

# THE MCGILL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN AGING (MCSA)

AUGUST 2020 – 11<sup>TH</sup> EDITION



# McGill



Keeping you updated on the latest news, events and research achievements!

The scientific achievements from last year were possible thanks to the active participation of our patients, their relatives and friends. Together, we advanced the clinical science towards new therapies for Alzheimer's Disease.

## MCSA IS CELEBRATING ITS 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!



### Past and Present Directors

Left to right: Dr. Judes Poirier, Dr. Jens Pruessner,  
Dr. Jacqueline McClaran, Dr. Serge Gauthier,  
Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto

The McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1985-2020) and we are inviting you to join us on Friday, November 13, 2020 to a virtual **celebration!**

Come and meet our past and present Directors and celebrate MCSA's accomplishments with us over the past 35 years. MCSA has achieved international recognition as a site of important research and clinical achievements and continues to attract global and scientific collaboration for the community we serve. We would like to celebrate such achievements by having special keynote speakers, followed by a summarization of notable highlights from each Directors' term.

To register, please click on the following link (<http://CMEV.eventbrite.com>).

## TRIAD COHORT – COVID QUESTIONNAIRE



Canada, like many other countries has been highly affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Measures taken to slow down the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable include social distancing and isolation. Although these measures prove to be effective, the impact of isolation and distancing on the population can be concerning.

The elderly are considered to be the most vulnerable to social isolation as social gathering and interactions are encouraged among this population as a dementia prevention strategy. Following the news of COVID-19 and its devastating effects in senior's residences and the greater population alike, Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto, Neurologist and Director of the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging, lead his research

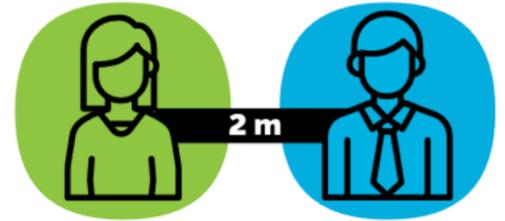
team in an investigation into how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the elderly and vulnerable populations.

The hope is to aid health care professionals in understanding the impact of global pandemics on aging populations and what can be done to lend a hand as well as offer emotional support to our MCSA patients and research participants. In an effort to stand by them, questionnaires were carefully formulated by a team lead by Dr. Rosa-Neto, Dr. Gauthier and Dr. King in order to understand all factors at play.

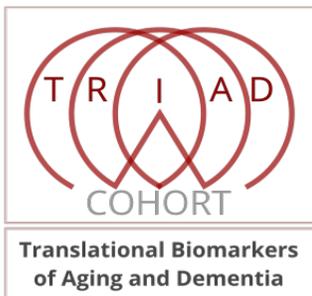
The questionnaire had 2 parts, one conducted with our research participants and the second part with the participant's informant. Each answered several general questions about the pandemic and their knowledge of what is happening

along with their feelings about it. Other kinds of data were also gathered such as information about nutrition, sleep, physical activity, social support, anxiety, depression, among many others. During a 3-month period, 490 questionnaires were completed by our dedicated research staff.

The goal of this study is to investigate the behavioural and psychological effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic and social isolation on the aging population and dementia patients. With this information, we hope to make strides in finding ways to help those affected the most by this global pandemic, to better understand how this population is currently impacted by the crisis and to be better prepared in the event we face similar situations in the future. The interaction with our participants after several months of isolation had a positive effect on them and our research staff alike. The second phase of follow-up phone calls are set to take place in the coming weeks.



