



Welcome to News Brief, a short collection of stories and notes about some of the great work underway in AU's Faculty of Health Disciplines and in our wider community. With your help, we'll evolve to keep you informed and connected with alumni and with the Faculty.

Let us know how we're doing and what you'd like to see in the future by [sending us a note](#). Enjoy the read and we hope to hear from you soon!



Controlled drugs module gives nurse practitioners a shot in the arm for elevating patient care

Launched in January 2014, Prescription and Management of Controlled Drugs and Substances is a powerful tool enabling nurse practitioners to provide more comprehensive care to patients. More than 500 people have already enrolled in this first-time offering.

[Read more](#)



The survey says ...

Thanks to everyone who completed the communication survey this summer! With your help, we're working to strengthen the relationship between the Faculty of Health Disciplines and alumni, students, faculty and others. Here are some highlights of what you told us.

[Read more](#)



Navigating through one of today's most exhilarating and challenging roles: parenting

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs there is. But what's the best approach for "heat-of-the-moment" parenting? What do moms and dads need to know and do? Why don't children come with an instruction book? Health Disciplines researchers are looking for answers.

[Read more](#)



Passions for counselling and education come together

As a counsellor with Eastside Family Centre in Calgary, Gina Ko helps families through some of their most difficult times. She's part of a team employing a one-of-a-kind practice model and, thanks to her work and a major educational award, she never stops learning.

[Read more](#)



Can the risk of diabetes be lowered for some new mothers?

For some women, pregnancy can deliver more than a bundle of joy. Those who experience gestational diabetes are at substantially higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. New research is looking into whether active living and healthy eating can help prevent it.

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Learning from faculty who are among the very best in the field

Every time faculty receive provincial and national awards, it affirms the benefit students and alumni gain by learning from acknowledged leaders in teaching and practice. Here are some of the latest faculty to be honoured by their professional peers.

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Active living corner: A step in the right direction

Shift work. Long hours. Emotional stressors. Bending and lifting. Working in health care can be intensely rewarding — and mentally and physically challenging. Providing the best care for patients starts with caring for ourselves. Here are a few tips.

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News from here and there

Health Disciplines alumni, faculty, researchers and students are movers, shakers and news makers. Here are some of the contributions they're making to patients, communities and health care across Canada and beyond.

[Read more](#)

Share your news! Submit a story! Let us know what you want to read about! [Drop us a line](#) and help grow and strengthen the Faculty of Health Disciplines community. Together, we'll have the conversations that matter to you.

Invest in the future of health care by donating to student awards, research and scholarly activities, and learning resources. Find out more by visiting the [Caring for the Future](#) website — and donate online.

Controlled drugs module gives nurse practitioners a shot in the arm for elevating patient care

Launched in January 2014, Prescription and Management of Controlled Drugs and Substances is a powerful tool enabling nurse practitioners to provide more comprehensive care to patients. More than 500 people have already enrolled in this first-time offering.

A new continuing education module introduced by the Faculty of Health Disciplines in January 2014 is proving popular with nurse practitioners across Canada wishing to increase their knowledge and skills and improve the level of care offered to patients.

***Prescription and Management of Controlled Drugs and Substances* enables nurses to develop the competency required to prescribe narcotics or controlled**

substances. The Government of Canada only last year approved regulations that permit nurse practitioners to prescribe narcotics, and each province has its own rules governing nurses' authority (not all jurisdictions allow nurse practitioners to prescribe controlled drugs and substances).



"This module is one of the first in Canada," says **Debbie Fraser** (Director, Nurse Practitioner Program). "It enables nurses to add to their practice and to provide more-timely care for patients. Previously, nurses had to ask doctors to prescribe narcotics needed by patients. Now, if they complete this module and work in an area that authorizes them to prescribe controlled drugs and substances, they can provide more comprehensive services. It's very exciting."

The module is recognized by the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators and the Council and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. It comprises seven self-paced units totalling 15–20 hours of study, which can be started at any point in the year and must be completed within three months. Tuition is \$169 + GST.

