THE ISLAND MEDICAL PROGRAM

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 10 YEARS
In 1970, Dr. William Gibson and president of the Victoria Medical Society, Dr. John Higgins, planted a plane tree seedling in the heart of the University of Victoria campus.

The seedling was grown from a seed harvested from the plane tree under which Hippocrates taught medicine and brought to Victoria from the island of Cos by Dr. Gibson. The planting of the seedling symbolized the spirit of co-operation between the Victoria Medical Society and the university, and reflected Dr. Gibson’s commitment to medical education.

Thirty-five years later, when the Island Medical Program welcomed its first students, Dr. Gibson presented each student with a seed pod from the mature tree.
THE ISLAND MEDICAL PROGRAM

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 10 YEARS
The faculty, staff and leadership on Vancouver Island wish to recognize

**OSCAR G. CASIRO MD FRCPC**

for providing inspiration and guidance for the past 10 years.

**DR. CASIRO** was the first UBC Faculty of Medicine Regional Associate Dean, Vancouver Island, and Head of the Division of Medical Sciences at the University of Victoria. From 2004 to 2014, he was the driving force behind the significant expansion of medical education across Vancouver Island and the growth of medical sciences at the University of Victoria. With dogged determination and boundless energy, Dr. Casiro brought together a team of faculty, staff, physicians and community supporters who embraced his vision of establishing a first-class medical education and research program on Vancouver Island.

After a decade of service, Dr. Casiro steps down from his leadership positions with the UBC Faculty of Medicine and the University of Victoria on June 30, 2014. All that has been accomplished over the past 10 years is due in no small part to his bold and inspiring leadership. His legacy will be the continued growth and flourishing of medical education and medical sciences on Vancouver Island.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**
IN 2004, UBC LAUNCHED Canada's first fully distributed undergraduate medical education program, creating the Northern Medical Program and the Island Medical Program as part of a long-term strategy to help address regional shortages of physicians, particularly in medium-sized, small and rural communities such as those in northern BC and on Vancouver Island. A decade later, it is very gratifying to see that the Island Medical Program is now firmly embedded in the academic and medical community on Vancouver Island; postgraduate medical residency training programs are being established on the Island and graduates from the program are returning to Island communities as practising physicians. The full commitment of Island Health and the University of Victoria as institutional partners, the dedication of program leaders, staff and faculty and the steadfast support of the Island’s medical community have helped to make the Island Medical Program’s first 10 years a resounding success.

DR. GAVIN STUART, DEAN, UBC FACULTY OF MEDICINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA is proud to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Division of Medical Sciences, and a decade of successful collaboration in developing and delivering the Island Medical Program as part of UBC’s distributed MD undergraduate program. This first decade has been an outstanding success. The program has permitted the University of Victoria to partner with UBC in the training of physicians for the benefit of our province. It has focused and further built our capacity to contribute to health research and graduate training. It has sparked interprofessional collaborations with researchers in our departments and research centres and with other organizations in the region. All of these developments have brought great benefits to our university and to the health of our province. Happy 10th anniversary!

JAMIE CASSELS, QC, PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

ISLAND MEDICAL PROGRAM
THE UBC FACULTY OF MEDICINE has spent the past decade transforming medical education in BC by increasing the number of doctors in training, and placing these trainees in communities where doctors are needed most. Island Health has been proud to be a key partner in helping to move that transformation forward, working with UBC and the Island Medical Program over the past 10 years to significantly increase the number of academic learning spaces in hospitals and clinical facilities across Vancouver Island. At Island Health, we recognize that providing top-quality medical education and training will help us toward our goal of being a learning organization that draws excellent physicians to our region. Our collaborative partnership with the Island Medical Program in the years to come will be an important part of furthering that goal.

DR. BRENDAN CARR, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ISLAND HEALTH
n 2000, Canada was facing a severe national and regional shortage of physicians. British Columbia responded by developing a bold, ambitious plan for expanding medical education and distributing it around the province, not only by training more doctors but by training them in a variety of locations to encourage them to practise in underserved communities.

The vision for the Island Medical Program was to build a first-class medical education program on Vancouver Island, committed to excellence in education, innovation, discovery and service to the community. As The Island Medical Program: Celebrating the First 10 Years clearly shows, we have accomplished that.

The program is flourishing, with medical students and residents being trained in newly developed teaching facilities across Vancouver Island and by more than 900 faculty members, including clinicians and scientists. Following the establishment of the Island Medical Program, postgraduate medical education also expanded, with seven new residency programs introduced since 2004 and more than 100 residents currently based on Vancouver Island for all or most of their training. And we have seen a huge growth in medical research: recruitment of new faculty and graduate students, construction of state-of-the-art laboratories, and external research funding of more than $14 million since 2006.
The journey from vision to implementation has not been without challenges. The need to quickly build significant medical education resources across institutions and groups with different cultures initially generated enthusiasm as well as resistance to change. Encouraging organizations, physicians and communities to support the program became a top priority, along with building technology-enabled educational facilities and a new team of educational leaders and staff. Extensive strategic planning, substantial new government funding and participation from a wide group of stakeholders across Vancouver Island allowed us to move forward.

From the early days of the Island Medical Program to today, an ever-growing number of supporters have never faltered in their determination to build a first-class medical education program on Vancouver Island. None of our successes would have been achieved without the unwavering support of the provincial government, the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, the University of Victoria, Island Health, the Victoria Medical Society and Vancouver Island physicians. Our faculty and administrative staff, many of whom have been with the program since the beginning, and, of course, our talented students and residents have created a team that has made the program work, day by day and year by year.

Community members—including our volunteer patients, standardized patients and clinical teaching associates—have also played an important role in making the program what it is today. And thanks to the generosity of private donors, students who wouldn’t otherwise have access to medical education are being trained to be the next generation of physicians who will meet the health needs of Vancouver Island communities and beyond.

