

# **UBC REPORTS**

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# **Best Places to Kiss on Campus**

Your choices for the most romantic setting. BY BRIAN LIN

From the romantic to the risqué, Valentine's Day often takes the blame for a surge in public displays of affection - or PDAs - among lovers who can't keep their lips off each other.

We surveyed the campus for the best location to lock lips. Kisser discretion is advised.

Both the Rose Garden and the top of the Clock Tower seem to be big hits with students.

"Sitting on the wall at the edge of the Rose Garden, watching the sail boats cruise by with the backdrop of a perfect summer sunset," says Megan Thomas, news editor of The Ubyssey. "But who you are kissing is really more important than the venue!"

Not citing any personal experience - nor that of his friends, for that matter - AMS VP External Affairs Sam Saini says the Rose Garden would be his pick for a romantic kiss, while the top of the Clock Tower "seems like a pretty wild place for that sort of stuff."

For a "highly artistic" kiss, AMS President Oana Chirila suggests the top of the Buchanan Tower, but warns that it's not for the weak of heart

The middle of the Pit dance floor and backstage at Chan Centre during a concert were among her top picks, followed by the backyard of the Cecil Green Park House.

Sauder School of Business Marketing professor Kathleen Vohs agrees.

"I attended a beautiful wedding at Cecil Green Park House last fall," says Vohs, who was recently chosen one of 10 Most Eligible Bachelorettes by The Vancouver Sun.

"It just made me want to get married there as soon as I could."

For more private displays of affection, Science student Sarah Kittle recommends the stacks in the bottom floor of the Main Library and "the cage" in the West Storage of the Student Recreation Centre.

"My friends and I were just talking about it the other day," says Kittle of the secured structure for athletic equipment. "We thought it'd be a great place to make out."

Korean exchange students and valentines Yeohoon Park and Myung Suk Cha prefer Wreck Beach and the Rose Garden for smooches.

University Counsel Hubert Lai can't resist the beauty and tranquility of the Nitobe Garden.

"It's one of the undiscovered gems of the UBC campus, with

many quiet nooks to sit with someone special and contemplate all that life has to offer."

Community Affairs director Sid Katz has been in love with a spot right outside Cecil Green Coach House for more than 25 years.

"It's without a doubt the best place to kiss, especially since the recent addition of a park bench," says Katz, who recalls daily walks there from the Dept. of Pharmacy when he first arrived at UBC in 1975.

"I was probably a lot more romantic then," says Katz. "But who can resist the view overlooking Howe Sound, especially on an August evening when the sun is setting?"

For indoor lip-locks, Herbert Rosengarten, executive director of the President's Office, says you can't beat the old dining room on the lower floor of the University Centre.

"This is where my wife Amanda - a UBC grad - and I were married many years ago, and where we exchanged our first marital kiss - in public, of course!"



Sid Katz's quarter-century love affair with the Cecil Green cliff has been made easier with a new park bench.

#### 10 favourite spots to kiss on campus: • Rose Garden

- Cecil Green Park House
- Cecil Green Coach House

• University Centre

- Student Recreation Centre • Nitobe Garden
  - Chan Centre
    - Main Library

• Clock Tower

• Buchanan Tower

### Workshop Helps to Separate Fact from Fiction in Real Life Stories

### Finding the truth is not easy. BY CRISTINA CALBOREANU

What do we read when we read auto/biography? And what exactly are on Stage", will explore the challenges of en we watch auto/biogwe watching w raphical plays?

The workshop, titled "Putting a Life

For the students, this is an opportunity and also a challenge. "The manipulators

The workshop runs February 18-22. For more information, visit



Robert More, Canada's leading expert on puppets.

We commonly expect to find the truth in auto/biographical narratives and plays. But, as one of UBC's experts in auto/biography studies explains, that expectation may not be entirely realistic.

