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

**MCSA’S 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

The McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging (MCSA), previously known as the Centre for Studies in Aging, was created in 1985 with a mandate to promote research, education and teaching in the field of aging and aging research with a multidisciplinary approach. Over the years the Centre has acquired international recognition and today focuses its resources on a better understanding of healthy aging. The Centre originated in 1985 at the Montreal General Hospital, then moved to Chateau Westmount in 1989, then to St. Mary’s Hospital in 1991 and finally in 1995 to the Douglas Hospital.

The MCSA grew progressively over time with the recruitment of young researchers who have been extremely successful in their academic career, including Drs Judes Poirier, Josephine Nalbantoglu, and Michel Panisset. After relocating three times, the MCSA found its home on the grounds of the Douglas Mental Health University Institute in 1995 where a red brick house built in the 1900s continues to offer warm and convivial environment to all visitors and staff. Research fellows from Asia, Europe and South America have been charmed by its location, particularly with the fall colors and the migrating birds. The MCSA has achieved an international reputation for the high quality of its research output, thanks to its dedicated graduate and post-doctoral students.

The Alzheimer’s Disease Research Unit was created to conduct randomized clinical trials ranging from phase 2 to phase 4 of drug development. The Unit helped in the validation of measures of clinical efficacy, including the Disability Assessment in Dementia, and in the methods of analysis of results from clinical trials such as reduction of emerging behaviors. Without the help of three formidable women, the Alzheimer Disease Research Unit would not be here today. These women demonstrated through their life and work their leadership, strength, and endurance. Donna Amyot, RN, Clinical Research Coordinator, began to work with Dr. Serge Gauthier at the Montreal General Hospital in 1985 for The Parkinson Study Group, clinical trial in 1989. Jean Hall, RN, then joined them when they moved to the Chateau Westmount in 1989 and Margaret De Chazal, RN, joined the team when they moved to St. Mary’s Hospital in 1991. They were the key employees who took care in providing and coordinating...
clinical care, where their main roles were in assuring participant safety, maintenance of informed consent, integrity of protocol implementation, accuracy of data collection and recording and appropriate follow ups. The Unit’s success is due to their diverse qualifications and strengths, skills as clinical nurses including critical thinking, problem solving and research knowledge. Congratulations for going beyond the “checklist activities” and for your hard work, dedication and in helping make the Unit what it is today!

In 2007, the Education Committee of the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging was established in order to suggest practical steps to improve and maintain brain health, as well as to promote healthy lifestyle choices amongst the most populous generation in history. This was an important development in the past 35 years because it allowed MCSA to interact and help our community by bringing them the most up to date information on health-related topics. This committee has organized nearly 300 events consisting of symposiums, fundraisers and lectures. A special thank you to every single member of the committee and our speakers throughout the years!

On Friday, November 13, 2020 the MCSA Education Committee organized a virtual celebration for the 35th Anniversary of the Centre. Over 70 participants attended the event to commemorate this special achievement. Past and previous Directors of the Centre presented short presentations on their contributions to the progress of the Centre during their tenure and former students spoke about how their time at MCSA impacted their lives and careers. We would like to thank everyone who presented on this day and who attended this very special celebration!

Conratulations Dr. Serge Gauthier!

On September 18, 2020, Dr. Serge Gauthier was elected into the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS). This honor recognizes the elected individuals for their leadership and commitment in their field of expertise. Dr. Gauthier has excelled in the field of Alzheimer disease by establishing the C5R, which has advanced Canada’s role in clinical trials, and being an instrumental leader in the Canadian Consensus Conferences on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia. MCSA would like to congratulate Dr. Gauthier, along with all of the other fellows, in achieving such a prestigious honor!

Full Article can be read here.
International collaboration: Our Centre’s involvement in DIAN

The MCSA has been actively contributing for over 4 years to the work of the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer Network (DIAN) which is based out of the University of Washington in St. Louis. This Network is comprised of clinicians and researchers who are dedicated to finding answers for families with early onset familial Alzheimer disease (EOFAD). This rare condition causes Alzheimer disease to present at much younger than usual ages, from the 30s to the 60s. EOFAD causes many members of a family, across the generations, to be affected. It is hoped, however, that studying families with this condition will lead to a better understanding of how both early and late onset Alzheimer disease occur and what treatment or prevention may be effective.