This book reflects the Island Medical Program’s remarkable evolution and success. We have built a strong foundation on which to continue to grow medical education and research on Vancouver Island and the future is bright. That’s a lot to celebrate!

Dr. Oscar Casiro
Regional Associate Dean, Vancouver Island
Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia
Head, Division of Medical Sciences, University of Victoria
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CELEBRATING THE FIRST 10 YEARS
PROFILE

DR. STEVE MARTIN
COURSE DIRECTOR, CLINICAL SKILLS

DR. STEVE MARTIN became involved in the planning and implementation of the Island Medical Program in 2003. In addition to being course director for clinical skills, Dr. Martin is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Family Practice at the University of British Columbia and Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education at the University of Victoria. He has many years of experience practising medicine in rural British Columbia, particularly in First Nations communities, and currently practises sport and occupational medicine in Victoria.

I always wanted to be an educator. I’m not sure exactly why, but I’ve always appreciated good teaching. At the same time, I have a passion for learning, especially about how humans function, both in health and in adversity. That’s what got me into medicine. The combination of my passion for teaching and my passion for learning is what motivates me in my work at the Island Medical Program.

One thing that distinguishes the IMP is its size. With only 32 students in each year of the program, it’s like a big family. Faculty are in touch with the students regularly. And because the community itself is quite small—many tutors also lecture or serve as preceptors or mentors—the students are more visible and have more opportunities for growth through increased contact with physicians in the community.

And it works both ways. While there was initially some opposition to the program in the community, many of the tutors now tell me that teaching or supervising students has renewed their own interest in medicine—the enthusiasm of the students is both refreshing and gratifying.
n 2000, people living in British Columbia’s northern, rural and coastal communities had less access to health care than those in more urban areas. In 2004, the University of British Columbia (UBC) Faculty of Medicine, in partnership with the provincial government, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia and all six health authorities, launched its expanded undergraduate program, the first of its kind in Canada and the most distributed undergraduate medical program in North America.

The expanded program included three sites in diverse regions across British Columbia: the Vancouver Fraser Medical Program in the Lower Mainland, based at the UBC campus in Vancouver; the new Island Medical Program, serving
THE GOALS OF THE EXPANDED UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL PROGRAM WERE TO:

- establish new medical education sites throughout British Columbia
- double the number of medical students training in the province
- encourage rural and Aboriginal students who were seeking medical careers
- allow students to complete their training in rural and underserved communities, where they may be more likely to return to practise once their training is complete.

Vancouver Island and located at the University of Victoria; and the new Northern Medical Program, serving the northern part of the province and based at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. (A fourth program, the Southern Medical Program, serving the interior of the province, was added in 2011 at UBC’s Okanagan campus in Kelowna.) All students would graduate with an undergraduate medical degree (MD) from UBC.

New medical education facilities were needed on each of the university campuses, as well as innovative technology to connect them so that all students could fully participate in lectures and labs delivered at any one site. The expanded program also required the participation of hospitals and several thousand physicians, to provide clinical training and mentorship, throughout the province.

When the first students in the expanded program began their medical training in September 2004, a new era for medical education in British Columbia began. Ten years later, 1,871 MDs have graduated from the program, and 1,434 new physicians are in practice—70 per cent of them in British Columbia and 57 per cent as new family doctors for British Columbians.¹

¹ University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, “Where Are BC’s New Doctors?” (Infographic): http://med.ubc.ca/faculty-of-medicine-education-infographic/

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 10 YEARS
BRINGING MEDICAL EDUCATION TO VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Island Medical Program was established in 2004 in collaboration with the University of Victoria and the Vancouver Island Health Authority (now Island Health). Victoria was an ideal location for one of the sites in UBC’s expanded undergraduate medical program. The University of Victoria was already the province’s second-largest educator in the health sector through both its programs in nursing, social work, psychology and health information science and its research groups, including the Centre on Aging, the Centre for Biomedical Research and the Centre for Addictions Research BC. In addition, having a pool of medical students studying throughout Vancouver Island would increase the likelihood of more physicians returning and practising in areas experiencing physician shortages.

The provincial government funded the development of new infrastructure—both bricks-and-mortar and technological—needed to support the Island Medical Program. The Medical Sciences Building was built at the University of Victoria and teaching space was developed at hospitals and other clinical sites across Vancouver Island.

A team of educational leaders and administrative support staff had to be established quickly. Physicians from across Vancouver Island were recruited to teach medical students. Volunteers of all ages joined a roster of practice patients for the students’ clinical skills sessions.

The first Island Medical Program students arrived at the University of Victoria in January 2005, having spent their first term at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Ten years later, the Island Medical Program has graduated a total of 191 new doctors. The number of Vancouver Island physicians involved in teaching has grown from 200 to over 900, and more than 150 patient volunteers now help faculty teach medical students in clinical skills sessions.
EXPANDING POSTGRADUATE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Island Medical Program graduates now have more opportunities to pursue their residency training on Vancouver Island, increasing the likelihood that they will eventually practise here. Seven new UBC postgraduate training programs have been introduced since the Island Medical Program began in 2004:

- The UBC Family Practice Residency Program established two new sites on Vancouver Island, in addition to the existing Victoria site: Nanaimo in 2007 and Strathcona in 2013 (based in Courtenay, Comox and Campbell River).
- As well, the UBC Family Practice Residency Program brought its Aboriginal site to Victoria in 2005 and established a new International Medical Graduate site on Vancouver Island in 2012.
- Three new specialty sites were launched in Victoria: Psychiatry (2010), Emergency Medicine (2013) and Internal Medicine (2013).

