

NEWSLETTER

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

21/12/2021



Well it's been another pandemic-plagued year but we have made it through with good outcomes so thanks to everyone especially those of you hit hard by the online teaching scenario. And again a big thanks to Jackie for guiding us through the ever changing COVID guidelines.

Well done to our 400-level students who coped admirably with the 3 week lockdown, treating us to an amazing display of online research talks in September. On the more senior postgraduate front, we have had a record number of MSc and PhD completions this year, with 9 MScs and 7 PhDs with Sam's thesis being placed on the exceptional doctorate list.

The Department has gained significant research funding this year (\$7M) with a number of PIs gaining big grants which we celebrated recently. Of course the big news this year was the formation of the biotech start-up company Amaroq Therapeutics founded and lead by Sarah Diermeier. Research labs are again humming with a large number of summer students which we also recently welcomed to the department and it's a bit of a tight squeeze for some labs with the ongoing renovations.

At least we have been able to have a few more student-oriented social events this year in our nice new tea room. Here's hoping we get back to a full social schedule next year.



As well as the usual coming and goings of research staff we have a few long term and loyal staff leaving us this year (see list below) although I have heard a rumour that DJ might be back.

A number of staff have won awards this year, including Sarah Diermeier winning the Early Career Award for Distinction in Research, Chris Brown winning a Health Science Supervisor of the year award and three of our staff winning highly coveted BMS awards: Kurt (Distinguished academic teacher), Sarah (Commercialisation Researcher) and Mandy Phipps-Green (Research Support) .

So well done team, have a wonderful and well-deserved summer break.

Meri kirihimete

S. P. A. M. Connors



Safety and Compliance

Kia ora,

Thanks so much for all your help and support again after another interesting year!

Please note that by now you should have requested access from Teena to work over this period, and received an email with more detailed information.

The official lab compliance back-up during the Christmas/New Year period is Campus Watch – it is important to know that the H&S Office is also closed during this time, therefore, the use of equipment (e.g. autoclaves, cold rooms) should be minimised as there will be no DHSO or DLM available.

Go over a plan with your PI for working alone in a lab, and use a buddy system by letting your flatmates/family know you are coming into the department during this time. Please keep safe.

I will be back on Monday 10th January, but will periodically check emails.

Fire and Ambulance: 1-111 (meet on Loading Dock, or call Campus Watch for assistance)

Campus Watch, emergency: extn 5000 (or 0800 479 5000)

Campus Watch, general enquiries: extn 5001 (or 0800 479 5001)

****Please ensure the security doors close securely behind you when you are arriving or leaving and do not let others in with you.****

Have a happy and safe break.

Meri Kirihimete,

Jackie

North Hub Team

We will have purchasing & store staff working through until 23rd December. Staff will be back from Thursday 6th Jan.

Reminder please send all correspondence relating to orders to purchasing.north@otago.ac.nz

Have Merry Christmas.

Lynn

PhD & Msc completions:

Pauline Uyseco (MSc) is now a scientist at Mastaplex Limited, in the Centre for Innovation.

Jonas Maierl (MSc)

Maddie McIntyre Wilson (MSc) - Maddie is currently at Med School in Australia

Hamish McMillan (PhD) is finalising projects here then will move to a postdoctoral position in Cambridge next year.

Tom Brew (PhD) is working at Pacific Edge Biotechnology

Elham Torbati (PhD) is working with James Ussher in Microbiology

Charles Shaw (PhD) is still here, flaunting his Hawaiian shirts on Fridays.

Bikash Bhandari (PhD) Bikash has a postdoc in Cambridge. "Somewhere famous" Sigurd says.

Beatrice Koh (MSc) is working for an antibody production company in Timaru.

Jacob Irby (MSc) has returned to the USA where he is a lab technician at Stanford.

Daniel Palmer (MSc) is MIA!

Tom Chin (MSc), Tom is working at the Wellington Regional Genetics Laboratory

Jackie Foster (MSc) is a Compliance Manager at Donaghys

Ei Phiyo Khaing (PhD) is an RA in Physiology.

Sam Taylor-Wardell (PhD) is currently a post doc or ARF with Daniel Pletzer in Microbiology.

Jasmine Divinagracia (MSc) is now working at Plant and Food in Palmerston North.

Staff leaving/left

Our wonderful DJ Champion resigned from ITS in lockdown (we may however be seeing more of him in future than we had thought - watch this space)

Pam Wyber and Sandra Jeffery have both retired.

Robyn Lee is leaving at the end of January 2022 to move to sunnier climes in the North Island.

And of course we said goodbye to Kaye Wilson after semester one.

New babies

It has been quite the year for babies, Michelle Gdantiz (nee Liddy) from Craig's lab had a wee girl in March, Hollie Wicky returns from parental leave in February 2022, Lyvianne De Courtye from Cancer Genetics comes back in January, and Golnoush Madani had twin boys in October.



Whispa and masks feature in this special departmental group photo.



Our prizewinners at the BMS awards.



Lynette wins the "best hat" stakes.



The Covid mural is a popular photo backdrop.



Sigurd's academic dress is magnificent.