

Baycrest Matters

A bi-weekly update for Baycrest staff, families and clients

JULY 29, 2009 VOLUME 5, NO 15

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Baycrest Matters
is published 26 times
a year.

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Baycrest is fully
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University of Toronto.

Can common infections trigger Alzheimer's disease?

New research from Baycrest's Kunitz-Lunenfeld Applied Research Unit (KLARU) is looking at whether certain types of infections or viruses may trigger Alzheimer's disease later in life. The findings were recently published by Kie Honjo, Robert van Reekum (former KLARU researcher) and **Paul Verhoeff**.

Much is still unknown when it comes to Alzheimer's disease. One thing we do know is that it is the leading cause of dementia in developing countries.

According to senior author Dr. Verhoeff, clinician-scientist at Baycrest's Kunitz-Lunenfeld Applied Research Unit (KLARU) and staff psychiatrist at Baycrest's Brain Health Centre, "The cause of Alzheimer's is probably multi-faceted. We are

looking at several factors, which when combined, may put someone at higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. What we have found is that certain viruses exist in the brains of people with Alzheimer's. Research teams are therefore looking a little closer at this."

One infection that scientists are looking at is herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) - which is the virus behind cold sores. This infection is usually latent but certain triggers may cause it to reactivate sporadically. In the last two decades many scientists have found the HSV-1 genome in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's as well as in normal elderly patients.

"What is interesting about this finding is that the virus only affected a very small number of young people's brains, indicating that perhaps

the virus can enter the brain when an individual becomes older," explains Dr. Verhoeff. "Perhaps this is because of a decline in the immune system."

"Keep in mind that HSV-1 may be a risk factor for developing Alzheimer's but HSV-1 alone does not cause Alzheimer's disease directly," emphasizes Dr. Verhoeff. "Although it is not an independent risk factor, it might be a part of what causes Alzheimer's by inducing inflammation in those areas of the brain that are vulnerable to Alzheimer's, when it combines with other risk factors."

Another infection that scientists are looking at is Chlamydia pneumoniae (C. pneumoniae) which causes acute respiratory infection and is associated with coronary artery disease and an increased risk of ischemic

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Baycrest

Enriching Care
Enhancing Knowledge
Enlightening Minds

Can common infections...continued from page 1

stroke. One study showed the presence of these bacteria in 89% of brains of people with Alzheimer's disease, while 95% of non-Alzheimer's patients were negative of the bacteria.

Although various infections can affect the human brain, we know that aging increases the risk of infection as well as the incidence of Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease may arise in the elderly in part because of increased rates of infection or perhaps older adult brains react pathologically to infections.

"More research is clearly required," says Dr. Verhoeff. "However the evidence provides hints about how some infections may precipitate or accelerate Alzheimer's.

"The main findings indicate that no specific infectious agents cause Alzheimer's directly, although a combination of infection with genetic background or some other risk factors may contribute to it. Therefore the timely treatment of infections may become an important part of Alzheimer's prevention and therapy." [BM](#)

Building engineers train to handle chemical spills

Handling a chemical spill at Baycrest might seem like a scary job but not for this group of Baycrest building engineers, seen here at their routine chemical spill response training session. Participants learn about spill identification, how to safely handle the material, containment and proper disposal. Although Baycrest has created a safer environment by eliminating the use of many chemicals, effectively controlling chemical spills remains an important response requirement by the building engineers who are on site 24/7. From left to right are: Alex Bulanov, Fred Calma, Jack Grexton, Tom Elson, Andrew Stasiewski, Eddie Austria, Ivy Schaufler, Sunny Chau, Robert Marcinkiewicz and Doug Groff (trainer).



Summer Picnic

Apotex 4 resident Irving Goodman enjoys a refreshing slice of watermelon during the Apotex 4 bi-annual picnic. The event was organized by nursing staff who put together money to purchase fruit and drinks, and kept 36 residents entertained with lively music and great conversation.

Upon the Doorposts

The Significance of the Mezuzah

A new exhibit at Baycrest of hand-crafted mezuzot (pleural, mezuzah) - created by the Pomegranate Guild of Jewish Textiles - honours one of the most significant symbols of a Jewish household. This exhibit is displayed at the Apotex entrance in the Winter Garden opposite the Apotex elevators.