Some of the ongoing projects within this network include the DIAN Expanded Registry (DIAN EXR) which is a registry of persons from across the world who either have personal family histories of early onset familial Alzheimer disease (EOFAD) or who work with families with EOFAD. Individuals and families who participate in this registry have access to valuable resources including regular newsletters, family conferences, educational webinars and access to genetic testing, as well as have opportunities to learn about current research and clinical trials.

The DIAN observational study enrolls family members who have parents with EOFAD in order to observe what changes may occur in this condition in the brain or in various molecules found in the body. It is hoped that insights gained by this study could lead to a better understanding of how this condition progresses and may eventually contribute to identifying possible paths to preventing or treating EOFAD.

Some MCSA families have already participated in an initial DIAN clinical trial which compared two medications aimed at preventing the brain changes that occur in EOFAD. While these study results did not show a cognitive benefit in participants, one of the drugs did show that there may be an improvement in signs of disease activity and progression. Further studies with this medication are ongoing and new trials with other medications are upcoming. It is hoped the brain impairment occurring in EOFAD may be able to be slowed or stopped with certain medications and these clinical trial studies could lead to preventative treatment for both early and late onset Alzheimer disease.

Our team at the MCSA provides information, evaluations and care for families with this rare condition. Participation with international groups such as DIAN is a key part of the research that is moving our knowledge about Alzheimer disease forward!

DEMENTIA ACTIVITY BOOKLET

Four occupational therapy students in the Health Innovator Student Incubator Engines clinical course (Nicole Drinkwater, Emma Vadot, Madde MacDougall and Chrissy MacDonald) created an activity booklet for caregivers and their loved ones with dementia. This booklet has over 40 recreational activities that are meant to encourage creativity and add to the individual’s quality of life. For more information about the booklet and authors, visit this website!

Congratulations to Nicole, Emma, Madde, Chrissy and their supervisor Marie-Eve Bolduc for creating this helpful tool!
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. A over 40 events have been scheduled since the month of June and we are continuing into the new year! The global pandemic caused us to move our annual Health Day online this year. For three Friday’s during the month of September, speakers gave presentations to our participants on important health related topics. These events replaced our annual Health Day that occurs every September at the Centre. 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

"I LOVE the exercise classes"

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

"Very helpful and encouraging"

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

Dr. Danilo Bzdok, PhD, MD - Perceived Social Isolation and Its Impact on the Human Social Brain

Dr. Loraine Mazzella-Maiolo hails from the Bronx, New York and earned her medical degree from L'Universita degli Studi di Firenze, Italy. She did her rotating internship at Centre Hospitalier Universite de Sherbrooke and her residency in Family Medicine at McGill University, Montreal General Hospital. During her residency she made her first contacts with the MCSA, thanks in particular to the influence of a founding member, Dr Jacqueline McLaren, who pioneered a vision of geriatric care where the family physician played a vital role.

This exposure led Dr Mazzella to a long interest in Geriatrics. She worked for 15 years in the department of Geriatrics MGH doing Home Geriatric Assessments. For the past 35 years she practices family medicine in her private office and long-term care medicine at the Julius Richardson-Centre Henri Bradet. There she taught medical students as Assistant Professor McGill University. She also works in long term care at Resource Intermediaire Claudette Barre.

She sits, enthusiastically, on the MCSA Education Committee as medical advisor for the past 14 years. Dr Mazzella continues her passion for public outreach through lectures, frequent speaking engagements to community organisations, TV and radio including a regular call-in medical program ‘PRONTO SALUTE’ on satellite radio. Dr Mazzella is active in organizing Continued Medical Education Conferences and Symposia both local and internationally. She finds her medical work rewarding, as she balances her career with the enjoyment of family life.
Dr Paolo Vitali is a Faculty Lecturer at McGill University Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, Faculty of Medicine. He is a board-certified neurologist (FRCPC) and registered neuropsychologist (Ordre des psychologues du Québec). He is staff neurologist at the CIUSSS Nord-de-l’Île-de-Montréal and associate neurologist at McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging.

