

Publications of the Week

Polyphosphatases Have a Polyphosphate-Independent Influence on the Virulence of *Cryptococcus neoformans*

First Author: Kabir Bhalla | Senior Author: Jim Kronstad *(pictured)*
Infection and Immunity | UBC



Cryptococcus neoformans causes one of the most prevalent, life-threatening diseases in immunocompromised individuals. Previous studies demonstrated that *C. neoformans* cells lacking polyphosphate (polyP) display altered cell surface architecture but unimpaired virulence in a murine model of cryptococcosis. Here, researchers show that mutants with abundant polyP due to loss of the polyphosphatases Xpp1 and Epp1 are attenuated for virulence. [Abstract](#)

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Awards

Outstanding Faculty and Graduate Students Honoured With Killam Teaching Awards

UBC Faculty of Medicine



A number of UBC Faculty of Medicine members have been honoured with Killam teaching awards for 2024/2025. The annual awards are presented to faculty and teaching assistants who demonstrate excellence in teaching. There are eight awardees, including Dr. Jenna Usprech *(pictured)* from the School of Biomedical Engineering. [Read More](#)

Research Excellence Clusters Funded in 2025/26

UBC Research + Innovation



A total of 47 Research Excellence Clusters led by researchers at UBC Vancouver are being supported in 2025/26. Research Excellence Clusters are interdisciplinary networks of researchers addressing societal and cultural problems, and working together to solve challenges that transcend traditional boundaries associated with departments, institutions, and funding agencies. Dr. Steven Hallam *(pictured)* is one of the awardees. [Read More](#)

AI Innovation Puts VCHRI Scientist at the Forefront of Global Drug Discovery Avenues

Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI)



Vancouver Prostate Centre researcher Dr. Artem Cherkasov *(pictured)* recently won two competitions in the international CACHE Challenges, leveraging advanced computational methods and AI to find new potential treatment avenues for Parkinson's disease and COVID-19. Dr. Cherkasov's submissions topped results from dozens of other researchers from leading academic, industry, and non-profit sector institutions around the world. [Read More](#)

Somasekharan Lab Students Honoured with CIHR Travel Award 2025

Vancouver Prostate Centre



Unnati Yagnik *(pictured, left)* and (Ziwei) Mia Cai *(right)* are students from Dr. Syam Somasekharan's laboratory and have been awarded the prestigious 2025 Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Travel Award through the Institute Community Support Program. This highly competitive and limited award makes it remarkable for two students from the same lab to be selected. [Read More](#)

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Local News

Can Plants Inherit Climate Coping Skills?

Genome BC



Exciting new research funded by Genome BC and conducted by Drs. Greg Henry and Loren Rieseberg *(pictured)* at UBC is shedding light on how plants adapt during climate change. Their study, focusing on *Dryas octopetalata*, a small plant related to strawberries that is found in tundra environments, has uncovered a fascinating potential for rapid adaptation through changes in DNA regulation. [Read More](#)

Professor François Jean Reflects on Five Years of COVID-19

UBC Microbiology and Immunology (MBIM)



When COVID-19 reached Canada in 2020, the Jean lab was ready. MBIM Professor and Virologist Dr. François Jean *(pictured)* focuses on the discovery and preclinical investigation of antivirals against human pathogenic "enveloped" viruses. In redirecting his knowledge and experience toward SARS-CoV-2, Dr. Jean became the lead of Pillar 10, the antiviral strategies and therapeutics pillar of the Coronavirus Variants Rapid Response Network. [Read More](#)

SFU Researchers Developing Wearable AI Technology for Stroke and Spinal Injury Rehabilitation

SFU News



SFU researchers are using cutting edge technology, in combination with AI and machine learning, to support safer rehabilitation for patients. The work is highlighted in a research paper in the journal *Clinical Rehabilitation*, co-authored by Dr. Gustavo Balbinot *(pictured)*. Dr. Balbinot leads the Movement Neurorehabilitation and Neurorepair laboratory, which focuses on rehabilitation after stroke or a spinal cord injury. [Read More](#)

UBC Traveling Health Fair: A Hands-On Learning Experience for UBC Pharm Sci Students

UBC Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences



The UBC Traveling Health Fair (UBC THF) has become a vital initiative that enhances the health of faculty and staff while offering pharmacy students at UBC's Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences invaluable practical experience. For many students, UBC THF stands out as a defining aspect of their education with the Faculty. [Read More](#)

How Emotions Can Modulate Vestibular-Motor Responses

UBC Balance and Falls Research Centre



A newly published study in the *Journal of Physiology*, by co-first authors Dr. Martin Zaback *(pictured, left)* and Solenne Villemer *(right)*, demonstrates that emotional and arousal states can modulate balance responses evoked by the vestibular system. This research was conducted in Dr. Mark Carpenter's lab in collaboration with Drs. Tim Inglis and Kyle Missen. [Read More](#)

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📅 Upcoming Events in Vancouver

April 29
5:00 PM

SFU Cafe Scientifique: Brain Mapping, Brain Function, and Evolution
Online

April 30
8:00 AM

Genome BC's Genomics Forum 2025
Genome BC

May 12 - 13
8:00 AM

BC Resuscitation Sciences Series: Organ Donation & Transplantation Symposium
Vancouver General Hospital

May 15
8:00 AM

Women in STEM Career Fair
Online

May 22
5:00 PM

BC Pharmacy Residency Research Night 2025
Science World

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📁 Science Jobs in Vancouver

Scientist, Analytical Development and Services
STEMCELL Technologies

Laboratory Assistant
Provincial Laboratory Medicine Services

Postdoctoral Fellow in Immunology, Molecular Biology, and Vaccine Research
UBC

Research Manager
BC Children's Hospital Research Institute

Pathologist Assistant, Anatomical Pathology
The Provincial Health Services Authority

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