"Auto/biography is something compiled, written, or produced, by another human being, so it's a form of art in its own right," explains English professor Sherrill Grace. "And that is manifestly the case when we're talking about theatre, because there are all these other players who come in: playwright, director, actors, script, stage manager, lights and stage designer."

According to Grace, auto/biographical plays have become more and more common in 20th century literature, but the interplay between theatre and auto/biography, and the reasons for the prevalence of the genre have still to be investigated. That is what an innovative exploratory workshop organized by UBC's English and Theatre departments with support from the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, the UBC Hampton Fund and the McLean Chair for Canadian Studies, has set out to do.

staging and performing auto/biography. It includes keynote lectures, panel sessions, and roundtable discussions featuring a stellar cast of scholars from around the world and some of Canada's most respected playwrights, including Sharon Pollock, Joy Coghill, Mavor Moore and Linda Griffiths.

The focal point of the workshop is a performance of Song of This Place, by renowned UBC alumna Joy Coghill. The play, which explores a storyteller's struggle to portray B.C. artist Emily Carr on stage, is, according to director Robert More, "unique" in its approach and its courage to examine "the creative process and the artistic vision in itself." It contains both biographical and autobiographical elements, which are explored through the use of Bunraku-style puppets, or animated masks, held by manipulators visible to the audience. Four UBC students will give life to the 19 puppets.

"We're moving across a divide here, by involving students in a live play production," says Grace. "Working with Robert More, who is Canada's leading expert on puppets, they're getting a course in a very specialized area which is not part of the regular curriculum."

are walking, listening apparati," explains More. "They must be an open channel to serve the mask and the script. All the acting dials must be dimmed down and the emotions released into the mask, so that the audience can believe the mask is a living breathing being."

And that's not easy. Says More, "I can bring them technique, but that isn't going to make you go, 'God, that's Emily Carr,' and be astonished. They have to listen to the mask and respond, listen to the text and to their fellow actors, and be empathetic to everything around them. Learning to be that open and confident could take 20 years of acting."

For Grace, this production of Song of This Place is an experiment, but also a way of bringing together two worlds. "This event doesn't fit into the academic mode and it bursts beyond the theatre production to bring the two together," she explains. "We tend to live in disciplinary solitudes, but it is exciting and mutually beneficial when academia and theatre meet."

http://autobiography.arts.ubc.ca. L



**IN THE NEWS** 

Highlights of UBC Media Coverage in January 2004. COMPILED BY BRIAN LIN

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### **Bounce at The Bell**

UBC professor Heather McKay has conducted a pilot study that followed almost 100 students who had similar eating habits and physical levels. The activity only difference was that half of them jumped at the bell (just five jumps, three times a day) and half of them did not jump.

McKay found that those who had jumped actually built 3.2 per cent more bone mass in the hip region of the body than the other children. That could be enough to postpone, or perhaps event prevent, osteoporosis later in life.

"We're talking about these children gaining in eight months what we would see women lose in three years around menopause," McKay told ABC News.

"It takes no money to run the program," said McKay. "It takes no special training, and we're talking about an investment of about a minute and a half a day."

#### **Researchers Study** Newborns' Pain at Being Circumcised

UBC Nursing professor Fay Warnock is leading a research study on the pain babies sustain from circumcisions. The researchers systematically note and itemize the behaviour of 10 baby boys during circumcision, recording each head twitch, each leg kick, each eye squeezing.

Warnock told the National Post that this kind of detailed data collection meant exhaustive and successive viewing of each of these 90minute tapes on a second-by-second basis.

Warnock says her work "is very basic in that it is focused on detailing normally occurring newborn pain-related distress behaviours... Its usefulness is conceptual and, hopefully, will result in a deeper and more comprehensive descriptive understanding of newborn pain



Hush little baby: Fay Warnock's study focuses on circumcision because it is "an intense form of newborn acute pain."

### expression."

She says the study focused on circumcision because it is "an intense form of newborn acute pain," but stressed that further research in this area requires ongoing descriptions of other kinds of acute pain.