Dr Vitali obtained a PhD in Biomedical Sciences (Neuropsychology) from Université de Montréal in 2007. After obtaining his MD degree from Université Laval in 2010, he completed a residency program in Neurology at Université de Montréal (2015). He also completed a research fellowship at the Memory and Aging Center (UCSF-San Francisco). His clinical and research focus is on acquired language disorders (aphasia) due to neurodegenerative diseases.

In 2016, he joined the MCSA and the Alzheimer’s Disease Research Unit as an associate neurologist to conduct clinical, educational, and research activities in atypical dementia patients, especially those presenting with language disorders (Primary Progressive Aphasia, PPA). As a behavioral neurologist with expertise in language disorders, he set up a specialized clinic at the MCSA aiming to better characterize atypical dementia and PPA patients neurologically, neuropsychologically and by using CSF and brain imaging biomarkers. He also established multidisciplinary collaborations with investigators in the field of language disorders and has ongoing research collaborations with the Montreal Heart Institute as well in order to investigate the combined effect of cognitive training and physical exercise on cognition and cerebral vasoreactivity in patients with vascular risk factors or heart failure. He has also a role as neuropsychology supervisor of clinical internship to neuropsychology PhD and DPsy students. His internship proposal at the MCSA combining unique neurological, neuropsychological, and biomarkers expertise in a specialized memory clinic is highly demanded and candidate selection very selective.

In 2017 he joined the MCSA Education Committee, a multidisciplinary panel of health professionals involved in knowledge transfer regarding healthy and pathological aging to the general elderly population. More recently, he has been appointed as a member on the executive board of the Quebec Alzheimer Congresses and in the next future, he will take the lead of the Quebec Memory Clinic Network.

COMING SOON - NEW FREE ONLINE COGNITIVE TRAINING

The Translational Neuroimaging Lab, directed by Dr. Rosa-Neto, launched an online platform S.N.A.P. (Screening of Neurobehavioral Abnormalities in the aging Population). S.N.A.P. provides a free online cognitive training and encompasses a more comprehensive approach towards the study of variables associated with neurodegeneration in the older population. As an example, S.N.A.P. implements ambulatory monitoring of psychophysiological parameters, which is most pertinent to the current COVID-19 situation. The project is a renewed version of the previous P.O.N.D.E.R. project, which featured free online cognitive games with the idea of strengthening the cognitive reserve. We have completely renovated the website and added a comprehensive survey that collects information related to lifestyle, medical history or sleep, to name a few.

The website is currently available for participants! To play the free cognitive training games, click on the following link https://snap.research.mcgill.ca/users/login. The program is still a work in process, resulting in possible changes being made in the future. If you have any questions, please contact snap.mcgill@gmail.com

MCGILL UNIVERSITY VIRTUAL HEALTH FAIR

MCSA was invited to present S.N.A.P at the McGill University 10th Annual Virtual Health Fair which took place on October 29th. The fair was offered to employees and students to learn more about health and wellness where a preliminary version of S.N.A.P. was introduced and elaborated via group and individual information sessions. S.N.A.P. team presenters and organizers included Jaime Fernandez Arias, Mira Chamoun, Dima Romanov and Alexandra Triantafillopoulos
NEW STAFF & STUDENTS

Vanessa Pallen, B.A
I earned my Bachelor of Arts majoring in Psychology from Concordia University in December of 2018. I have recently returned from my year-long trip to Australia and am lucky to have received such a wonderful opportunity to work alongside the girls at crossroads as a research assistant/psychometrician. I look forward to furthering my studies in neuroscience as I continue to learn about Alzheimer’s Disease. Thank you MCSA!

Parissa Fereydouni-Forouzandeh, B.Sc.
I joined Dr. Rosa-Neto’s research team as a research assistant in September 2020. My responsibilities currently include escorting participants in and out of the PET and MRI units at the Montreal Neuropsychological Institute, handling scan schedule changes, regularly updating scan spreadsheets, confirming participants’ scan appointments, preparing their files before various visits, and archiving.

