

Publications of the Week

Mechanisms of Lactic Acid Gustatory Attraction in *Drosophila*

First Author: Molly Stanley (pictured, left) | Senior Author: Michael Gordon (third from left)
Current Biology | Life Sciences Institute and UBC



Sour has been studied almost exclusively as an aversive taste modality. Yet recent work in *Drosophila* demonstrates that specific carboxylic acids are attractive at ecologically relevant concentrations. The authors demonstrate that lactic acid is an appetitive and energetic tastant, which stimulates feeding through activation of sweet gustatory receptor neurons. [Profile](#) | [Abstract](#)

Evening the Playing Field: Microenvironmental Control over Stem Cell Competition during Fate Programming

First Authors: Kieran Maheden and Omar Bashth | Senior Author: Nika Shakiba (pictured)
Current Opinion in Genetics & Development | Biomedical Research Centre and UBC



Although recent studies have largely focused on exploring how the differential expression of key genes mediate the competitive elimination of some cells, little is known about the impact of the microenvironment on cell competition. The authors explore recent findings that have brought cell competition into the spotlight, while dissecting the role of microenvironmental factors for controlling competition in cell fate programming applications. [Abstract](#)

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Awards

Achieving Excellence: SBME Award Winners (2021)

UBC School of Biomedical Engineering (SBME)



It's time to once again celebrate some of the SBME innovators who made waves in the first half of 2021. Benjie McMaster (pictured), a fourth year student in the UBC Biomedical Engineering program's cellular bioengineering stream, was awarded the J. K. Zee Memorial Scholarship. He previously worked in Dr. Peter Zandstra's lab developing computational models of spatial patterning in embryonic stem cell colonies. [Read More](#)

Awards Announced for DMCBH Trainees

Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health (DMCBH)



Several awards have recently been handed out to DMCBH trainees. Adrienne Kinman (pictured) won a Benjamin Feldman and Family Endowment Fund for Transformational Activity in Mental Health award. She is studying a previously unreported cell type which has the potential to reveal novel neural mechanisms of spatial memory, which is important for both basic and translational science. [Read More](#)

2020/2021 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships and Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships Awarded to 26 UBC Researchers

UBC Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies



Twenty doctoral students at UBC have received Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, and six postdoctoral fellows have received Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships. Scholarship recipients include Hamidreza Galavi (pictured), a PhD student in Dr. Steven Pelech's lab, which develops antibodies and antibody microarrays for tracking kinases, phosphatases, phosphorylation sites, and a wide range of other signal transduction proteins. [Read More](#)

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Local News

The Future of Genomics in a Post Pandemic World

Michael Smith Laboratories



Live experiments, grant funded research, and educational activities ground to a halt as scientists around the world refocused their efforts on tackling the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the globe. Dr. Terry Snutch (pictured) is one of many researchers that did just that. Normally working with animal models of brain disorders, Dr. Snutch repurposed Oxford Nanopore technology, a portable DNA sequencer, to sequence up to 150,000 genomes of SARS-CoV-2. [Read More](#)

Feds Throw Support behind BC Biotech with Another \$4.6M for Oral COVID-19 Vaccine

Business in Vancouver



Ottawa is doubling down on a BC biotech pursuing the development of a COVID-19 vaccine that can be taken orally. Burnaby-based Symvivo has announced that the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program is earmarking \$4.6 million to support the clinical advancement of the company's vaccine candidate known as bacTRL-Spike. [Read More](#)

UBC Researcher Embraces Big Data, Helping Uncover Deeper Insights into the Genetics of Autism

UBC News



A future where autism care is personalized to fit an individual's unique genetic makeup is now one step closer to reality, thanks to a new big data initiative. Geneticist Dr. Suzanne Lewis (pictured), a Clinical Professor in UBC's Department of Medicine, is among the international team of autism researchers and is leading efforts underway at UBC and BC Children's Hospital Research Institute. [Read More](#)

Distinguished Toronto Scientist Dr. Jim Woodgett Takes Up Leadership of Terry Fox Research Institute on August 1

Terry Fox Research Institute



The Board of Directors of the Terry Fox Research Institute has announced the appointment of Dr. Jim Woodgett (pictured), a senior scientist based at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, part of Sinai Health in Toronto, as its new President and Scientific Director effective August 1, 2021. Dr. Woodgett recently stepped down as Director of Sinai Health's Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, a position he held for 15 years. [Read More](#)

New Open Science Database Published to Study Microglia

Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health (DMCBH)



Microglia — the immune cells of the brain — have been an important area of study over the last decade, especially with respect to their impact on brain disorders. In a recently published paper, DMCBH member Dr. Annie Ciernia (pictured) and her team used an open science platform to help researchers understand how certain genes are regulated in microglia. [Read More](#)

Dr. Andrew Shih Pursues an Innovative Project for Convalescent Plasma Process Mapping and Distribution with Canadian Blood Services Funding

Centre for Blood Research



In early clinical studies, convalescent plasma was shown to improve outcomes in a small number of patients. Now that the CONvalescent Plasma for Hospitalized Adults with COVID-19 Respiratory Illness (CONCOR-1) trial has finished recruiting, Dr. Andrew Shih's (pictured) group was recently awarded funding to study both the rollout of CONCOR-1 and distribution strategies for convalescent plasma throughout BC. [Read More](#)

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Upcoming Events in Vancouver

- August 5 9:00 AM **ADDC Webinar — "Things I Wish I Knew": Cell-Based Imaging**
Online
- August 6 12:30 PM **Brain-Tech 2021: Idea Generation and Hackathon for Brain Wellness**
Online
- August 6 4:00 PM **Online Open House: Synthetic Biology Laboratories at UBC's SBME**
Online
- September 8 12:00 PM **New Genomics for Non-Invasively Monitoring Canada's Polar Bear Populations**
Online
- September 9 9:00 AM **ADDC Webinar — "Things I Wish I Knew": Venture Funding**
Online

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