

Kelowna researchers win health research funding award to support obesity and diabetes research

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Two Kelowna-based researchers, Dr. Sanjoy Ghosh and Dr. Mary Jung have received research awards from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) that will help them address two interconnected and high-profile public health issues — the increasing rates of both type 2 diabetes and obesity and how each contribute to increased illness and death due to heart disease.

Drs. Ghosh and Jung, both with UBC-Okanagan, join 30 other researchers working in diverse fields of health research who were selected for funding in MSFHR's 2014 scholar competition. These awards, presented to promising new investigators to help them launch independent research careers and build strong research programs, are worth up to \$90,000 per year over a maximum term of five years.

Dr. Ghosh, with the Department of Biology in the Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences, is no stranger to MSFHR awards, having received a trainee award in 2007. He is researching the drivers behind the rise of heart disease in Western societies – diet and lack of exercise. He is looking specifically at how the unsaturated fatty acids found in vegetable oils contribute to increased inflammation in our bodies, which can accelerate heart disease.

As a complementary project, he is also investigating how standard exercise guidelines can be modified to meet the needs of real people who are already overweight or who are already experiencing heart troubles. As a first step, using animal models of diabetes, Dr. Ghosh is asking if pre-existing metabolic conditions change the impact of exercise and how much exercise is too much. His work will also help determine if antioxidants are beneficial during exercise for people with diabetes. Ultimately, he would like to determine the optimum amount of exercise for elderly diabetic individuals with a long standing history of disease.

Dr. Jung, with the School of Health and Exercise Sciences in the Faculty of Health and Social Development, is tackling the issue of obesity and type 2 diabetes from a different perspective. Her research is focused on developing and validating self-regulation training programs for individuals who are prediabetic. By teaching these individuals the skills necessary to independently adhere to exercise, the goal is to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. She is testing the effectiveness of a

theory-based, brief counseling program, coupled with a mobile app, in helping individuals overcome challenges, goal-set, self-monitor, and revise exercise routines accordingly. If successful, she hopes her intervention will increase independent physical activity for over one year in 100 inactive adults with prediabetes.

A complete list of the 2014 scholars and their research projects may be viewed at <http://www.msfhr.org/funding/2014-msfhr-scholar-awards>

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About the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research:

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research empowers British Columbia's (BC) best and brightest health researchers to pursue world-class innovation and stretch the bounds of what health research can achieve. The Foundation helps BC's health research community discover solutions to our greatest health challenges; connect knowledge and action; and engage partners to address provincial priorities. MSFHR is dedicated to the memory of Nobel Prize recipient Dr. Michael Smith, a pre-eminent BC scientist with a long-standing commitment to supporting researchers throughout their careers. Learn more at www.msfhr.org

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