

Osteoporosis Canada's  
Scientific Advisory Council

# SAC Link

## ASBMR Breakfast 2020

The ASBMR 2020 Annual Meeting will be a completely virtual event, taking place September 11-15. OC will therefore not be hosting a social event for the SAC this year. All OC SAC meetings regularly planned for ASBMR and for the rest of the year will happen virtually.

## CMC Update

CMC 2020 has been postponed until June 17, 18th 2021 due to COVID-19. The conference will be held at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, 123 Queen Street West in Toronto. A Young Investigator's day will be held on June 17th. Save June 17, 18th 2021 in your calendar and watch the SAC Link and your mailbox for further details.

## AGM BOD MEETINGS

The Osteoporosis Canada Annual General Meeting and Board of Directors Meeting scheduled for September 18 and 19, 2020 in Toronto will not take place in-person this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. As Osteoporosis Canada continues to monitor the impact of the evolving pandemic situation, the health and well-being of supporters, volunteers, donors, partners and staff remain its top priority.

Please continue to save the dates as Osteoporosis Canada will, where possible, use technology to convert these meetings into live webcasts to allow for the sharing of information with our stakeholders. Details will be confirmed as we get closer to the dates.

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## Patient Engagement Research Ambassador

Congratulations to Christine Thomas, Osteoporosis Canada Patient Advocate and Board of Director member, for being invited to join the Institute of Musculoskeletal Health & Arthritis's (IMHA) Patient Engagement Research Ambassador (PERA) team.

Through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the PERA team is an evolution of the IMHA original Research Ambassador group, started in 2003. This group consisted of members of the public who either lived with a condition that falls under CIHR – IMHA's research mandate such as osteoporosis or who were advocates for individuals living with those conditions, such as family or community members.

Congratulations Christine!

## COI Forms

The annual Conflict Of Interest form has recently been sent to your mailbox. All SAC members are required to complete annually. It should be returned to Kerry no later than August 14, 2020. If the COI form is not returned, we can only assume you wish to step down from the SAC.

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## SAC Committees

We are looking for volunteers for our research, development, guidelines, COPN and knowledge translation committees/subcommittees. A formal note will arrive in your mailbox shortly. If you have interest in joining a committee or would like more information, please contact Kerry at [KGrady@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:KGrady@osteoporosis.ca)

## Lindy Fraser Award Nominees

Osteoporosis Canada is inviting nominations for the 2020 Lindy Fraser Memorial Award from its SAC. This award recognizes individuals who have made an out-standing contribution to the field of osteoporosis research and education in Canada. The award named in her honour recognizes individuals who have done exemplary research, have helped to increase the knowledge about osteoporosis and is a member of the SAC. It is Osteoporosis Canada's most prestigious award – last year's winner was Dr. Rowena Ridout.

Please e-mail your nomination, with a brief letter highlighting why the nominee is worthy of this honour, to [kgrady@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:kgrady@osteoporosis.ca) by Aug. 14, 2020.

## ISCD Researcher of the Year

The International Society for Clinical Densitometry (ISCD) Researcher of the Year award for 2020 was recently presented to Dr. William D. Leslie, MD, FRCPC, MSc, CCD.

This award is given to an outstanding researcher for distinguished service to the field of densitometry in the areas of publication, education, or leadership. Awardees are nominated by their peers and colleagues in the field for their outstanding contributions to the field of densitometry.

Dr. Leslie is a Professor of Medicine and Radiology at the University of Manitoba with over 450 peer-reviewed publications. His research interests are in fracture risk assessment, osteoporosis testing, and other nuclear diagnostic techniques. He is Past President of the International Society for Clinical Densitometry, Past Chair of the Osteoporosis Canada Scientific Advisory Council, co-led the "2010 Clinical Practice Guidelines in Osteoporosis", Director of the Manitoba Bone Density Program, and Co-Director of the Winnipeg PET Imaging Centre. He is currently the co-chair of the Osteoporosis Canada's 2020 Clinical Practice Guidelines Steering Committee.