### Anorexia May Cause Emphysema

The malnutrition that results from the eating disorder anorexia nervosa may cause emphysema, according to a study lead by UBC radiology professor Harvey O. Coxson, also a VCHRI member.

Researchers used a new method of assessing computed tomography (CT) scans to analyze the lungs of 14 anorexia patients and found the malnutrition in these patients changed the physical structure of their lungs.

"There is a reduction in the amount of lung tissue in patients

with anorexia nervosa,"Coxson told CBS News.

"It is unclear whether these structural changes are permanent, but if they are, early therapy is important in patients who have anorexia," Coxson says.

### Man bites dog? No, Planet Heats Sun

UBC astronomer Evgenya Shkolnik has found a planet that is actually heating up its sun.

Shkolnik's study of a large planet orbiting a star 90 light-years away shows that the magnetic field of the planet is producing hot spots on its parent sun, a reversal of the effect the sun has on planets such as the Earth.

"The hotspot moves across the surface of the star keeping pace with the planet, but just a little bit ahead," Shkolnik told USA Today. She said measurements of more than 100 orbits showed that the hot spot on the face of the star exactly matches the motion of the planet.

### Use the 'Force'

For the many who sometimes walk into a room and feel that something is not quite right, the answer may lie in a sub-system of our visual experience, according to a new study on visual perception by UBC psyand chology computer science professor Ronald Rensink.

"Basically visual perception then is two parts. It's got the sort of pictures we all know and love, and then we've got this other thing, this feeling, this using the force, this sensing stream, and they work in parallel, I think. They both operate at the same time," Rensink told the National Post.

While you may not see anything, Rensink says the "sixth sense" or as he calls it, "mindsight," is basically another kind of vision where people can sense a change and have a visual experience of it.  $\Box$ 

### LETTER

### **Dear Editor:**

As co-chairs of this year's campaign, we are delighted to announce that, thanks to the exceptional work of our volunteers and thanks to the continued support of our donors, we have raised the phenomenal total of \$511,150.08 for United Way of the Lower Mainland. Not only have we hit our goal but we have exceeded it by over \$11,000 - truly outstanding!

A campaign like this is a huge team effort and

campaign, whether they are a donor, volunteer or supporter. Of the \$511,150.08 raised, \$350,000 was undesignated - so we can all feel good about the impact these dollars will make in our community.

On behalf of United Way of the Lower Mainland and all the people who will benefit from our contribution, thank you!

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such a fabulous total could not have been achieved without everyone being generous with their time, talents, creativity and money. Everyone should be very proud of their contribution to this

Eilis Courtney Deborah Austin Co-chairs 2003 UBC United Way Campaign

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# **Protecting Young Workers from Crippling**

### Injuries UBC researcher searches for solutions. BY HILARY THOMSON

An 18-year-old sawmill worker was fatally crushed when a log he was attempting to straighten rolled off the skid of an infeed deck.

A 21-year-old lumber piler entered a hazard area without turning off the power. He sustained a crushing injury to his foot resulting in five severed toes.

An 18-year-old power press operator had his right hand and forearm crushed when he reached into the die press to remove some jammed material. He had been on this job for two weeks at the time of the accident.

These real-life incidents taken from a Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. (WCB) report called Protecting Young Workers illustrate how young workers, 15-24 years old, account for the highest rate of compensation claims among all age groups in B.C.

Besides being a tough way to begin working life, these injuries may possibly be the start of long-term health consequences, according to UBC researcher Mieke Koehoorn.

An assistant professor in the department of health care and epidemiology, Koehoorn has launched a study that looks at the experiences of young workers in B.C. She wants to know if persistent symptoms from early work injuries result in increased usage of health-care services in the long term, beyond workers' compensation benefits.

Saves Time and Money

"Young people have higher claim rates mainly due to inexperience," says Koehoorn, who is a Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Scholar. "New workers may be too intimidated to ask questions about safety, not yet prepared in terms of work or safety training or so eager to prove themselves on the job that they perform tasks they're unfamiliar with."