Almost 45 per cent of Island Medical Program graduates have chosen to pursue careers in family medicine, while others have been very successful when choosing to train in highly specialized areas of medicine, such as ophthalmology and urology. After completing residency training, more and more alumni of the program are returning to Vancouver Island to practise in smaller communities, such as Duncan, Nanaimo, Comox, Campbell River and Alert Bay.
PROFILE

JESSICA NATHAN
CLASS OF 2016

It was an honours project in the fourth year of a combined biology and psychology undergraduate degree that took JESSICA NATHAN into Dr. Brian Christie’s lab in the University of Victoria’s Division of Medical Sciences. She continued the work on Huntington’s disease that she started that year and completed a master’s degree in neuroscience in 2011. Along the way, Jessica produced six journal articles and two book chapters, presented her research at national and international conferences, and received numerous prestigious grants and awards. She is now a student in the Island Medical Program.

I knew that the Island Medical Program would be the best place for me. I was born here, my family is here, my husband’s family is here, and ultimately I would like to practise medicine in Victoria. I feel very lucky to be in the IMP, not just because this is where I want to be, but because the IMP is a great program.

I think that what makes it great is the dedication of the faculty and staff. They are all interested in our doing well. It’s a very welcoming environment. Dr. Casiro sits down with every student at least once each semester to see how things are going. Dr. Hammell (Assistant Dean, Student Affairs) has an open-door policy, encouraging us to drop in and see her if ever there are any issues.

Everyone is very friendly. They are always checking in with us to see how we are doing and if there are things that could be improved. Before our exams, our lab instructors give us a lot of extra review sessions—on their own time—to make sure that we are in the best position to do well. I really appreciate that. It would be hard to get that personal touch in a bigger program.
The UBC Faculty of Medicine admissions process looks for well-rounded students from a variety of backgrounds—students from less-populated areas and students who are open to training and practising in northern or smaller communities. The UBC Faculty of Medicine also actively recruits Aboriginal applicants, aiming to have 5 per cent of first-year spaces occupied by First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

Becoming a physician is not just about having top marks. In addition to their academic achievements, applicants are evaluated on their personal qualities, such as integrity, motivation, social responsibility, leadership potential and diversity of experience.

Currently, there are 288 spaces available for first-year students, 32 of them in the Island Medical Program.
MORE OPTIONS FOR VANCOUVER ISLAND STUDENTS

The Island Medical Program broadens the options for Vancouver Island students who want to pursue a career in medicine. Increasingly, Vancouver Island high school students see the University of Victoria as a gateway to studying medicine, providing them with an opportunity to complete undergraduate studies and then medical school without leaving Vancouver Island.

The clinical component of the education of Island Medical Program students takes place in Vancouver Island health care facilities, allowing the students to develop relationships with physicians throughout their undergraduate training—physicians who may well become colleagues once the students complete their postgraduate training.

- Since 2004, the average success rate of Vancouver Island applicants to the UBC Faculty of Medicine has been 25 per cent, compared to 13 per cent before 2004.
- University of Victoria graduates consistently form the second largest pool of successful applicants to the UBC Faculty of Medicine undergraduate program (after UBC graduates).
- Overall, close to 50 per cent of Island Medical Program students attended the University of Victoria or other Vancouver Island post-secondary institutions, and 36 per cent of Island Medical Program students attended a Vancouver Island high school.
INCREASING ABORIGINAL STUDENT ENROLMENT AND GRADUATION

The UBC Faculty of Medicine’s pre-admission and support initiatives for Aboriginal medical students have increased enrolment and graduation since 2004 and are now recognized as a model for other Canadian medical schools.

The Island Medical Program has been very successful in attracting and training many of the Aboriginal students who have gone through UBC’s distributed undergraduate medical program. Eighteen Aboriginal students have graduated from the Island Medical Program in its first 10 years. Over 55 per cent of these graduates completed their pre-medical studies at the University of Victoria, where academic and mentoring support is provided by the Office of Indigenous Affairs. In addition, the First Peoples House (opened in January 2010) offers a social and cultural meeting space for Aboriginal students at the University of Victoria, and is a place where many Island Medical Program Aboriginal students continue to go to maintain ties with their communities.
“James Andrew (Aboriginal Student Initiatives Coordinator at the UBC Faculty of Medicine) supports Aboriginal students through the medical school application process, which is a pretty frightening institutional barrier. And once you’re in the program, he continues to be a supportive presence. . . . He definitely makes medical school less intimidating for Aboriginal students, which really helps.”

DR. AMI BROSSEAU, CLASS OF 2012
DR. LAURA ARBOUR
CLINICIAN RESEARCHER

DR. LAURA ARBOUR is a Professor in the Department of Medical Genetics at the University of British Columbia and an Affiliate Professor in the Division of Medical Sciences at the University of Victoria. She is trained as both a pediatrician and clinical geneticist. Dr. Arbour joined the Island Medical Program in 2006 as its first clinician researcher.

As a clinician researcher, I split my time between delivering health care and doing research. The research that I do is informed by the questions that patients bring to me about the causes of their conditions, the impact of the conditions on them and the care that they need. For me as a geneticist, the patient may also be the family and, in some cases, the community.

I see patients and families of all ages with hereditary conditions, and in the last 10 years I have followed the rapidly expanding area of cardiogenetics—in particular, cardiac conditions that can lead to sudden death in any age group. Throughout my career I’ve also been carrying out genetic research with First Nations and Inuit people, ensuring that the way we do research is acceptable to them and therefore ensuring that the genetic component of disease is not ignored.

My clinical work and research focus came together when I was approached by a large First Nations community in northern British Columbia where many individuals were previously diagnosed with long QT syndrome, a hereditary predisposition to arrhythmia and sudden death. That led to a partnership to understand the causes and impact of long QT syndrome in that community. Our expertise there led to improved care locally with the initiation of a multidisciplinary cardiogenetics service here on Vancouver Island, which now has expanded into the BC Inherited Arrhythmia Program, providing care for all affected British Columbians.