For more information or to register, please visit the [Faculty of Health Disciplines website](#).

[← RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)

[GO TO NEXT STORY →](#)

The survey says ...

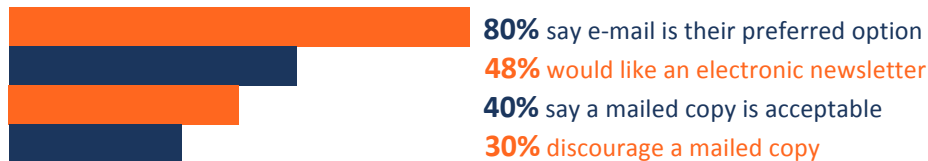
Thanks to everyone who completed the communication survey this summer! With your help, we're working to strengthen the relationship between the Faculty of Health Disciplines and alumni, students, faculty and others. Here are some highlights of what you told us.

Almost 900 grads, students and faculty responded to our communication survey. What you told us will help inform future plans for communicating with you. Here is a snapshot of what we learned:

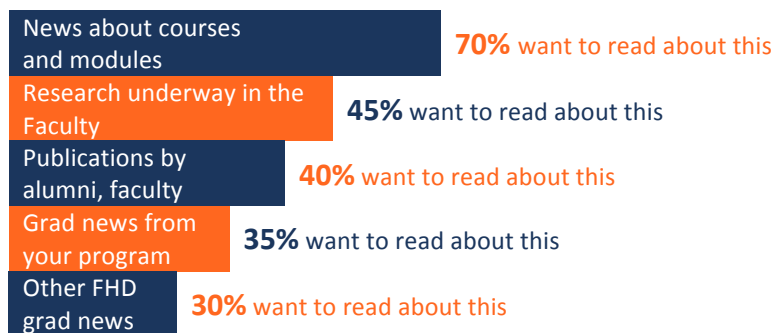
SOCIAL MEDIA



PREFERRED WAY TO RECEIVE NEWS ABOUT THE FACULTY OF HEALTH DISCIPLINES



WHAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN READING/KNOWING ABOUT



WOULD YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER?



Navigating through one of today's most exhilarating and challenging roles: parenting

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs there is. But what's the best approach for "heat-of-the-moment" parenting? What do moms and dads need to know and do? Why don't children come with an instruction book? Health Disciplines researchers are looking for answers.

It's tough being a parent these days, with all the hype and media stories about "attachment parenting," "tiger moms" and "helicopter parents," not to mention countless online how-to resources and "advice" from "experts" and well-meaning friends and family.

Research being led by **Dr. Gwen Rempel** (Associate Professor, Centre for Nursing and Health Studies) and **Dr. Gina Wong** (Associate Professor, Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology) with colleagues from across Alberta aims to help parents by investigating the benefits of a promising approach to parenting that is based on the most recent advances in developmental neuroscience and attachment theory: the Circle of Security Intervention.

"Circle of Security is a roadmap for parents," Rempel explains. "We have high expectations of ourselves as parents, but instead of looking at difficult childhood behaviours as something to be managed or even extinguished, Circle of Security enables parents to understand and respond to their child's emotional needs."

The model aims to help parents be "good enough," rather than perfect.

While many parenting models focus on behaviour, Circle of Security focuses on emotions, giving parents tools to better understand what is behind their child's actions. This

provides insight parents can use to improve heat-of-the-moment parenting when tensions run high with their children, and can strengthen the bond between parents and children.



Want to know more about Circle of Security? Watch the video.

The approach has been gaining international recognition and Rempel and Wong are co-leading research in Canada beginning in Alberta to gather evidence that may lead to large-scale implementation of Circle of Security. Funding has been received from the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research and from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

The first phase began in October with formation of the research team. Step 1 will be to train people who will lead groups of parents through eight DVD-based interactive sessions, and to pilot measurement methods. The study itself will involve groups of parents and likely take a year.

“This program resonates with people,” Wong says. “It acknowledges that, as parents, we make mistakes. But if we reflect on them and set things right, our children and our relationships will be stronger.”