In addition, young workers are often assigned low-end jobs that carry the greatest risk factors. As new workers, they are often unable to recognize workplace hazards and are unaware of their rights as workers to operate in a safe environment.

In a two-year study, funded by the WCB, Koehoorn will examine data that covers the 15-year period from 1985-2000. Using WCB and provincial health records, she will assess if young workers with a compensation claim have more contact over time with the health-care system than individuals of the same age, sex and geographic location.

She thinks young workers may seek continued medical attention outside the compensation system because, although they have symptoms after the claim is closed, they don't know how to re-open a claim. Also, they may be reluctant to take further time off work that will damage their fledgling work record.

Industries where young workers are most likely to be injured include retail

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industries for 15-19-year olds, and for workers 20-24 years old the majority of claims come from the retail, manufacturing, construction and forestry sectors. Common injuries include back and other strains, cuts and bruises.

Koehoorn hopes that her research findings will lead to a better understanding of the impact of work-related injuries and help to direct more resources to prevention and regulatory efforts aimed specifically at young workers.

For more information on injuries to workers. young visit www.worksafe.bc.com/publications/re ports and click on the focus report called Protecting Young Workers. □

### Did you know?

UBC projects received more than \$1.6 million in funding from the WCB Research Secretariat in 2003, out of a total of \$1.8 million awarded to all institutions.

The Research Secretariat launched its first annual research competition in November 2000. The mission of the secretariat is to support scientific research that will lead to a reduction in the incidence and severity of work-related injury and disease.

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The Iona Building at Vancouver School of Theology on the UBC campus. Photo: Perry Danforth

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Please go to our online Event Calendar for full details and registration: www.research.ubc.ca

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# UBC Engineering Students Raise the Quality of Life in East Timor Village

Engineers Without Borders is making a difference. BY CRISTINA CALBOREANU

Villagers in Usu'un, East Timor live off the land. They farm and they fish. It is not easy being a farmer in a place like this, what with rugged terrain, poor soils, and unpredictable rainfall. And it's even harder when you live in a country where 70 per cent of the physical infrastructure was destroyed in an armed conflict in which nearly three quarters of the population was displaced.

Seemingly small things can easily throw off the delicate balance of this life. Things like how long it takes to dry the food that needs to be preserved.

It usually takes more than five days, during which time large amounts of fruit and fish are wasted due to parasitic contamination. That means there will be less to eat.

And that is what UBC third-year Integrated Engineering student Monica Rucki was trying to prevent during her four-month internship with Engineers Without Borders last summer. Rucki worked to build solar dryers that would cut the drying time for fish and fruit to less than two days. Prototypes were built from locally available, inexpensive materials, and locals were trained how to build and maintain the dryers.

Rucki's experience in East Timor was just one example of the work done by Engineers Without Borders (EWB), whose 3,700 members are working on 30 projects in 20 countries to promote human development through access to technology and a focus on building capacity in the local communities.

"It's an attempt at finding sustainable solutions, as opposed to giving something away and then leaving, which is not particularly useful," says Brendan Baker, a recent Metals and Materials Engineering graduate who will be traveling to Senegal later this year for an eight-month internship. He will help develop and implement technologies that will allow locals to process the peanuts and cashew nuts they grow, thus increasing their value. "They found that the nuts are worth next to nothing if sold as grown, in shells – but if they can shell them, skin them, roast them and then package them, then they're worth much more on the local, national and international market," explains Baker.

The UBC chapter of EWB was founded in 2001 and is already one of the fastest growing and most active in the country.

"We focus on promoting awareness of international development and global issues among students and the Vancouver community," says Rucki, co-president of the UBC chapter. "We do that through our internships abroad, through our local projects, and our Speaker Series here on campus."