## WHAT IS THE TRIAD COHORT?



**TRIAD** means Translational Imaging in Aging and Dementia. This is a study developed at the MCSA, to identify the causes of Alzheimer's Disease. TRIAD participants are asked to perform cognitive tasks and brain scans every two years. We aim to discover why some people develop abnormal proteins that causes brain diseases. Results from the TRIAD study already helps scientists to develop better clinical trials to cure Alzheimer's Disease. For more information and to participate, call our research information Centre: 514-761-6131 ext. 6321. For research participants and sponsors that are interested in donating to the TRIAD Cohort Research Study, please contact Alexandra Triantafillopoulos at T:514-761-6131 x 6311 or email [alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca](mailto:alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca)

## DID YOU KNOW THAT 2/3 OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE CASES ARE WOMEN?

Dr. Natasha Rajah, CIHR Sex & Gender Chair in Neuroscience and Professor at McGill University, is conducting a brain imaging study in collaboration with Drs. Pedro Rosa-Neto and Serge Gauthier, of the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging, to understand: *why women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, than men?*



This project focuses on middle-aged adults, 40-65yrs, and investigates how biological sex, menopausal status, and genetic risk factors for Alzheimer's disease influence brain activity, brain structure and memory.

If you are a middle-aged woman or man and in general good health – we need your help! By volunteering your time, you can help us make important discoveries to improve future precision medicine aimed at treating or preventing Alzheimer's disease in women and men!

### PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT INVOLVES:

- Filling out an online questionnaire
- A 3-hour visit for behavioural testing and to give a blood sample to study how certain genes and hormone levels affect memory and brain function.
- A 2-hour MRI scanning session.

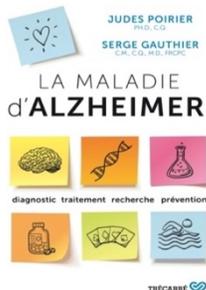
### INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Age: 40 to 65 years old,
- Education: High School (completed),
- **NO** history of Stroke, Severe Mental Illness or Diabetes

### TO PARTICIPATE

- Email: [memoryandaging@douglas.mcgill.ca](mailto:memoryandaging@douglas.mcgill.ca)
- Call us at 514-761-6131 ext. 2877

## LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER: DIAGNOSTIC, TRAITEMENT, RECHERCHE, PRÉVENTION - BY DR. JUDES POIRIER & DR. SERGE GAUTHIER



The second edition of "Alzheimer's Disease: A Complete Guide" written by two former directors of the McGill University Research Center for Studies in Aging (Dr. Judes Poirier and Dr. Serge Gauthier) increases our knowledge of the diagnosis and treatment of people with dementia caused by Alzheimer's disease. It brings some hope towards a preventive approach for those at risk, and several practical tips through the seven stages of the disease.

## BRAINY BOOMER LECTURE SERIES AND EXERCISE PROGRAM

This year marks MCSA's Education Committee's 14th annual Brainy Boomer Lecture Series! MCSA is overwhelmed with the positive feedback received from the virtual Brainy Boomer Lecture Series and Exercise Program. Over 240 participants joined us for our Tuesday Lecture Series or Thursday Exercise Classes beginning in the month of July. The popularity of the lectures increased with each event, and our new Senior exercise program was a hit among those who participated! While MCSA is located in Montreal, the Brainy Boomer Lecture Series had participants from across Canada, and even a few from the United States!

The lectures ranged from topics like ambiguous grief to understanding telemedicine in today's world. Participants were able to join the 45-minute informative lectures and ask any pressing questions that they had to our experts.



Aging in a Changing World –  
Dr. Dolly Dastoor, PhD



Giuliana Guerriero (part-owner of GSC Athletics - <https://gscathletics.ca/>) shared her expertise in fitness training with our senior participants by keeping them motivated and active during the pandemic! Each week Giuliana held different exercise classes that would target different parts of the body to optimize the exercise experience for our seniors!

We would like to thank all of our guest speakers for providing the most enlightening lectures for our participants and for giving them the opportunity to exercise weekly during these trying times.