It is important that the students in the distributed undergraduate medical program have role models who are clinicians and who are also academics doing research. In addition to bedside teaching, as a clinician researcher I also act as a mentor. I have supervised many medical students who are interested in conducting research as a way to either understand what research is about or explore research as a career.

It has been an incredible opportunity to be able to build my research program here. The small size of the Island Medical Program offers an opportunity to get to know the students and our colleagues well. If you’re in the IMP you have all the benefits of being connected with a larger hub, while at the same time being part of a very strong, small community. That makes the program special.
The goal of the Island Medical Program is to graduate innovative, resourceful, self-reliant and culturally aware physicians, who are fully acquainted with the rigours and rewards of medical practice in small rural towns, larger urban centres and culturally diverse settings.

**DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR TOMORROW'S PHYSICIANS**

**LEARNING TO BE A DOCTOR**

The first two years of the UBC undergraduate medical program involve learning in classroom lectures, laboratory settings and small-group tutorials. Students also spend two half days each week learning basic skills in a clinical environment.
They work in small groups with physician teachers and volunteer patients from the community, and with family physicians and real patients in local practices. In these settings, students learn to take a patient's history, do a physical examination and measure vital signs such as temperature and blood pressure. They then move through the more complex skills required in the various areas of medicine, such as child health, women’s health and mental health.

In the third and fourth years of the program, Island Medical Program students spend most of their time training with physicians and other health professionals in hospitals and community-based clinical facilities across Vancouver Island. Clinical rotations in third year include anesthesiology, dermatology, emergency medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, pediatrics, psychiatry and surgery.

Third-year medical students also have the option of completing a 12-month Integrated Community Clerkship, where they gain experience in the medical and surgical disciplines by following patients through their diagnosis, treatment and follow-up. On Vancouver Island, the Integrated Community Clerkship is based in Duncan. Students there are assigned to a local family physician whose clinic or group practice serves as a “real-life” classroom. Through this approach, students gain valuable knowledge about maintaining continuity of care, collaborating with health professionals, and working with patients in the context of their home community.

In fourth year, students complete electives to hone their skills and explore and solidify their career interests.

After completing the four-year UBC undergraduate medical program, Island Medical Program graduates enter two to six years of postgraduate training in one of more than 50 specialty areas across Canada and beyond.

“The wonderful thing about the IMP is that you are always made to feel like you are in the right place. With a genuinely caring staff and incredible teaching faculty, students are the centre of support and attention at all times.”

DR. SHAUN VAN PEL, CLASS OF 2014
A FOCUS ON CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

With our shifting demographics, and people over the age of 75 using health services at several times the rate of the general population, geriatric care will take on an increasingly important role in the coming decades. Vancouver Island is already home to six of Canada’s 10 most elderly communities. Currently, almost 19 per cent of Vancouver Island’s population is over the age of 64, and this age group is expected to increase to 30 per cent over the next 20 years.

The Island Medical Program recognizes the need to prepare future physicians to care for the elderly and provides students with opportunities to learn in a variety of Vancouver Island clinical facilities where they can gain hands-on experience addressing the unique health needs of this growing segment of the population.
EDUCATING PHYSICIANS FOR A CHANGING FUTURE

Society expects that physicians, and the institutions that train them, will respond to contemporary challenges and to the evolving needs of patients and populations. Medical schools need to graduate doctors who will be able to practise effectively for 40 or more years in a perpetually changing environment.

Island Medical Program faculty are working with colleagues across the province toward the implementation of a renewed, innovative medical school curriculum that builds on a vision articulated through the Future of Medical Education in Canada project. The ultimate goal is to produce knowledgeable, compassionate, highly professional graduates who are well prepared to practise medicine in the 21st century. To function in an integrated, interdisciplinary health care system, new graduates not only must have excellent communication, analytical and critical thinking skills, they must also be adaptable and eager to pursue new knowledge through research and lifelong learning.

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SIMULATION-BASED EDUCATION

Simulated learning is a rapidly growing component of health education. With recent advances in simulation technology, such as high-fidelity interactive mannequins and sophisticated debriefing systems, students and interprofessional teams can now rehearse basic as well as more complicated scenarios and medical procedures in realistic circumstances before engaging with real patients. Simulated learning is an important tool for teaching and assessing learners and teams from a variety of health care professions, ultimately enhancing patient safety.

In collaboration with Island Health, the University of Victoria School of Nursing, the UBC Faculty of Medicine and others, the Island Medical Program has spearheaded the development of an interprofessional regional patient simulation initiative on Vancouver Island that includes patient simulation centres in Victoria and Nanaimo, as well as mobile simulation. The simulation centre in Nanaimo is up and running and a new simulation centre at Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria is scheduled to open in 2015.
EMPOWERING TEACHERS, ENHANCING EDUCATION

The Island Medical Program provides opportunities for faculty to continuously strengthen their abilities and effectiveness as teachers, with the goal of enhancing education for medical students and residents. Faculty development helps to ensure that students and residents benefit from the most current educational practices.

Faculty development activities and events bring together physicians, health professionals, basic scientists and education leaders, and take place in a variety of locations on Vancouver Island so that teachers can participate as close to their home and work environments as possible. Each year, up to three themed day-long retreats and over 20 other events, including workshops, seminars and weekly lunch-time sessions, attract participants from medical education, research and health care settings.

As well, interested faculty, physicians and education leaders are supported in completing certificates and degrees in medical education, in both local and international programs, with assistance from the Centre for Health Education Scholarship in the UBC Faculty of Medicine.
DAVE CERILLI  
TECHNICAL SUPPORT ANALYST  

DAVE CERILLI is one of four technicians at the Island Medical Program and one of 37 in the University of British Columbia’s MedIT group. They help to keep the technology that connects the four sites of the distributed program running so that the curriculum can be delivered. He was working the day that the very first Island Medical Program students arrived, in January 2005.