The UBC chapter is involved in a variety of overseas projects, such as Scala, an EWB-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) project developed in partnership with the Filipino government. The UBC Chapter is trying to raise 40 computers and \$15,000 that will go towards setting up ICT training centres in the Philippines, helping Filipino youth develop computer literacy skills and increase their employability. They are hoping some of these youth will in turn become computer teachers able to keep the ICT training centres alive. "The long-term hope is that the centres are able to selfsustain," explains project leader Jordan Marr.

As part of the UBC chapter's local projects, volunteers with the Scala project have partnered with the Learning Exchange to offer free IT classes in shelters in the Downtown Eastside. EWB-UBC also organizes a High School Outreach program aimed at educating high school students about engineering, appropriate technology and international development. The program is supported by Aeroplan members donating their Aeroplan miles through the Miles Without Borders donation program.

Being involved in so many different projects, locally and across the world, has helped EWB-UBC move beyond the confinements of an engineering club. They are now actively trying to recruit students from different fields (such as commerce or political science) who would be interested in putting their knowledge and experience to work.

"International development is multidisciplinary," says Rucki. "To develop new ideas, you need to involve people with different backgrounds, different educations, and different experiences."

Of course, you also need awareness of international development and global issues, which, they say, is conspicuously absent from the academic curriculum – at least when it comes to engineering.

"There is often a complete lack of study of the social and environmental issues surrounding what we do as engineers," says Baker, the director of curriculum change for the UBC chapter. "UBC is very good technically, but these aspects are often neglected to the detriment of some of the broader and more complicated issues." That is why EWB is aiming to implement a student-directed seminar on international development, based on their experience in developing countries and provided as a full-credit science and technology course for second-year engineering students. They're hoping to promote awareness of global issues and to educate engineering students to recognize that international development is "a two-way street."

"Often there is a perception that we're sending people over there to teach and to impart our knowledge to the local people, and that's not true," says Baker. "In fact, it may be even more so that you're learning how things are done and how the world works, and you can bring that back and use it here. We hope to see a huge difference in the way things are done here, in terms of addressing issues overseas and even in terms of how we address issues here in Canada."

"One of the greatest things I brought back was just humility," adds Rucki. "You gain an immense appreciation for the fact that there are other ways to live than just the way we live, that really work and that make people happy."  $\Box$ 





Living and working in East Timor (clockwise from top): Inspecting the irrigation system in a rice field; a traditional "lulik" or magic hut; a bamboo fence weaving workshop; teaching locals how to make fertile soil from manure, legumes and compost.





### FACULTY OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSOCIATE DEAN, CLINICAL FACULTY AFFAIRS

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# UBC Project Makes Life Easier for Those Suffering from Aphasia

Team designs communication aids

#### **BY MICHELLE COOK**

(with files from Gayle Mavor, Computer Science Dept.)

Anita Borg, founder of the Institute for Women in Technology in Palo Alto, California, was passionate about using technology to better people's lives. Those who knew her say she was a brilliant engineer with a compelling vision and a way of presenting it that would make people sit up and listen.

When Borg was diagnosed with advanced brain cancer in May 2000, her long-time friend Maria Klawe, UBC's former science dean, says, "It felt like the sun had gone behind a huge cloud."

Borg survived the cancer for much longer than expected but, by 2002, had developed aphasia, a condition that affects a person's ability to process and use language while leaving their mental faculties intact. It most often occurs after a stroke but it can also result from a brain tumour or brain injury.

But cancer and aphasia could not defeat Borg's vitality and enthusiasm. She was determined to use her expertise in technology to find ways to overcome her difficulties communicating. She and Klawe began brainstorming. Their discussion laid the groundwork for a remarkable initiative now underway at UBC called the Aphasia Project.

"Anita was having increasing difficulty with speech, reading and writing," recalls Klawe, now Dean of Engineering at Princeton University. "[But] after realizing that her ability to recognize images was still completely intact, we decided to see if computing technology could enhance her ability to function in a variety of ways."