Congratulations Bill!

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## Rapid Response from Osteoporosis Canada Vitamin D and potential impact on the severity of COVID-19

By Aliya Khan MD, FRCPC, FACP, FACE, Rowena Ridout MD FRCPC, Heather Frame MD FCFP, Claudia Gagnon MD, Lianne Tile MD MEd FRCPC, Wendy Ward M.Sc., Ph.D., David A. Hanley, MD, FRCPC, Sandra Kim MD, FRCPC

Previously we have described the role of vitamin D in optimizing bone health and treatment strategies for osteoporosis. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of vitamin D on modulating the immune system are being reviewed.

Two recent studies have suggested that low levels of vitamin D may be associated with an increased risk of severe COVID-19 infections.

Ilie and colleagues from the UK noted that countries with low levels of vitamin D had a higher number of COVID cases, as well as the highest mortality rates from COVID (1)). Similarly, Daneshkhah and colleagues from Northwestern University(2) also found that severe COVID-19 infections appeared to be more common in countries where vitamin D deficiency is more common. We recognize that the number of cases of COVID identified in each country will clearly be affected by the number of tests completed, as well as preventive measures taken by the various countries which were not accounted for in these studies. In addition, linking an observation of low vitamin D levels in a population with an illness needs to be interpreted with caution due to the limitation of confounding factors. At this time it is not known if low vitamin D levels are causally associated with a higher number and severity of COVID infections. Keeping that caution in mind, the possible link between vitamin D deficiency and an impaired immune response to COVID-19 infections may have some support from earlier studies of vitamin D effects on the immune system.

Vitamin D deficiency reduces the ability of white cells to mature and to produce antigens necessary to prevent infections (3) Vitamin D may prevent macrophages from releasing excessive inflammatory cytokines and chemokines (4). Vitamin D may also enhance expression of ACE2 (Angiotensin converting enzyme 2), which has been associated with improved outcomes with COVID-19 infections (5, 6 )

These early observations may suggest that adequate vitamin D levels are of value in the immune response to infections such as from COVID-19. This would be of particular importance in patient populations vulnerable to low vitamin D levels. These include those who are obese, have malabsorption or short gut syndrome, long term anticonvulsant use as well as the elderly. However, further research is needed to determine if low vitamin D levels are causally associated with a higher number and severity of COVID-19 infections.

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While the relationship between vitamin D and COVID-19 is unclear, we know that vitamin D is critical for bone health. Osteoporosis Canada recommends that individuals with osteoporosis or with risk factors for fractures receive adequate vitamin D, as recommended at 800-2000 IU per day. This would also be important for those at higher risk of developing vitamin D deficiency. High dose vitamin D supplementation should be avoided due to potential harms.

#### References

1. Ilie et al Aging Clinical and Experimental Research May 6, 2020
2. Daneshkhah et al Northwestern University May 2020
3. Abu-Amer et al 1993 Cell Immunol 151: 356-368
4. Helming et al Blood 106: 4351-4358
5. Kuka et al 2006 Curr Opin Pharmacol 6: 271-276
6. Cui et al 2019 Redox Biol 26: 101295

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## OC National Volunteer Program Update

If you are aware of any activities or opportunities for OC Volunteers in your area, please contact the Community Engagement Coordinator or Manager. Contact information is below.

### Region 1- BC & Alberta

Liz Kehler [lkeher@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:lkeher@osteoporosis.ca)

### Region 2- Saskatchewan & Manitoba

Sandy Owczar [sowczar@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:sowczar@osteoporosis.ca)

### Region 3- Ontario

Cathy Pearcy [cpearcy@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:cpearcy@osteoporosis.ca)

### Region 4- Quebec, Region 5- Atlantic Canada, Region 6- Territories

TBD

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Now, more than ever, we need your help.



COVID-19 has made life challenging, but know that Osteoporosis Canada remains committed to supporting Canadians with osteoporosis.

**Without you, we cannot do what we do.  
Together, we will make Canadians unbreakable.**

**PLEASE DONATE**