



Dear Colleagues,

Since the last Newsletter Update in early July 2024, much has happened within our Division of which we should be proud. You may have noticed some occasional Newsflashes; the intent is to drop you a quick “no-action-required” note about a newsworthy Divisional item. As such items arise, please email Carolyn at [ocmed.div@utoronto.ca](mailto:ocmed.div@utoronto.ca) and I’ll be sure to keep the team updated.

### Director’s Discussion



#### **DLSPH 5-year Academic Plan**

Thanks to those who responded to the email requesting your input. I consolidated everyone’s thoughts and prepared a 9-page group submission on behalf of the Division. If you are interested in reading it, please let me know. DLSPH has responded:

*Thank you very much to you and your team for taking the time to compile and share this submission. We’ve added it to the key inputs for consideration as the early draft starts to take shape. There will also be opportunities to review and provide feedback on this later this winter/spring.*

#### **Division Website and Electronic Presence**

- Newsletters can now be found on the website, should you wish to refer back to them: <https://deptmedicine.utoronto.ca/occupational-medicine-newsletter>
- Check out the News section especially if you haven’t seen the UofT Feature on **Dr. Sharef Danho**: <https://deptmedicine.utoronto.ca/news/why-dr-sharef-danho-chose-occupational-medicine-u-t>
- Guidelines and Professional Resources – feel free to provide suggestions for addition to this segment of the website, including links to other sites by emailing Carolyn. Such updates are quick and easy with the support of Nelson Lo in the Dept of Medicine.
- The Strategic Plan summary is now available on the Divisional website: <https://deptmedicine.utoronto.ca/occupational-medicine>
- The DoM has a LinkedIn page. Suggestions for expanding our Division social media presence to showcase the incredible work being done by our faculty (you!) and to enable networking are welcomed.

#### **Transition from Subspecialty to Specialty**

In August 2024, the Royal College issued a memo indicating that Council had formally approved a change in the category of discipline recognition for Occupational Medicine / Médecine du travail to a primary specialty from a subspecialty.

In accordance with the Policy on Discipline Status Change, the first step toward operationalization of this change involves the development of new national specialty-specific standards documents (Competencies, Pathway to Competence, Entrustable Professional Activities, Training Experiences, Standards of Accreditation), to align with the new category of primary specialty. Work on the revised standards documents for the newly configured discipline will be undertaken by the existing Specialty Committee in Occupational Medicine conjointly as Occupational Medicine transitions to Competence by Design (CBD) which is expected to begin in fall 2024.

It is expected that that the suite of national standards documents will be available around December 2026 with an anticipated launch of CBD effective July 2027. At that time applications for accreditation of training programs will open. Based on this timeline, it is expected that the first direct entry for Occupational Medicine as a primary specialty would be no earlier than July 2027.



Trainees currently in the existing subspecialty training route will be able to complete their training and subspecialty certification examination. It is expected that the last subspecialty examination will be in fall 2028, and the subspecialty training route will close at the end of the 2028-29 academic year.

Congratulations



**Conrad Tsang**

- Conrad received several awards recently including:
  - Research Presentation Award at The Richard K. Reznick Wilson Centre Research Day for his Project: The relational structure between medical and surgical specialties in Canada: quantitative network analysis with applications to curriculum development
  - Clinical Service Award from Vancouver Medical, Dental and Allied Staff Association (for previous service during the pandemic)
  - AMEE (International Association for Health Professions Education) 2024 Research Paper Award for the paper titled “Admissions interviews predicting clinical communication performance: a natural experiment of virtual vs. in-person admissions interviews”

**Nik Rajaram**

- Nik has received an MD Program Teaching Award of Excellence for the 2023-2024 academic year. The MD Program Teaching Award for Excellence was introduced in 2017 by medical students to recognize faculty, residents, graduate student teachers and clinicians in the MD Program that have attained exceptional Teaching Evaluation Scores in one or more of the teaching activities to which they have contributed.