“As a team, we believe Circle of Security works,” Rempel adds. “But if it’s going to be introduced on a large scale, we need research evidence of program effectiveness.”

[← RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)

[GO TO NEXT STORY →](#)

Passions for counselling and education come together

As a counsellor with Eastside Family Centre in Calgary, Gina Ko helps families through some of their most difficult times. She's part of a team employing a one-of-a-kind practice model and, thanks to her work and a major educational award, she never stops learning.

Teacher. Student. Counsellor. Mom. Volunteer. Gina Ko wears many hats, but you can be sure that wherever she is or whatever she's doing, she's learning.



A 2014 graduate of AU's Master of Counselling (Psychology) program — she gave the graduands' address at the Faculty of Health Disciplines Convocation Banquet in June — Ko is a counsellor at Eastside Family Centre in Calgary.

She has also received an Eyes High Doctoral Recruitment Scholarship (valued at \$100,000 over four years) from the University of Calgary to support her current doctoral work.

Work and school, she says, are giving her a profound learning experience.

Eastside, offered by Wood's Homes, brings together psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, graduate students, doctors, nurses and others to help individuals, couples and families who are going through difficult times and may not be able to afford professional services. It employs a unique "single session walk-in model," which ensures every member of the team has the information needed to provide comprehensive support to clients.

"Every time I go in, I learn from the team and from clients," Ko says. "Whether the presenting concern is suicide, grief, addiction, domestic violence or some other crisis, I'm able to use what I've learned."

At the U of C in the first year of her PhD in Educational Leadership — on the road to becoming a psychologist and, ultimately, a post-secondary instructor — she's looking at how families who have immigrated to Canada problem-solve with school professionals to promote their children's wellbeing and success. "I'm Chinese and born in Vietnam, and my whole family were refugees when we came to Canada," Ko explains. "Being raised here and having another identity, I'm interested in looking at families' stories and how parents connect with school professionals to help their kids."

"I'm so lucky to be able to put all the pieces together," she says. "This is what I'm meant to do — and I wake up every morning excited to do what I'm doing."

Can the risk of diabetes be lowered for some new mothers?

For some women, pregnancy can deliver more than a bundle of joy. Those who experience gestational diabetes are at substantially higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. New research is looking into whether walking and healthy eating can help prevent it.



About 2,000 women in Alberta develop gestational diabetes each year — and it can have lifelong health consequences. These mothers are at substantially higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes within 10 years of their gestational diabetes pregnancy, and evidence even suggests that women of child-bearing age may be at higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes than the general population.

Dr. Steven Johnson (Assistant Professor, Centre for Nursing and Health Studies), in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Alberta and Calgary, wants to know if targeting known diabetes risk factors soon after birth can help prevent Type 2 diabetes down the road.

He has received funding from the Lawson Foundation in Ontario to launch a program to see if new mothers can be encouraged to increase their physical activity and eat healthier soon after giving birth, and what impact that lifestyle change will have on their health. Because women with a previous gestational diabetes pregnancy report feeling abandoned by the health care system, the goal is to find ways to better support them in the high-risk period after childbirth.

“We want to see if the program is effective at inspiring new mothers to make short-term behaviour changes — healthy eating and active living — right now, and whether this can help prevent Type 2 diabetes down the road,” he says. “We know that women at this time of their life don’t eat well and aren’t necessarily active because having a child can be a substantial life change.”

The two-year study will comprise two six-month phases involving 100 women in Calgary and Edmonton (two groups of 50; one taking part in the program and the other a control group). Johnson hopes to have the project underway by the end of January 2015.

Johnson is a member of the Alliance for Canadian Health Outcomes Research in Diabetes (ACHORD) and this latest project builds on his work in Type 2 diabetes. He developed the Healthy Eating and Active Living for Diabetes (HEALD) program and has conducted several studies on the subject. A recent paper published in the journal *Practical Diabetes* describes how patients felt while participating in the HEALD program and how it helped them become more physically active.