Klawe shared the pair's initial ideas with Karyn Moffatt, a UBC graduate student, and convinced her to take on the task of designing a computer-based aid for people with aphasia as her master's thesis project. Klawe also approached Joanna McGrenere, an assistant professor of computer science at UBC and a specialist in human-computer interaction, to work with Moffatt on her project in addition to exploring other possibilities.

McGrenere remembers being slightly daunted by the scope of the challenge.

"Human-computer interaction (HCI) is a relatively young field. In HCI, where we're trying to design technology to

work for a broad range of users, and one group that hasn't received much attention are people with disabilities, particularly people with speech and language cognitive disabilities," explains McGrenere. "The reason this group doesn't get the same coverage in HCI is because it's difficult working with participants who have difficulty speaking and articulating their needs. It just makes the job of designing technologies for them that much more challenging."

From the start, it was clear to McGrenere and Moffatt that, if they were going to help Borg, they would need a multidisciplinary team of experts. They brought in several other UBC computer science students, along with psychology professor Peter Graf, and Barbara Purves, a clinical professor at the UBC School of Audiology and Speech Sciences with more than 30 years of experience helping people with aphasia.

The group wanted to understand the specific effects the condition had on Borg's ability to function. McGrenere, Moffatt and Purves flew to San Francisco to meet Borg and began investigating preliminary designs and potential applications.

Despite her failing health, Borg showed an enthusiasm for the project that all three women remember fondly.

"Anita was really inspired to use her condition in a way that could help other people, even knowing that she probably wasn't going to see the benefits of most of this work," McGrenere says.

But Borg also had specific needs that she managed to vocalize for the research team.

"Anita wanted to maintain an active schedule and she increasingly had to rely on family members to help manage her schedule and that's not what she wanted," says Moffatt. "She had very real needs so it was easy to envision how the technology could fit in - how it could help."

Back in Vancouver, the team began working with existing technology in the form of an IPAQ pocket PC running with the Windows CE operating system. Their goal was to develop a device that would help Borg and others with



Anita Borg inspired a group of UBC researchers to use technology to help people with aphasia.

aphasia maintain their independence in carrying out small daily life tasks.

Purves estimates that there are approximately 100,000 Canadians with aphasia – about the same number as suffer from Parkinson's disease. She says the biggest frustration for those affected is the impairment of their ability to communicate with words and writing and to some extent, with gesture and drawing, and with it the impairment of their ability to communicate who they are and what they are feeling.

"Aphasia affects people in different ways but the thing that is common is that they're not unable to think, they just can't get their thoughts out, and they also have difficulty taking information in," Purves explains. This makes simple activities like jotting down a doctor's appointment or remembering where to meet a friend for dinner very difficult.

With help from other team members, Moffatt and McGrenere have developed a prototype for a daily planner program that runs on a hand-held computer (much like a Palm Pilot). It is designed so that people who have lost

their ability to recognize words or write them down can record meetings and appointments using a combination of images and sounds and some text.

One of the team's big challenges has been to understand if people with aphasia will be able to use the planner they've designed. Through the BC Aphasia Centre and local stroke clubs in Vancouver, as well as the Life Enhancement Aphasia Program in Victoria, they have enlisted the help of a group of people living with the condition to assess the prototype and incorporate their ideas on how to improve it. Moffatt says the support and enthusiasm from the local aphasia community has been overwhelming.

Sadly, Anita Borg passed away on April 6, 2003 from brain cancer at the age of 54. The institute she founded has since been renamed the Anita Borg Institute for Women in Technology.

But the UBC Aphasia Project is really just getting started. While Moffatt's master's thesis - the genesis of the project – is almost complete, there is still much work to be done on the prototype. There are also several other spinoff projects and case studies in progress.

The team has recruited help from other collaborators, including Jeff Riley, an expert in assistive technology at Vancouver's G.F. Strong Rehab Centre, and they plan to continue working with B.C.'s aphasia community on new prototype technologies.

McGrenere thinks the project could continue for up to 10 years.

"We're definitely in the foothills," she says. "It's a matter of trying to uncover what the best platforms are for this kind of work. [There are] various PDAs, cell phones that can send images back and forth, tablets and a fair amount of mobile technology now.