MCSA is happy to announce that the Brainy Boomers Lecture Series is continuing to host virtual lectures! We heard your suggestions and we are in the process of scheduling new lectures that you have asked for! To register for all of our upcoming events, please visit our Eventbrite page (<http://CMEV.eventbrite.com>). If you have any questions, please email [brainy.boomer-mcsa@mcgill.ca](mailto:brainy.boomer-mcsa@mcgill.ca)

*"I LOVE the exercise classes"*

*"Good work - well worth it for the world we live in."*

*"Good... it was nice to stumble about with other old folks"*

*"Very well done -- content and execution"*

*"This class is so good for me... THANK YOU!!"*

*"Excellent. I appreciate the presenter's expertise!"*

## NEW MCSA YOUTUBE CHANNEL



In case you missed out on one of our excellent events, don't worry about it! MCSA has created a new YouTube channel so it is easier for you to watch or re-watch one of our recorded lectures or exercise classes. To watch the videos, visit our channel at

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9q0DRFcb6cgJRskdwwKD1Q?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9q0DRFcb6cgJRskdwwKD1Q?view_as=subscriber)

**FEATURED ASSOCIATE RESEARCH MEMBER –  
DR. JUDES POIRIER, PH.D., C.Q. MD (HON).**



Born in Montreal, Dr. Judes Poirier is full professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at McGill University, Director of the Centre for Studies in the Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease and associate member at the department of neurology and at the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging based at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute in Montreal, Canada.

Dr. Poirier has made some fundamental contributions to the advancement of scientific research for both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. He is internationally renowned for his work on the role of apolipoprotein E and related proteins in the injured brain and, in the genetics of Alzheimer's disease. Beside his seminal contribution in the field of brain plasticity and apolipoprotein E, he has been a pioneer in the establishment of the pharmacogenomic bases of novel treatments for common neurological diseases. Dr. Poirier is also the co-founder of two Montreal-based biotechnology corporations [Nova Molecular Inc. (1996-2000) and more recently Spectral Neuroscience Inc. (2004-2013)] which have been involved in the development and commercialisation of pharmacogenomic services and gene-targeted therapies for biotech and pharmaceutical corporations.

His recent research focused on the understanding of fundamental mechanisms regulating pathology onset in cognitively normal subjects with a parental history of Alzheimer's disease. His team discovered three new genes these past 5 years directly associated risk and/or protection against Alzheimer, two of which regulate that onset of the so-called Tau protein pathology in the brain of "at-risk" subjects. He has also identified novel biomarkers for the disease pathology, many of which are showing alterations in the years or decade preceding disease onset. In a completely different field of research, Dr. Poirier has recently teamed up with the famous MIRA Foundation to develop a new type of service dog designed to help people with the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. The goal of this exciting new research program is to determine if, as it was shown for autism spectrum disorder, the companion dog can alleviate stress and anxiety, improves quality of sleep, slow down the loss of cognitive functions, provides daily exercise and facilitate socialisation. Early results are so far quite promising.

**FEATURED ASSOCIATE RESEARCH MEMBER - DR. MICHAEL WISEMAN, DDS**



Dr. Michael Wiseman is an Associate Professor, McGill University Faculty of Dentistry. He has lectured nationally and internationally to dental conventions on geriatric dentistry and medicine. He was a founder of the McGill Outreach Program which provides free dental care to Montreal's disadvantaged community. His past research involves studies evaluating oral care in functionally dependent dementia patients, salivary flow in Parkinson's Disease, and is currently evaluating the oral status of psychiatric patients. As an Associate Professor at McGill University, Dr. Wiseman instructs dental students on the proper care of involved in geriatric dentistry. He has a private practice in Cote St. Luc and is on staff at a variety of Montreal hospitals. For the past 20 years, Dr. Wiseman has been a key member in organizing MCSA's outreach

program with the Education Committee. He is the father of three wonderful children and celebrates over 30 years of marriage to his wife Belaine.

**COMING SOON - NEW FREE ONLINE COGNITIVE TRAINING**

The Translational Neuroimaging Lab, directed by Dr. Rosa-Neto, is launching an online platform that will provide free online cognitive training. More details soon to come in our November Newsletter.