When the program began, the primary responsibility of the videoconferencing technicians was to support all of the lectures, labs and administrative meetings. We would spend most of our time getting the technology set up for the users and then actively monitoring it right in the room. The technology was quite new and we were still in the process of developing our support procedures.

But the hardware and systems have evolved and become more reliable over the years. We don’t have to stay in the room where the videoconference is taking place anymore; we have monitors in our office, which gives us a lot more flexibility and functionality. We’re often able to identify and resolve problems before presenters or audiences are even aware that they exist. And if we need to troubleshoot by having a conversation with another technician at a different site, it doesn’t disrupt things in the room.

Because our role supporting the technology is less intensive than it used to be, we’re now involved in various provincial initiatives, so we’re often doing several things at one time. For example, we are supporting the simulation project at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, organizing the implementation of a backup bridge for the provincial videoconferencing system, managing the student computer labs, distributing recorded content to our users, and helping to recalibrate the audio systems across the province.

We wear a lot of hats: we support multiple IMP facilities in the Victoria area (the Medical Sciences Building, Royal Jubilee Hospital and Victoria General Hospital), and we’re part of a provincial network (MedIT). There is rarely a dull day—always lots to keep us busy!
A medical education program that is distributed around British Columbia, both on university campuses and in rural and urban clinics and hospitals, needs sophisticated infrastructure to ensure that everyone is seamlessly connected.
GREEN AND GOLD

The Medical Sciences Building was the first building at the University of Victoria to be awarded the gold standard in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating Program. Almost three-quarters of the materials used to construct the building came from local sources and include high-recycled-content materials, such as carpeting, interior glass tiles and lab cabinets. The structure of the building emphasizes natural light and is designed to be 37 per cent more energy-efficient than the Model National Energy Code for Buildings standard. The design also features natural landscaping, as well as covered bike racks, showers and change rooms to encourage people to cycle to school.

THE MEDICAL SCIENCES BUILDING

The Medical Sciences Building, located at the University of Victoria, was the first facility built for the Island Medical Program, opening in 2004 in time for the arrival of the first group of students. It serves as home base for the program.

CLINICAL ACADEMIC CAMPUSES AND CLINICAL EDUCATION SITES

Since hospitals on Vancouver Island did not have adequate teaching space, significant renovations and additions were needed to accommodate the education of medical students, residents and other health profession students. New academic spaces, including videoconference-enabled classrooms, clinical skills rooms, library and study areas, and on-call rooms now allow students and residents to learn and study in a supportive and comfortable environment.

ISLAND MEDICAL PROGRAM
CLINICAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS VANCOUVER ISLAND
AT THE LEADING EDGE

In 2010, the UBC Faculty of Medicine distributed undergraduate medical program, including the Island Medical Program, received two major technology awards:

- The Ted Freedman Award recognizes an innovation that has brought about an important change through the appropriate use of technology.
- The COACH (Canada’s Health Informatics Association) Best Innovation in Technology Award recognizes programs, projects or service providers that demonstrate an innovative application of technology and learning in the field of telehealth.

This network of academic spaces across Vancouver Island allows students and residents to be placed in smaller communities without disadvantaging their learning. It also provides community physicians with excellent opportunities to participate from a distance in professional development activities taking place in larger centres in the province.
INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Bridging geographical distances is a major challenge for distributed medical education. One of the principal ways in which the Island Medical Program is connected with the other sites in UBC’s distributed undergraduate program—in Vancouver, Kelowna and Prince George—is through innovative technology that ensures seamless interactions between all students and instructors. The four sites are connected through videoconference technology, allowing for lectures and seminars to be shared from any site. The connections are fully interactive, with all instructors and students able to see and hear each other as though they were in the same room, not hundreds of kilometres apart.

Technology also takes learning beyond the campus classrooms and into Vancouver Island hospitals, so that students, residents, instructors and administrative staff can connect with colleagues or engage in academic sessions while in clinical environments.

“The new space [at Cowichan District Hospital] is available to the medical community as a place of learning. The rooms are being used more and more not only by learners but also by Island Health staff and physicians who are able to step away from the clinical environment and focus on learning. We have had very positive feedback on this.”

DR. MAGGIE WATT, FAMILY PHYSICIAN AND SITE LEAD, INTEGRATED COMMUNITY CLERKSHIP, DUNCAN
DR. BRIAN CHRISTIE
NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCHER

DR. BRIAN CHRISTIE is a neuroscientist, Professor in the Division of Medical Sciences and Director of the Graduate Program in Neuroscience at the University of Victoria, and Affiliate Professor in the Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences at the University of British Columbia. His laboratory uses a sophisticated array of electrophysiological, immunohistochemical, molecular and behavioural research methods to study the plasticity of the brain. Dr. Christie was the first researcher to join the Division of Medical Sciences, in 2007, and has been instrumental in developing the neuroscience research program and mentoring a new generation of researchers.

The goal of my research is to find ways to utilize the innate plasticity of the brain to produce better outcomes for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders. Specifically, we are looking at how exercise can enhance both the growth of new cells in the brain and the functionality of existing cells. We are developing therapies for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, fragile X syndrome, and mild traumatic brain injury. We’re also developing return-to-play indicators for children and athletes after they have experienced concussions.

We provide Island Medical Program students with instruction in neuroanatomy, histology and other areas through small-group tutorials. Some of the medical students do summer research projects in our lab as well. One of the more gratifying aspects of our presence here is that we are seeing a lot of UVic undergraduate and graduate students who have worked in our lab entering the IMP—four this year and four the previous year. It’s nice to be able to continue to interact with them, and watch them as they advance in their careers.