What is clear is that Borg's vision of technology's potential to help people lives on in an energetic, imaginative group of researchers who were motivated by a remarkable woman.

Klawe says her friend would be thrilled at what the UBC aphasia team has accomplished in its first year.

"Her family members and doctor told me that the project brought her more joy than anything else in the last few months of her life."  $\Box$ 

# **Old Skill Provides Modern Solution to Heart Valve Replacement**

### New technique may mean no more broken breastbones. BY HILARY THOMSON



Sailors' art goes hi-tech with new non-surgical cardiac procedure.

A traditional sailors' craft was the inspiration for a new technique to replace heart valves without major surgery.

Much like a ship in a bottle, the procedure involves inserting a foldable valve through a small incision and running the valve along a blood vessel into the heart where it is 'unfurled' and attached remotely - a virtually non-surgical intervention.

Valve replacement surgery currently requires breaking ribs and breastbone to access the heart, a minimum of a week's hospitalization and considerable recuperation time.

Called Percutaneous Valve Replacement, the new procedure is being developed by Dr. John Webb, director of the cardiac catheterization laboratory at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Still in the experimental stages, the technique offers promise for patients who are too ill to survive traditional valve replacement surgery.

The new method involves a small incision made in the thigh to allow a tube the size of a pencil to be inserted. The tube is threaded along the veins up to the heart. Once the folded valve has been opened and attached in the heart, the tube is withdrawn. After a couple of stitches for the incision and a day's rest, the patient would be able to go home.

Sound simple? Not quite, says Webb, who is also a UBC associate clinical professor of cardiology.

"The new remote procedure is still highly experimental. We haven't yet tried it on a patient. The tube is about three feet long and the placement of the valve within the complex structure of the heart is critical. A few hair widths out of place and the whole thing is wrong. We have to get it exactly right every time."

If the technique can be perfected, it would mean huge health-care savings compared to current methods requiring an operating room and long hospital stays. Most importantly, it would mean that individuals who are too weak for surgery and unlikely to survive might be saved.

Also, patients would be able to avoid the significant pain and discomfort of heart valve replacement surgery.

"When they broke my breast bone and ribs to get at my heart it really hurt," says 86-year-old Eleanor Wetherly. "I was in the hospital for a long time. It was two or three months before I felt better."

Four valves direct blood to and from the body through the heart: the aortic valve, the pulmonic valve, the tricuspid valve, and the mitral valve. Any of these valves may malfunction because of a birth defect, infection, disease, or trauma. When the malfunction is so severe that it interferes with blood flow, an individual will have heart palpitations, fainting spells, and/or difficulty breathing. These symptoms will progressively worsen and cause death unless the damaged valve is replaced surgically.

Webb expects it will be at least two years before patients can benefit from the procedure.

About 80 per cent of Canadians have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease and 11 per cent have three risk factors or more, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Risk factors for cardiovascular disease include smoking, lack of exercise, being overweight, and high blood pressure.

For more information on heart disease and treatment, visit ww2.heartandstroke.ca.

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### UBC ALUMNI

# For the Love of Money

A financial planning workshop for recent grads just in time for tax season!

**BY VANESSA CLARKE** 

A lot of us love money, but not many of us relish the annual chore of working out our taxes – especially when our efforts don't result in a nice fat return. The Young Alumni Network is offering recent graduates a workshop that will teach them how to manage their money efficiently and invest it wisely.

Just in time for the March 1 RRSP deadline, Jonathan Pagtakhan, BA'98, a financial advisor with CIBC, will teach workshop participants new investment strategies and ways to keep the taxman at bay. He'll talk about goal setting, borrowing, cash flow management, RRSPs, investment planning and asset allocation. A representative from London Life will also be on hand to talk about different types of insurance.