**Hatem Alqahtani**

- Hatem Alqahtani passed his CBOM exam in Edmonton before the OEMAC conference

Welcome



**Dr. Marina Afanasyeva** is formally with us having been recently appointed to our division as a Clinical Adjunct Professor

**Dr. Shane Journey** has joined the Division of Occupational Medicine with secondary appointment; maintaining a primary appointment in the Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

**Dr. Qusay Almahmoud** (FMD, KSA) will be starting the 2-year fellowship training program in July

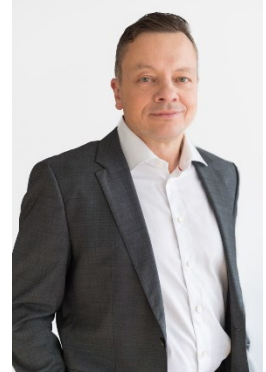


**Angela (Hong Tian) Dong**, who will be joining the Division as a resident in July 2025! Prior to residency, she graduated from the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine and Bachelor of Honours Health Sciences at McMaster University. Angela has a passion for bridging medicine with policy and innovation, a philosophy she hopes to bring to her career in Occupational Medicine. Currently she is in the PARO Leadership Program, sits on the CMA Ethics Committee, and has completed a diploma in University of Toronto's Global Health Education Initiative (GHEI) Program. Angela is actively involved in healthcare-AI and synthetic biology communities, and is a regular contributor of health-tech investigative journalism pieces for Healthy Debate. In her spare time, she enjoys sabre fencing, creative writing, and nerding out over musicals.



Faculty Feature – Dr. Michael Schweigert

In order to learn more about our team, I hope to feature one of our faculty members in each newsletter with brief snapshot. Let's get to know Mike a bit better. We asked him:



**Academic Questions:**

- What Divisional activities are you involved in? (eg what do you teach, what research, committees etc)? Why are these exciting to you?
- What other professional activities are you involved in?
- What's one thing that excites you about the future of the Division of OM at UofT? (ie not the SMH clinic but the academic Division)

**Nonacademic Questions**

- Tell us a bit about yourself
- How would you explain what you do/your area of research to someone who is not familiar with Occupational Medicine?
- What do you enjoy outside of medicine?
- Optional – feel free to add anything else you'd like us to know

***Here's what he told us:***

**Academic Contributions:**

I am involved with occupational medicine residents, occasionally leading first-year public health tutorial groups. Additionally, I am actively looking for residents or students to assist with learning projects. I love learning, and students and residents are the best source for up-to-date information!

In my professional practice, I work with law enforcement agencies, particularly in assessing fitness for duty. I also collaborate with other employers in the GTA and occasionally prepare WSIAT and other medicolegal reports.

The delivery of education has been challenged by the availability of online learning, accelerated further by the advent of large language models (LLMs). The future of learning is an open question, and I am excited to see the answers we uncover together as a division.

**Personal Insights:**

I enjoy teaching colleagues and leadership regarding medical and health issues as well as quality improvement efforts. Outside of my professional work, I dedicate time to solitary and group pastimes, including physical fitness, singing, and dancing. I am also an avid reader, setting time aside daily to explore topics unrelated to my profession. The last book I read was *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins.

My personal story includes overcoming a serious health challenge, which has given me a deeper appreciation for the struggles workers face in returning to work after illness or injury.

Occupational medicine focuses on the interaction between work and health. From my perspective, my role centers on supporting workers to remain healthy at work and assisting them in returning post-injury or illness.

**Additional Reflections:**

As a lifelong learner, I am intrigued by the evolving role of formal education amidst new learning technologies for professional development. This challenge is immense, and I expect that the evolution of learning will bring surprising outcomes for both university education and students who embrace the future.



Alumni

Younus Alyaarbi started a new position as a medical consultant with Abu Dhabi Police.

Member Activities

This is where we can highlight some of the great work our members are doing:

- **Joyce Zhang** is the incoming Chair of the OMA Section on OEM, which means **Marina Afanasyeva** will move to the Past-Chair position
- **Conrad Tsang** has been invited to join the Royal College exam committee
- **Joan Saary**
  - has been appointed Associate Professor at the DLSPH
  - has given several invited presentations on Aerospace Medicine in Canada:
    - FMWC: Federation of Medical Women of Canada panel with Jane Philpott and Andre Picard
    - UTMB: University of Texas Medical Branch with Tracy Smart / Australia
- **Nikhil Rajaram**
  - Is the public health theme co-lead for the U of T Undergraduate Medicine Program: <https://md.utoronto.ca/faculty/nikhil-rajaram>
  - Has been elected President of OEMAC for a term of 2 years.
- **Aaron Thompson**
  - Presented a talk at the IAIABC
    - Wins a “longest acronym award there: IAIABC = International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (an association of international workers’ compensation jurisdictional agencies)



Member Publications

Rhind SG, Shiu MY, Vartanian O, Allen S, Palmer M, Ramirez J, Gao F, Scott CJM, Homes MF, Gray G, Black SE, **Saary J**. Neurological Biomarker Profiles in Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Pilots and Aircrew. *Brain Sci.* 2024 Dec 23;14(12):1296. doi: 10.3390/brainsci14121296. PMID: PMC11674576.