We are able to give IMP students a lot of attention as we guide them through the core elements of the curriculum. It’s more personal, too, and that’s a major strength of the program.

One of the main goals of the distributed system was to integrate students into the social structure of the community early, so that they become accustomed to the places where they are learning and working, and want to eventually live there. I’m amazed not only at the success of the students academically, but also at the number of students who come through the program with the goal of going to more rural communities. I take great satisfaction in being able to help them, in some small way, achieve their aspirations.
Scientific inquiry is recognized as an essential component of medical education. A first-class educational experience includes opportunities for students to interact with a community of scholars, to participate in research and to develop research interests and skills.

Bringing medical education to Vancouver Island in 2004 provided an opportunity to expand research in areas that address specific health needs in the community. The University of Victoria’s Division of Medical Sciences was created as an academic research unit that would strengthen the Island Medical Program.

At the time, careful consideration was given to areas of research that would align well with the needs of the Island Medical Program and with the strengths
of both the University of Victoria and Island Health. Several factors influenced the decision to hire a neuroscientist as the first basic scientist in the Division of Medical Sciences: the significant prevalence of brain-related diseases in society, such as dementia, stroke, inherited developmental disorders and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; a rapidly aging population, particularly on Vancouver Island; and the potential to collaborate with other researchers at the university.

Once the first neuroscientist was in place, in 2007, hiring other talented neuroscientists became the focus. A “centre of excellence” soon emerged, culminating in the establishment of the interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Neuroscience in 2011. Based in the Division of Medical Sciences, the program links researchers in the division with others from departments such as psychology, biology, biochemistry and the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education. The graduate program is attracting masters students, PhD candidates and post-doctoral fellows from around the world.

In addition to lab-based neuroscientists, several clinician researchers are affiliated with the Division of Medical Sciences and the Island Medical Program. Clinician researchers bridge the gap between basic and patient research, conducting studies in clinical settings such as hospitals or outpatient clinics. With significant strengths in medical genetics, psychology and health information science, the division’s clinician researchers make significant contributions to Aboriginal health, maternal health and information technology in primary care.

In a short period of time, both lab-based neuroscientists and clinician researchers in the Division of Medical Sciences, along with their teams of post-doctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students, have attracted more than $14 million in external research funding from national agencies. Three faculty members have also received Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research scholar awards and a Canadian Institutes of Health Research new investigator salary award.

Together, these researchers bring to Island Medical Program classrooms new, cutting-edge knowledge and ideas, along with an enthusiasm for their scholarly work. Medical students have the opportunity to become involved in research and to interact with graduate students working in the labs. The interplay of a strong medical education environment with an equally strong research environment fosters an interest in moving research from the laboratory into the health care setting. Ultimately, being exposed to these researchers and their work helps medical students become better doctors.

To date, at least 12 students who have worked with researchers in the Division of Medical Sciences, as graduate students, undergraduate students or volunteers, have gone on to pursue a medical degree—most of them as medical students in the Island Medical Program.
IMPROVING HEALTH THROUGH RESEARCH

Division of Medical Sciences faculty are making important contributions to health research. Their innovative studies include:

- looking at mechanisms underlying the effects of exercise on the aging brain, and how these mechanisms may result in new approaches for maintaining and enhancing brain cells
- using advanced imaging technologies to assess brain structure and function to understand how the brain is able to repair itself following a stroke
- working to understand how neurological diseases affect learning and memory processes
- examining how neural stem cells function and how they might be harnessed to repair brain injuries
- developing a computer-based support mechanism to help primary care physicians avoid prescribing medications that can cause adverse reactions, particularly in seniors
- investigating perinatal and postpartum mental health issues, in particular anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders
- working with First Nations in British Columbia to explore and understand the prevalence of particular genetic conditions in their communities.
The interplay of a strong medical education environment with an equally strong research environment fosters an interest in moving research from the laboratory into the health care setting.
MICKI MITCHELL
VOLUNTEER PATIENT

MICKI MITCHELL had her first session as a volunteer patient with the Island Medical Program not long after moving to Victoria from Edmonton, when she was interviewed in her home by first-year student Shirley Rudecki.

My daughter has been a standardized patient and my grandson has been both a standardized patient and a volunteer patient with the Island Medical Program.

When I was asked to be a volunteer patient, I said yes because I was new here and I wanted to get involved in a few things. I figured I would probably learn something about my health condition, which is called COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease], and at the same time I would be giving a helping hand. Doctors have certainly helped me throughout my life. And this is something that they do need to know—how to act with their patients.

My goodness, Shirley got my whole life history! She was so patient and understanding. She didn’t pretend that she was a doctor and tell me things about my condition. I was amazed at her maturity for such a young person.
clear vision, good students, a strong curriculum, and the best facilities and technology available together provide a strong foundation for the Island Medical Program. But it’s the people who make it successful.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

In the early days of the program, only a handful of people shared the vision of building an undergraduate medical education program on Vancouver Island. Ten years later, more than 900 physicians and other health care professionals are committed to providing our medical students with an excellent educational...
experience. A core group of faculty and administrative leaders in locations from Victoria to Port McNeill work together to plan and implement the curriculum. Many of them have been with the Island Medical Program since it began in 2004—a testament to their belief in the vision and the importance of the program.

The Island Medical Program also relies on many others in the community to make it work.

Three groups of specialized volunteers work with students to translate classroom skills into real-life or “simulated” real-life environments. Volunteer patients act as practice patients for students in the first two years of the curriculum. They may be healthy or have a medical history or diagnosis. Standardized patients are trained by a professional to simulate the personal history, emotional characteristics and physical symptoms of patients with certain medical conditions, and they contribute to the evaluation of students’ skills and knowledge. Clinical teaching associates are women who guide students as they learn to perform sensitive breast and pelvic examinations.