Learning from faculty who are among the very best in the field

Every time faculty receive provincial and national awards, it affirms the benefit students and alumni gain by learning from acknowledged leaders in teaching and practice. Here are some of the latest faculty to be honoured by their professional peers.

Following are highlights of some recent honours received by Faculty of Health Disciplines faculty and staff.

External Awards

Sharon Moore

Professor
Centre for Nursing
and Health Studies

CARNA Nursing Excellence in Education

presented by The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta

Sharon was recognized for her innovative and creative arts-based approach to teaching, which has shaped her success as an educator in both a formal post-secondary setting and in outreach education for women around the world. She transformed traditional correspondence courses into interactive online learning experiences allowing students the flexibility to achieve higher levels of nursing education regardless of geographic, socio-economic, family and work situations. Sharon is recognized as an educator with extraordinary approaches who is committed to sharing her time, talent and expertise across Canada and the world.

Debbie Fraser

Director, Nurse
Practitioner Program

CNA Order of Merit – Nursing Education

presented by the Canadian Nurses Association

At AU, Debbie brings together her loves of practice, writing, teaching, learning and community service and places high value on being able to teach and practice at the same time. Overseeing Canada's first online Nurse Practitioner program, she has the opportunity to help other nurses do so as well. She has helped to shape nursing education and practice in Canada and abroad. Debbie's passion for learning is reflected in the joy she sees in students' faces, in her own lifelong learning in the NICU and in the advice she offers to students and colleagues to "stretch our wings a bit" and look for opportunities to advance as nurses.

Beth Perry
Professor
Centre for Nursing
and Health Studies

CASN Nursing Education Excellence Award – Tenured

presented by The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN)

Beth's award recognizes that she is a teacher who loves what she does — and it shows. Her students are challenged academically, supported in igniting their creativity, and engaged in personalized education founded on the values of respect, trust, intentionality and optimism. Known internationally as an expert in online teaching and course design, Beth is a leader in enhancing the quality of online nursing education through example, through her research and by mentoring both students and faculty members.

Internal Awards

James Fedorchuk
*Instructional Media
Analyst (IMA) – Graduate
Programs*

Sue and Derrick Rowlandson Memorial Award for Service Excellence (SDRMASE)

presented at AU's annual staff recognition awards ceremony

Rick Roder
*Instructional Media
Analyst (IMA) –
Undergraduate Programs*

Recognized for consistently going above and beyond in providing exemplary service to Athabasca University and members of our community, James and Rick play key roles in the online student learning experience. They are committed to their roles in making online courses that work for students, and doing so through a process that is collaborative, efficient and effective. Their advice and guidance from the IMA perspective in designing, developing and revising online courses results in innovative, appealing and user-friendly courses for learners.

Elaine Schow
*Tutor, Individualized
Study*

President's Award for Tutoring/Mentoring Excellence (PATME)

presented at AU's annual staff recognition awards ceremony

Among many admirable qualities, Elaine consistently demonstrates four outstanding assets with her students — support in the form of being accessible and responsive; helpful feedback; reliable marking seen as accurate and reflective of quality of work; and respectfulness. In her long career with AU, Elaine is well known for upholding high personal standards in her work.



Virginia Vandall-Walker
*Associate Professor,
Centre for Nursing and
Health Studies*

**Craig Cunningham Award for Teaching Excellence
(CCMATE)**

presented at AU's annual staff recognition awards ceremony

Support is the cornerstone of Virginia's teaching philosophy and approach. Her decision to support students so they would "soar higher, fly longer, and successfully change course when needed" has shaped her career, eventually becoming the focus of her graduate education. Sharon recognizes the inherent value of each student and their ability to succeed, connects with them on a personal and professional level, helps them find meaning in what they are learning and guides them by providing comprehensive grading and detailed feedback.

[← RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)

[GO TO NEXT STORY →](#)

Active living corner: A step in the right direction

Shift work. Long hours. Emotional stressors. Bending and lifting. Working in health care can be intensely rewarding — and mentally and physically challenging. Providing the best care for patients starts with caring for our individual health. Here are a few tips.