FAREWELL MCSA STAFF

Maria Polcaro, R.N.
I began at the MCSA in 2014 as a Research Nurse, thereafter, took on the role of Clinical Research Study Coordinator, taking on more responsibilities. With hard work, passion, and leadership our team took care of providing optimal care, assuring our patients/participants safety and well-being from the start of the clinical trial to its completion. I have had the opportunity and privilege to work with such a diverse and knowledgeable group of people. I have forged many new acquaintances and friendships while working at the MCSA. What I have acquired by working at the MCSA is immeasurable! I will be forever grateful. I like to wish Dr. Gauthier, Dr. Rosa-Neto and the entire team continued success in the search for new frontiers in the study of Alzheimer’s Disease.

Carley Mayhew, RN
I started working at the MCSA at the beginning of 2018. I worked as a Research Nurse at Crossroads and I also saw patients in the clinic at the MCSA with Dr. Rosa Neto. I had the great opportunity to work alongside Dr. Gauthier in the clinical trials as well. During my time I learned so many things and have grown as a professional. I am forever grateful for having the opportunity to work at the MCSA, working alongside many great people, and of course, having the opportunity to connect with all the amazing patients and participants. I wish all the best to the wonderful team and our amazing patients/participants. I will miss you all very much.

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/UC9g0DRFcb6cqJRskdwwKD1Q?view_as=subscriber.

Subscribe to our channel today!
COVID-19 AND CLINICAL TRIALS AT THE MCSA

Clinical trials for Alzheimer’s Disease have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most trials are on hold due to the inability to have dosing and in-person clinic visits. This will affect nearly 94 new therapies in clinical trials today. Most of the therapies target brain amyloid including Roche’s gantenerumab, Biogen’s aducanumab, and Eisai’s BAN-2401, and six preventive therapies including Eli Lilly’s donanemab and Alzheon’s ALZ-801.

Dr. Serge Gauthier, the Alzheimer’s Disease Research Unit Director, and Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto, Director of the McGill University Research Centre for Studies, believe that remote technologies for assessing patients in clinical trials seem to be a reasonable alternative for the continuation of data collection. The disruption of important clinical research by the COVID-19 pandemic is linked also to the particular vulnerability of the older adults; the most targeted subjects by COVID-19. At MCSA, four clinical trials (DIAN, BUENA, Avanir and Cassada) are currently on hold and plan on restarting recruitment as soon as possible. Our team will answer all questions on the above studies in regards to clinical trials and if you are interested in obtaining more information and/or participating in one of our clinical trials please do not hesitate to contact Tamar Tatigian at 514-761-6131 x6314 or email: info.mcsa@mcgill.ca.

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 x6311 or email alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca

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 Triantafilopoulos at 514-761-6131 X 6311 or by email: alexandra.triantafillopoulos1@mcgill.ca or silvana.aguzzi@mcgill.ca.

Website: www.aging.mcgill.ca
tnl.research.mcgill.ca
http://alzheimer.mcgill.ca

Contact: (T): 514-766-2010
(F): 514-888-4050

Email: info.mcsa@mcgill.ca
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED MAKE THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY SO SPECIAL!

Speakers:
VP-Dean David Eidelman
Dr. Gustavo Turecki
Ms. Lynne McVey
Dr. Sylvain Baillet
Dr. Abraham Fuks
Dr. Richard Cruess
Dr. Jacqueline McClaran
Dr. Serge Gauthier
Dr. Judes Poirier
Dr. Jens Pruessner
Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto
Dr. Pin Ng
Dr. Dorothee Schoemaker

J. McClaran
1985-1987
S. Gauthier
1987-1997
J. Poirier
1997-2007
J. Pruessner
2008-2017
P. Rosa-Neto
2017-présent

Education Committee:
Dr. Dolly Dastoor (Chair)
Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto
Dr. Serge Gauthier
Dr. Paolo Vitali
Dr. Loraine Mazzella-Maiolo
Dr. Michael Wiseman
Laura Robb
Maria Maiolo
Meghan Williams (AGI. INC.)
Teresa Anuza (ASM)
Silvana Aguzzi
Tamar Tatigian
Alexandra Triantafillopoulos
Sarah Mulcahy
Kaitlyn Butt

Happy Holidays to one and all!
Joyeuses Fêtes à tous et toutes!