Physicians serve as tutors or clinical instructors, but some also choose to volunteer their time as mentors. Each Island Medical Program student is assigned a family doctor or specialist physician in the community and will stay connected with him or her throughout the four years of undergraduate training. The physician mentors give generously of their time, providing guidance on work-life balance and surviving the rigours of medical school—an experience that is extremely beneficial to the student and often invigorating for the physicians.

“Health care in smaller communities is a very different kind of practice. We get to know our patients really well and, by necessity, we’re involved with every aspect of their care. It is demanding but also extremely rewarding. The IMP is a terrific opportunity for students to experience what this is like.”

DR. FENN SMIT, CAMPBELL RIVER

OUR DONORS

Medical education is expensive and requires that students finance their medical training from family sources, savings, loans and student awards. Many students will graduate with significant debt. Financial concerns may prevent talented students from even considering a career in medicine.

Several individuals, families, foundations and associations have made generous donations to the Island Medical Program to establish bursaries and scholarships, investing in students as a way of serving the community. To date, over $1.3 million has been donated. Most of these funds will be used to help Vancouver Island students, including those from remote areas, to pursue medical careers.

The philanthropy of our donors is a lasting gift to health care on Vancouver Island.
“Students exposed to teaching by rural physicians learn skills and the ability to make a range of health care decisions for their patients that will help them to be better doctors no matter where they choose to practise.”

DR. GRANGER AVERY, PORT MCNEILL

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

Through local guest lectures, as well as projects and assignments, Island Medical Program students are encouraged and challenged to explore how they can contribute to and volunteer with community organizations that provide services to individuals in need. Some of the projects started by students continue to provide ongoing benefits for marginalized members of the community. These experiences also have a lasting effect on the students themselves.

ACTING GLOBALLY

It is important for medical students to be inspired to contribute not just locally but also globally. It is not uncommon for students to arrive at the Island Medical Program

ISLAND MEDICAL PROGRAM
Program with a strong sense of social responsibility. Many have a history of involvement with organizations in developing countries or areas with limited health care and education resources, and they often choose to carry on this important volunteer work during medical school.

For example, one source of inspiration is a local instructor who has dedicated significant time to sharing her expertise in curriculum development and medical education in a small health sciences academy in Nepal. In 2011, three Island Medical Program students travelled to Nepal to work with her.

UBC’s Global Health Initiative provides another way in which students can learn about and participate in volunteer opportunities all over the world, including some in Canada. Projects include working in local communities and with populations that are underserved and where there are barriers to accessing health care services. Wherever they go, Island Medical Program students who participate in these projects say the same thing: the experience is both humbling and immensely gratifying.

WALKING THE TALK: FOOT HYGIENE FOR VICTORIA’S HOMELESS

In 2007, an Island Medical Program student began a foot hygiene service at Our Place, a local shelter for Victoria’s homeless population. The student washed and massaged feet and tended to sores, but the service she performed also became a way for her to experience and understand the realities of practising medicine within an economically and culturally diverse society. This simple but much-appreciated service was so popular that it continues today through the University of Victoria’s School of Nursing.

“Our project has been a unique and valuable learning experience that has provided a better understanding of the social determinants of health and first-hand accounts of the diverse struggles and barriers faced by marginalized populations. Our collective experiences at Access Health Centre have been defining experiences in our medical education and have contributed to our ability to be effective patient advocates.”

LEAH ELLINGWOOD, AIMEE KERNICK, MICHELLE LAMARCHE, MICHELLE ROSS, TIANRU SUI AND BETHANY WOODROW, CLASS OF 2016
JENNIFER MACMILLAN
PROGRAM MANAGER, YEARS 1 AND 2

JENNIFER MACMILLAN has been with the Island Medical Program since its very beginning in 2003 when the program didn’t even have an office at the University of Victoria. She is now manager of curriculum and assessment for the Year 1 and 2 students, oversees the patient program (volunteer patients and standardized patients), and is involved administratively in faculty development.

My grandfather was a country doctor in Cape Breton and I spent a lot of time with him when he travelled to see his patients on house calls. Watching and listening to him, I learned how important it is to treat everyone with the same respect and compassion, no matter where they come from. He devoted himself to his community, ensuring that everyone had the best health care possible. When I look at and listen to the students in our program I think, “One day you may be my mother’s doctor or my grandchild’s doctor,” and it feels really good. I’m so grateful that we are training doctors to be compassionate and to help in our communities, especially in rural areas and Aboriginal communities.

I believe this program works because we’re a small family and we get to know our students well. We have a lot of very committed administrative staff, working hard behind the scenes to ensure that the students have the best experience possible. They are such an integral part of the strong glue that holds the program together.

Dr. Casiro always reminded us that we weren’t guinea pigs in this great adventure but we were pioneers because we were stepping “bravely” out into the unknown. I’ve always remembered that and I’ve kept it close to my heart. And now here we are 10 years later and the program has been so successful. I remember being so very surprised at how emotional I was when our first class graduated in 2008—and I still get emotional when every class graduates! It is an important time of year for all of us—students, staff and faculty—to celebrate our successes.

I feel proud and honoured to be part of the team and that has contributed to our students’ success!
he future began 10 years ago, with a vision of excellence in distributed medical education on Vancouver Island. Medical education and research now have a solid foundation on which to grow and continue to improve the way we train physicians to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Over time, the curriculum will evolve and new research will add vital knowledge to the treatment of disease and health conditions, furthering the work that has been done in these first 10 years.

Much has been accomplished through the efforts of many. But one of the best measures of our success is what graduates say about the Island Medical Program.
Everyone should know how wonderful it feels to be welcomed, cared for and believed in—IMP style. As I move on to Kelowna for a family medicine residency, I will bring the spirit of the IMP with me. You have all made a profound difference in my life. Thank you.