## NEW STAFF & STUDENTS

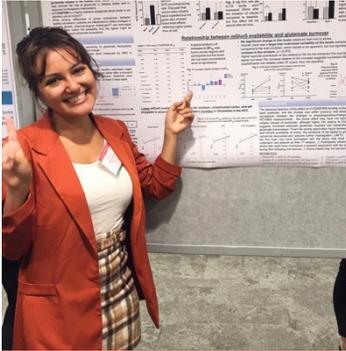
### **Kaitlyn Butt, B.A., Social Media Administrator**

I began working with the MCSA team this past June, and as a recent McGill University Graduate, I could not be more excited for the opportunity to work with such a talented group of people. I obtained my Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Studies and have a double minor in Communication Studies and Indigenous studies. I'm very excited to have the opportunity to put my education to use, and to continue to learn alongside such a fantastic team. I have been hired as a Social Media Administrator, which entails increasing MCSA's online presence through Social Media. For the three months that I have worked with Dr. Rosa-Neto's team, they have been incredibly supportive and helpful! I'm very excited to continue working with MCSA.



### **Maria Sato-Fitoussi, M.Sc**

I am originally from Japan and I have recently completed a Master's degree in Neurosciences from McGill University during which I received training from the MCSA team. It is with great joy that I officially joined the MCSA team this summer, where I helped with the administration and data input of questionnaires assessing the cognitive impact of COVID-19 on participants.



## FAREWELL MCSA STAFF

### **Veronica Li**

This past year working at MCSA has been an incredible learning experience. After studying neuroscience during my bachelor's degree at McGill, I was lucky enough to be able to further my knowledge in this field working as a research assistant at MCSA. This experience helped me grow as a person, becoming more empathetic to different situations and understanding more the urgency and need of research in dementia. Additionally, I was blessed to work with an amazing team at Crossroads! Everyone was incredibly kind; we were always ready to help each other out.



### **Ellie Joung**

I started working at MCSA in 2018 as a research assistant responsible for our regulatory affairs. I was very fortunate to be a part of the dedicated and competent team in the field of Alzheimer's Disease. I'm moving onto a new journey to start my Master's at University of Toronto in Epidemiology. All the best to the team and our amazing participants.



### **Melissa Savard**

I had a great time working at MCSA for over two years as a research coordinator. I learned a lot from Dr. Rosa-Neto and colleagues who also guided me through the writing of two scientific papers. It was a real pleasure getting to know every student and staff. MCSA is a very special place, filled with empathy, caring and collaboration and I miss all of you very much!



## MCSA'S VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION IN ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (AAIC) 2020

MCSA research members took part in the most prestigious international conference on dementia research this past July. For the first time ever, AAIC hosted the conference on a virtual platform with more than 50 live sessions and 32,000 participants from across the globe! A number of the research staff took part in this conference by having a presentation and/or having their posters published on the AAIC website.

### **Presentation:**

Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto, MD, PhD  
Dr. Andrea Lessa Benedet, PhD  
Joseph Therriault  
Tina Yi-Ting Wang

### **Posters:**

Peter Kang  
Julie Ottoy  
Jaime Fernandez Arias  
Cécile Tissot

Nina Margherita Poltronetti  
Jenna Stevenson  
Peter Kunach  
Alyssa Stevenson

## DONATIONS: WHY THEY ARE SO IMPORTANT



Due to COVID-19 social distancing, our fundraising activities are being severely reduced. While the impact of the pandemic has undoubtedly brought new challenges to many of you, your resilience motivates us to work harder in realizing the Centre's mission. As committed donors, you have also played a central role in the continued success of the Centre's medical research and services offered to the community. Thank you for your sustained support during a pandemic that has severely limited our fundraising capacities and community outreach activities as we continue to work and serve you remotely.

Your support is also crucial for advancing our mandate towards (1) prevention, (2) aging research, and (3) education of patients, caregivers and students. We thank all of our Donors for their encouragement and confidence in our work which contributes to the highest levels of research, education, and teaching in the field of aging. We are happy to accept any donations that will support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation by mail, phone or email, please contact Alexandra Triantafillopoulos at 514- 761-6131 X 6311 or by email: [alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca](mailto:alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca) or [silvana.aguzzi@mcgill.ca](mailto:silvana.aguzzi@mcgill.ca).

### **Website:**

[www.aging.mcgill.ca](http://www.aging.mcgill.ca)  
[tnl.research.mcgill.ca](http://tnl.research.mcgill.ca)  
<http://alzheimer.mcgill.ca>

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