In recent years, multiple studies have clearly shown the health benefits of moderate exercise, including brisk walking. This is good news; while genetics and other environmental factors can and do influence health, exercise is one intervention that offers each of us a way to take positive control of our lives.

But how much is enough?



Some guidelines recommend 30 minutes per day; others suggest 15 minutes as a target time. However, the science to support these numbers is not always very strong.

Recently, researchers at Iowa State University examined the clinic medical records of 55,137 healthy men and women aged 18–100 years of age. People who identified as runners had a 30% lower risk of premature death from any cause, and a 45% lower risk of dying of heart disease, compared to non-runners. But what is remarkable about the findings of a study by Lee et al. (2014) is that similar benefits extend to people who run as little as 5–10 minutes per day, regardless of pace!

So what is the take-home message?

It's not all about training for a marathon. The more you exercise, the greater the benefits! But the real moral of the story is this: no matter how busy you are, if you can fit in at least five minutes per day of running, you will likely reduce your odds of premature death.

And for those of us who don't find running particularly pleasurable or possible, there are other options: any means of moderate to vigorous exercise, such as pedalling a stationary bike, skipping rope or swimming, is also likely to accrue similar benefits.

[← RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)

[GO TO NEXT STORY →](#)

News from here and there

Health Disciplines alumni, faculty, researchers and students are movers, shakers and news makers. Here are some of the contributions they're making to patients, communities and health care across Canada and beyond.

Donna Clare
AU Academic Coordinator

... was interviewed by CBC earlier this year on the topic of eliminating urgent care nurse practitioners to save money

Margaret Edwards
Dean, Faculty of Health Disciplines
and

Caroline Park
Chair, Graduate Nursing Programs

... flew the Faculty of Health Disciplines colours at the Canadian Nurses Association conference in Winnipeg in June



Carole Huynh
alumna, Master of Counselling

... was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, recognizing her contributions to the sport of wrestling and her bronze-medal Olympic performance

Jennifer Jackson
and **Colleen Toye**
thesis students, Master of Nursing

... were awarded Rising Star status by Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honor Society of Nursing, in Indianapolis, this September



Barbe Pickering
alumna

... recently reunited with Gwen Rempel (AU Program Director) whom she worked with years ago at the B.C .Children’s Hospital. Barbe has been working with child-bearing women with HIV/AIDS and their children for many years. She presented on the topic at a conference this November

Tammy McParland
alumna

... was featured in the Canadian Nurses Association’s *Nursing Now* titled “Educating tomorrow’s courageous leaders,” which highlighted her career as a nurse educator

Gwen Rempel
Program Director – Master of Health Studies/Master of Nursing

... co-authored “Texting teens in transition: the use of social networking in clinical intervention research,” which was published online in JMIR mHealth and uHealth

Jill Sutherland
alumna, Master of Health Studies

... has worked clinically as a radiation therapist and as Radiation Therapy Coordinator for Educational Programming. She is now Project Manager for a Patient Reported Outcomes Initiative at CancerCare Manitoba (CCMB), in collaboration with partners from Alberta and Saskatchewan.



Darlene (Hutchings) Welsh
alumna

... holds the distinction of being the first student to graduate from the Centre for Nursing and Health Studies thesis route (2010). She has been accepted into the PhD Program in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of New Brunswick

Gina Wong
Associate Professor,
Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology

... recently co-edited a book: *East Asian Mothering: Politics and Practices*. She enjoys publishing and presenting nationally and internationally on maternal mental health and wellness issues from feminist and cross-cultural perspectives. Her research focuses primarily focuses on examining mothering experiences.

Carol-Ann Yakiwchuk
alumna

... holds three interesting positions, and says that two are made possible by her AU degree. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor in Dental Hygiene Degree Program at the University of British Columbia, the Dental Hygiene Practice Consultant with the British Columbia Dental Hygienists Association (a new position) and an Instructor of Dental Hygiene at Vancouver Community College. Carol-Ann has also had several articles published several in the *Canadian Journal of Dental Hygiene*.

[← RETURN TO FRONT PAGE](#)