DR. JENNY PHILLIPS, CLASS OF 2008

I feel so lucky to have had such wonderful teachers and preceptors and to have been so well supported by IMP faculty. During med school I have had fantastic experiences in communities all over BC, and I have been moved by many inspiring patients and families who so graciously allowed me to be involved in their care.

DR. SARA WATERS, CLASS OF 2009

There are so many fantastic teachers, preceptors and mentors within this program. The experience of being a part of such a tight-knit medical community on Vancouver Island has prepared me for residency and all of the adventures that lie ahead.

DR. ELISE ROBERTS, CLASS OF 2010

I have an interest in inner-city medicine and in Aboriginal health. One of the formative experiences of medical school for me was taking part in pediatric outreach clinics in Aboriginal communities at the northern tip of the Island. I hope to be able to invest in and learn from such communities throughout my career.

DR. JENNY CUNNINGHAM, CLASS OF 2011

Having grown up in Port Alberni, I really appreciate the community feel of the Island Medical Program. It has been rewarding to train among the dedicated students, preceptors and staff at the IMP. My experiences here have shaped my commitment to pediatric medicine and I look forward to moving back to the Island as a community pediatrician.

DR. LAURA SWANEY, CLASS OF 2012

Vancouver Island is where I grew up and has always felt like home so I was glad to have the opportunity to return to the Island. My IMP experience has been outstanding and I am amazed at the number of staff and preceptors who gave their time to contribute to our medical education. I am looking forward to the next step of the journey and joining two of my IMP peers in UBC’s newest Family Practice Residency Program [Vancouver Island—Strathcona].

DR. TYLER FALK, CLASS OF 2013

The IMP is easily one of Canada’s best-kept secrets in medical education. I am grateful for the teaching and guidance invested in me by the program, and I consider myself privileged to have trained alongside such an incredible group of colleagues. As I embark on the next chapter—internal medicine residency in Victoria—I do so with confidence in the quality of education I have received.

DR. JONAH VON SYCHOWSKI, CLASS OF 2014

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 10 YEARS
PROFILE

DR. AMI BROSSEAU
ALUMNUS

DR. AMI BROSSEAU graduated from the Island Medical Program in 2012. He was one of eight Aboriginal students graduating that year, the program’s largest Aboriginal cohort to date. After completing his residency in Aboriginal Family Practice in 2014, Dr. Brosseau will be working as a physician at the ‘Namgis Health Centre in Alert Bay. He will bring to his practice his Métis heritage and a broad academic background, with studies in visual arts, political science, philosophy and biology.

When I applied to medical school, the Island Medical Program was where I wanted to be. I was born and raised in Victoria and I want to stay on Vancouver Island to practise. The IMP was a good experience. The instructors are top-notch. Because it’s a small program, you get to be close to the action. Everyone knows each other, so there’s no possibility of slipping through the cracks. They really want you to succeed. It’s not a competitive culture, which I think is absolutely essential. And the program is really supportive of families: our first son was born in my first year of the program, and some of my classmates also had children during the program.

James Andrew (Aboriginal Student Initiatives Coordinator at the UBC Faculty of Medicine) supports Aboriginal students through the medical school application process, which is a pretty frightening institutional barrier. And once you’re in the program, he continues to be a supportive presence—in addition to providing the latest Canuck stats. He definitely makes medical school less intimidating for Aboriginal students, which really helps.

I have a lot of pride in my ancestry. My family and my wife’s family are descendants from the original Métis people in the Red River Valley. In Aboriginal communities, you always say where you are from. When I introduce myself to Aboriginal patients, I say I’m a half-breed, that my mother is from Cree territory in northern Alberta and I was born and raised in Coast Salish territory.

I decided to become a doctor because I wanted to be a helper. The Aboriginal site of the UBC Family Practice Residency Program has helped me to think differently about my medical education and my approach to practice. I am thinking constantly about what it is that I am doing, to understand the context of my practice and the fact that cultural safety is paramount.
ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Most of the photographs in this book were taken by Dr. Ted Grant, known by many as the father of Canadian photojournalism. More than 280,000 images from his 60-year career as a photojournalist are held in a dedicated collection in the National Archives of Canada, in addition to 100,000 images in the National Gallery of Canada—the largest collection by a single photographer in Canadian history.

Dr. Grant has photographed a huge range of events and people over the course of his long career, including nine Olympic Games, the six-day war in the Middle East and the Vietnam war, the child victims of Chernobyl, Sue Rodriguez, celebrities, politicians, Alberta cowboys, and others just doing what they do. But among his favourite photographs are those of the medical world: doctors and their patients, surgeons, nurses, medical students, women in childbirth. Of the eight books he has published, three are of medical photography.

In 2007, not long after the Island Medical Program began, Dr. Grant (or Dr. Ted, as he is affectionately known around the IMP) began photographing students in the program. It is most fitting that this celebration of the 10 years of the Island Medical Program should feature his work.

In 1999, Ted Grant and Yousuf Karsh received Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Canadian Association of Photographers and Artists in Communications. Dr. Grant is the only photographer to hold both gold and silver medals for photographic excellence from the National Film Board of Canada. In 2008, Dr. Grant received an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from the University of Victoria in recognition of his remarkable work. He is the subject of a documentary, *Art of Observation: The Photographs of Ted Grant*, produced for Bravo by Asterisk Productions in 2005. *Ted Grant: Sixty Years of Legendary Photojournalism*, by Thelma Fayle, was published in 2013.

“These are the people who look after us when we really need it. Look at their compassion and care and understanding. Look at how they do the hands-on thing when they are our comforters.”

FROM *TED GRANT: SIXTY YEARS OF LEGENDARY PHOTOJOURNALISM*