A mezuzah is a piece of rolled parchment inscribed with specific verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21) placed in a small tubular case, which is posted on the right side of the doorframe in the entry to a Jewish home. These verses comprise the Jewish prayer "Shema Israel," which begins with the phrase: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One."

The parchment is the most important part of the mezuzah, and is meticulously hand scripted by a scribe on 22 lines, using a special ink and a feather quill according to very strict



This unusual nature-inspired mezuzah features monarch butterflies



A variety of mezuzot hand-crafted by the Pomegranate Guild of Jewish Textiles are on display.

rules. Over the years, the production of mezuzah cases has been elevated to an art form. Mezuzot are produced from an endless variety of materials, from precious metals, to wood, stone, ceramics and fabric, and can be very simple in design to very ornate.

Jewish people have observed the commandment of placing mezuzot upon their doorposts for over three thousand years. "When we fulfill this commandment today we form an unbroken thread which binds us to our ancestors as well as to all future generations. The mezuzah represents a constant reminder to the Jewish people of their obligations to love G-d, and to observe the commandments every time they enter a home or leave it to go out into the world," says the Pomegranate Guild. Since 1982, the Guild has brought together people who are interested in studying and creating textile art and needlework based on Judaic themes. Its members include quilters, weavers, beaders, knitters, embroiderers and fabric artists of all ages and skill levels.

The relationship between Baycrest and the members of the Pomegranate

Guild goes back many years. The first Pomegranate Guild exhibit was held at Baycrest in the early 1980s. Over the years, many of the group's projects have been donated to Baycrest.

"Threads of Identity," an exhibit of textiles employing various techniques such as embroidery, beading, needlework, papier maché and weaving was on display at the Morris and Sally Justein Heritage Museum in the summer of 2007. Many members of the Pomegranate Guild are also on the museum committee at Baycrest.

Through its talented members and colourful creations that blend Judaic arts and culture, the Pomegranate Guild has helped to enrich the Baycrest environment," says **Bianca Stern**, director, Culture and Heritage. "We are proud to display the mezuzot, but we are also very pleased that this group continues to support Baycrest's Jewish heritage and look forward to working with them well into the future." **BM**

Important information for members of the Baycrest Employee Group Benefits Plan Change to new benefits carrier

Baycrest will switch to new benefits carriers after an extensive review of the Baycrest Employee Group Benefits Plan.

Benefits will be consolidated under SSQ Financial Group for life, travel and disability insurance and Coughlin and Associates Ltd for health and dental insurance, which results in significant savings for Baycrest and its employees in the form of lower premiums. These specialized firms provides Baycrest access to an expert team of benefits specialists to ensure that benefits are administrated accurately, in a timely way and in keeping with best practices in the field.

New Benefits Carrier Information Sessions

A Coughlin and Associates Ltd representative will be at Baycrest to provide additional information answer any questions. Please feel free to attend either session. For those who cannot attend, the session will be taped and posted on the intranet at Baycrest@Work.

Date: Thursday, July 30

Location: Classrooms

Time: 10:00 a.m. OR 3:00 p.m.

For more information or for a copy of Frequently Asked Questions on this change, please contact Human Resources, at ext. 2961 or go to Baycrest@Work.

Baycrest presents
the 9th Annual Kunin-Lunenfeld
Applied Research Unit (KLARU)
Conference

Aging at Home: Connecting Research and Clinical Care

Friday, October 30, 2009

The Holiday Inn Yorkdale
- 3450 Dufferin Street, Toronto

For information, please visit
our website
www.klaru-baycrest.on.ca
and click on the conference link.

Baycrest Staff Fees:
on or before Oct. 1, \$125
and after Oct. 1, \$150.

**Inquiries - Paula Ferreira at ext.
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Blast from the past!

This photo of this beautiful lady, who used to model, was taken nearly six decades ago. She has been a Baycrest volunteer for 28 years. Do you know who it is? If you guess correctly you can win a prize.

Send your guesses to **Joan Mortimer** at mortimerj@baycrest.org or call her at ext. 2952.

If there is more than one correct guess then a name will be drawn for the winner. If you would like to reveal what you once looked like (as an adorable baby, dressed in bell bottoms or a mini skirt, 30 pounds thinner or with hair), then dust off those old photos and send them to Joan.