil Foundation

[The Krembil Foundation](#) is a family foundation based in Toronto, Ontario. The Krembil Foundation has a mandate centred on helping people by supporting medical research and education in Canada. Their primary focus is funding novel, world class medical research projects that have the potential to produce life-altering results.

Tips from Kate on Finding and Competing for Non-Academic Jobs

Finding Jobs:

- Start early: Most jobs are not posted online or in print.
- Network through LinkedIn, at conferences, and with peers.
- Be open to new opportunities: Many jobs don't specify that they're looking for PhDs.
- Look for opportunities to do informational interviews (also known as informational conversations). An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in an interesting area where you seek advice about the field, industry, or position, and about the corporate culture of a potential future workplace. The person you are talking to has an opportunity to assess your interest, professional and personal qualities, and fit with their field or industry. Informational interviews are a good way to expand your professional network.
 - Show your interest by doing some research on the person, organization, or industry before your conversation.
 - LinkedIn and university alumni lists are potential resources to help you connect with people you might want to interview.
- Don't feel locked in - even jobs you don't enjoy and stay in long-term can give you skills that will lead to your next and better position.

Competing for Jobs:

- Start early: Identify gaps in your resume today.
 - Build skills outside your graduate degree.
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities.
- Be able to translate your academic skills and use them in other settings.
- Provide context for your academic accomplishments like papers and awards by describing them in a manner that is both understandable but highlights the difficulty in achieving them (e.g., "One hundred highly qualified people across the country applied for this national award that I received").
- All of the above demonstrate to a potential employer that you've prepared for the position in question.

TRAINEE SUCCESS STORIES

CCNA Trainee Awarded 2016 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship



We would like to congratulate Dr. Claire Godard-Sebillotte who was awarded a [2016 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship](#). Claire is also the recipient of the [2016 CIHR Institute of Aging Anne Martin-Matthews Doctoral Prize of Excellence in Research on Aging](#).

Claire is a Geriatrician and third year PhD student in Family Medicine at McGill University. She is a member of CCNA Team 19 and is supervised by Dr. Isabelle Vedel. Claire's research project focuses on the evaluation of components of the provincial plan implemented in Quebec for people who have Alzheimer's disease or related disorders. Working with people living with dementia, Claire saw firsthand the daily challenges they and their caregivers face navigating currently uncoordinated medical, social, and community services. To address these and other challenges, the Quebec Alzheimer Plan is supporting innovations in the delivery of care to these vulnerable patients within Family Medicine Groups (FMGs).

The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship will support Claire's research plan for the next three years. Claire will conduct a quasi-experimental study with a difference-in-differences analysis to assess the impact of the Quebec Alzheimer's Plan on care delivery. Claire will compare the use of health services by people with Alzheimer's followed in FMGs where aspects of the Quebec Alzheimer's plan have been implemented to control FMGs where the Plan has not been implemented. Data from Quebec health administrative databases will be utilized. The results will assist the Quebec Ministry of Health in deciding whether to disseminate successful models and/or modify the Alzheimer's Plan.

UPCOMING IN T&CB

Are You Interested in a CCNA Trainee Society?

In a 2015 survey conducted by the T&CB Program CCNA-Affiliated Trainees were asked whether they would like to see a CCNA Trainee Society organized. Because of the positive feedback, we have created a survey to explore this further. In particular, we want to hear from Trainees on what role a trainee society could play in the CCNA. The survey is available in English and French and can be accessed by following the links.

We look forward to receiving your feedback.

English survey: <http://wp.me/P6cmSh-2hN>

French survey: <http://wp.me/P6cmSh-2hT>

If you're interested in a CCNA trainee society please feel free to contact the 2016-2017 CCNA Conference Program Planning Committee Trainee representatives [Claire Godard-Sebillotte](mailto:claire.godard-sebillotte@mail.mcgill.ca) (claire.godard-sebillotte@mail.mcgill.ca) and [Lindsay Wallace](mailto:lindsay.wallace@dal.ca) (lindsay.wallace@dal.ca) with your ideas. Lindsay and Claire have contributed to the development of this survey and would like to hear from you.

MITACS STEP PROGRAM

High Quality Professional Skills Training Program

Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization that has designed and delivered research and training programs in Canada for 15 years. It was founded in 1999 as a Canadian Network of Centres of Excellence, dedicated to supporting applied and industrial research in mathematical sciences and associated disciplines. In 2003, it launched a research internship program designed to increase deployment of highly educated graduates into the private sector. Open to all disciplines since 2007, Mitacs has 25 offices across Canada.

Mitacs-Step provides professional skills training to graduate students, supplementing their education and research experience with the tools necessary to succeed in today's workforce. Step workshops are facilitated by leading industry and business professionals, are available to graduate students and

post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) on campuses across Canada, and include in-person and online workshops that cover topics like project management, business communication, and networking. By combining advanced research expertise with professional skills, young, educated people will be poised for success in their future careers.

For more information and to find a workshop near you, visit the [Mitacs Step Program](#).



DATES TO REMEMBER

The 2017 CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum

November 1-2, 2017 at the Toronto Reference Library
With a Half-Day Preconference Session for Trainees on October 31, 2017



STAY CONNECTED

HOW TO CONTACT T&CB

We always want to hear from CCNA Trainees, so feel free to contact us with your feedback about events and programming that would be of value to you.

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Until next issue, thanks for reading!