NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter Spring 2018: Clinician Investigator Trainee Association of Canada (CITAC)

A decade of CITAC Annual General Meetings: 2007—2017

In 2007, the Clinician Investigator Trainee Association of Canada (CITAC) launched its inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM has since become a major annual event, jointly organized by CITAC and leaders from the Canadian Society for Clinical Investigation (CSCI), and continues to provide a forum for clinician investigator (CI) trainees to exchange ideas, advance career prospects and engage with the broader community. Indeed, since its inception, all Canadian institutions with medical doctor and clinician investigator (MD+CI) training programs have participated in the AGM, while more than 1,000 trainees have registered as CITAC members. The 10th CITAC-CSCI AGM was recently held in Toronto (November 20—22, 2017). There were nearly 200 attendees, including CI trainees, faculty member and physician leaders from across Canada (Figure 1A, 1B). Trainees spanning diverse career stages had opportunities to participate in interactive poster sessions, workshops and lectures by leading physician-scientists. These exercises were designed to encourage and enhance networking, career development and mentorship for prospective physician-scientists.

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CITAC's achievements in 2017

CITAC is a trainee-led not-for-profit organization committed to enhancing the experience and career prospects of CI trainees via research, advocacy and education. Elected representatives work individually and in teams on various projects to advance this overall mission. Key highlights from this past year's list of CITAC accomplishments and activities are as follows:

1. **MD-PhD Outcome Study:** Partnering with the University of British Columbia, CITAC published the very first Canadian MD-PhD alumni survey (1). In this study, we reported that 60% of MD-PhD graduates were clinician-investigators and approximately 90% were principal investigators (PIs) with independent research grants.
2. **Recommendation Papers:** CITAC contributed to recommendation papers on clinician-investigator training (2,3). Published recommendations included establishing a national council with a mandate to oversee clinician-investigator training, developing capacity for funding and mentorship support and ensuring that CI

trainee funding is viewed as portable and distinct from operational funding.

3. **New elements in the AGM:** This year, CITAC organized two new AGM workshops; on negotiation and diversity. The former aimed to equip young trainees with basic negotiation techniques, while the latter discussed principles and practical skills needed to establish a fair and open-minded environment for gendered and racial minorities. These workshops, albeit new, attracted a large number of attendees and were received positively.
4. **Focus on mentorship:** CITAC's Mentorship team performed a preliminary nation-wide appraisal of mentorship opportunities and programs available for MD-PhD university students or Clinician Investigator Program students of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Future steps will involve a formal study to ascertain the met and unmet mentorship needs of trainees and to offer recommendations for programs based on this assessment.
5. **Supporting the Naylor Report:** The 2017 Naylor Report identified chronic underfunding and disorganization of the Canadian research ecosystem and made multiple recommendations to improve the current state of fundamental research in Canada. The systemic problems outlined in the report have important implications for CIs and CI trainees, whose capacity to conduct high-quality research that benefits patients ultimately hinges on the overall wellbeing of the broader Canadian research enterprise. CITAC has issued a statement in support of the Naylor Report.

Business in Leaders in Medicine Seminar Series

Within the Leaders in Medicine (LiM) program at the University of Calgary, the "Business in LiM Seminar Series" curriculum was developed to educate both medical and graduate students about business skills within the context of medical education (4). This initiative was motivated by the observation that clinicians currently lack the business skills needed to develop and deploy useful new technologies within the healthcare system. The seminar series is dedicated to building and enhancing entrepreneurial skills that are ultimately required to beneficially change the way care is perceived and delivered. Faced with the dual challenge of escalating costs and an aging population, medicine is currently experiencing a sustainability crisis. Moreover, medicine struggles to adopt even the simplest new technologies developed in adjacent fields. Advancements in operations, clinical practice and technology all play a role in rescuing a

Figure 1

FIGURE 1. (A) Trainee status and (B) institutional affiliation of 2017 CITAC-CSCI AGM attendees.

struggling healthcare system and are more likely to be developed and implemented by entrepreneurial-minded individuals equipped with the capacity not only to innovate within the system, but to disrupt it if need be. The goal of the seminar series is thus to both expose and prepare medical students to apply business aptitudes via seminars on a range of topics; including exponential technologies and disruption in medicine, entrepreneurial thinking, money management, the start-up path, artificial intelligence and many more subjects.

A pilot program with mid-point and year-end surveys to study progress was completed in 2016–2017, while a full program involving 50–75 LiM students, medical students and graduate students is currently underway (2017–2018). With the goal of developing professional skills and understanding business concepts, this innovative program aims to provide scientist-clinician students with business awareness.

New directions for Clinical and Investigative Medicine (CIM) journal

This year, CIM plans to incorporate several new features:

- Focused Reviews: on areas of your research interests (e.g., background on your PhD thesis or prepared from grant applications);
- Reflections: on work and life experiences by CITAC members and senior clinician scientists;
- Methods Papers: describing novel methods that you have developed and anticipate will be useful for others; and
- Guidelines or Recommendations on clinical care that are endorsed by a Canadian Medical or Surgical Societies.

CIM will continue to publish original papers on discoveries in pathophysiology, prevention, management, treatment and outcome of clinical problems confronting clinicians in Canada.

We invite you to be a part of these planned changes. CIM offers a reduced publication charge for articles submitted from Canadian investigators, trainees and Canadian medical and surgical societies. As part of the new CIM direction, there will be closer formalized participation of CITAC on the CIM team. Alexander Levit has joined as the incoming CIM liaison on the CITAC executive committee and Raphael Schneider has joined as a member of the CIM Editorial Board. Please join us as we embark on these changes, which will pave the way to a new stage for CIM.

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