**Afanasyeva, M.** Silicosis in Engineered Stone Countertop Workers. *Journal of Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association.* 43(2):29-33 (2024). Invited review article.

**Afanasyeva, M. and N. Rajaram.** Heatstroke and sweating. *BCMJ.* 66(7): 231 (Letters) (2024). short letter commenting on an earlier publication in the same journal.

Residency Program Director Update: from Dr. Vince Spilchuk

The residency training program had a successful CaRMS match in 2024, with **Dr. Angela Dong** (PGY3, GIM at U of T) being the selected candidate to start the 2-year residency training program in July. We also welcome **Dr. Qusay Almahmoud** (FMD, KSA), the selected candidate to start the 2-year fellowship training program in July. The first of several Royal College Competency By Design (CBD) workshops was held in November with more scheduled for the spring and fall of 2025, which will define training in our specialty when we transition to a 5-year specialty.



St. Michael’s Hospital Division Update: from Dr. Linn Holness

The Division continues its clinical and academic activities. From a clinical perspective, the new contract with the WSIB for the Occupational Disease Specialty Program has been finalized. A major event in 2024 was the introduction of EPIC, the new electronic patient record. EPIC went live on November 30th. Though there have been challenges along the way, we are starting to get familiar with the new system as we adjust a number of our clinic activities to accommodate the new system.

From an educational perspective, we continue to provide rotations for not only occupational medicine trainees, but also the dermatology trainees. In addition, some trainees from internal medicine and family and community medicine elect to spend time in the clinic. We also had a medical student as a summer research student who conducted a project related to WHMIS. As part of the Department of Medicine at the hospital, the medical staff participate in various teaching activities for the medical school more broadly such as OSCE examinations.

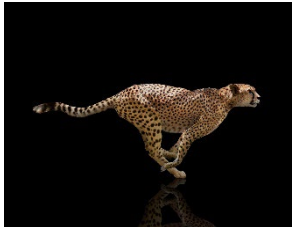
From a research perspective, the patch test database continues to add participants and is analysed on an annual basis. The HAVS database is currently being updated. In addition, a number of the staff and trainees have been working on a scoping review of occupational medicine education focused on undergraduate medicine and family medicine trainees.

DLSPH Occupational & Environmental Health Division Update: from Dr. Jeremy Scott

No update at this time

Action (might be) Required

**WebCV Transitioning to “Elements” - Update**  
*Sent on behalf of the MedIT Elements Team Dec 2024*



The transition from WebCV to Elements continues, however due to staffing and technical challenges, progress has been slow. To ensure faculty going through promotions have access to needed reports, MedIT and DoM leadership have opted to continue the use of WebCV until the reporting functions in Elements are ready.

The next promotions cohorts have been instructed to use WebCV until further notice. If you are not in a promotions cohort but still want to keep your CV updated, please continue to use WebCV until further notice. Please note that all data entry support for WebCV is currently limited to those in the promotions cycle.

Faculty are also welcome to login and explore their Elements profile. While there is a CV report currently available, please note it is not in the promotions format. The promotions-formatted CV and additional reports currently available in WebCV are in development with the Elements Team.

There are currently batch uploads of data from WebCV that are being added to the Teaching & Supervision module in Elements (this module is currently hidden on Elements for DoM faculty), and another batch upload planned for the Professional Activities module. This will reduce the amount of manual data entry required to curate profiles. There will be a gap between the batch uploaded data and any updates made to WebCV after Oct 31, 2024. The Elements Team will extract a final cut of WebCV data prior to its closure and use manual curation to move this missing data to Elements.



For those that submitted a CV for curation via the Elements CV consent webform, those CVs are currently being used to claim publications in Elements. Once the batch uploads for data from WebCV to Elements are completed, the Elements Team will shift focus back to individual curation, but no further submissions of CVs are needed at this time.

Work is also continuing on the development of Elements profile access for hospital-based support staff and accompanying training materials.

If you have any questions, please email [elements.med@utoronto.ca](mailto:elements.med@utoronto.ca) or refer to the Frequently Asked Questions document. You can Edit Your Profile here: <https://utoronto.elements.sy/>

Upcoming Events

The Division of Occupational Medicine and Ornge Air Ambulance co-leading this exciting symposium, which has CME credits. Please consider attending <https://care-in-the-air.ca/>



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Team Photos



Holiday Party Saturday Nov 30 – a good turnout with DeKovens' chili deemed the winner



OEMAC 2024 Edmonton



Annual Resident and Fellow Dinner

Food for Thought – What is Teamwork?



Together, we are Team OccMed!  
I am proud to showcase some of the great work you do that moves us forward.  
Enjoy the term!  
Joan