Thursday, February 12th HSBC Hall UBC Robson Square 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm Cost: \$15 For tickets, please contact Sandra: aluminfo@alumni.ubc.ca or 604-822-3313

Jonathan Pagtakhan is a volunteer on the Young Alumni Network committee, helping to organize events that will be useful to recent graduates in their professional development (there are also plenty of opportunities for socializing).

One of Jonathan's favourite memories of UBC is of the couches at Sedgewick Library — perhaps a contender for the best place to kiss on campus?

For more information about the Young Alumni Network, a program offered by the UBC Alumni Association, please contact Dianna DeBlaere at YAmentor@alumni.ubc.ca or 604-822-8917 or visit the website: http://www.alumni.ubc.ca/programs/youngalumni/index.html

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### New Invention **Saves Pain** for Patients and Doctors

Making needles easier to give and easier to take

BY MICHELLE COOK (with files from ErinRose Handy, Applied Science)

Joanne Driscoll (not her real name) has a deteriorating disc in her spine. To slow the deterioration down, doctors must insert a long needle filled with a steroid into her back every three months.

It's an experience marked with fear and anxiety and sometimes, when the needle misses its mark, excruciating pain.

"I have heard others scream when this happens and I've wanted to scream myself. One time it felt like molten lava coursing down my leg," Driscoll says. "It is also very stressful for the person inserting the needle. Once after many painful failed attempts, a resident actually asked my supervising doctor to put



Robert Rohling demonstrates the steerable biopsy needles he and fellow inventors have engineered.

He says the main challenge for doctors is having to imagine where to direct the needle, without actually being able to see where it's going. It's a skill that comes only with experience. The potential dangers are numerous: a misplaced needle can cause bleeding, pain, or seed healthy cells with cancerous ones.

"There's a certain anxiety when you insert a big needle into someone and time needed to perform it.

Rohling adds that while the cost of the system is still more than a regular, disposable needle, the health-care savings will be in the reduction of time it takes doctors to perform a procedure.

The researchers' next step is to prepare the prototype for clinical trials. The steerable needle hasn't been

used on humans - yet. Instead,

### "There's a certain anxiety when you insert a big needle into someone and you don't know whether you're going to get results or not."

on his gloves and take over my treatment."

Needle insertion is one of the most common medical procedures. It can also be one of the most nerve-racking for both medical practitioners and patients - especially when it involves the 15-cm-long needles used to reach regions deep inside the human body.

Now, a group of UBC engineers has developed a steerable needle to help doctors hit their target on the first try - and save their patients the stress and pain of multiple insertions.

"What's interesting about this needle is that instead of putting a straight needle into the body and hoping it goes towards its target, we have a needle that can steer itself from the tip. It can guide itself. It's a very smart needle," says Prof. Robert Rohling, a professor jointly appointed to the departments of mechanical engineering and electrical and computer engineering and one of the needle's inventors.

The steerable needle prototype looks like a stainless-steel barbeque lighter with a 15-cm hypodermic needle attached to it. What makes it unique is that within its barrel, there is a second, flexible needle with a curved tip. The second needle can be steered by a joystick on the needle's handle, giving doctors greater accuracy in locating their target, and make corrections along the way.

you don't know whether you're going to get results or not," Qayumi says. "If the biopsy is in a remote place, even experienced doctors can have difficulties. They've got to get to the target area without damaging tissue or causing complications."

Although he has not used the steerable needle, Qayumi welcomes Rohling's research, with fellow inventors Tim Salcudean, an engineering professor, and master's engineering students Richelle Ebrahimi and Stephen Okazawa, to improve the technique of needle insertion.

Okazawa says the biggest hurdle in designing the steerable needle prototype was getting the mechanical and electrical parts to work together with the computer software designed to run the needle. But the result is a one-of-a-kind device that the research team hopes will take some of the discomfort out of a painful procedure, and cut down on the

researchers have been trying it out on tissue phantoms - simulated pieces of tissue that Okazawa cooked up in his own kitchen using agar, a gelatinous substance obtained from seaweed, and then embedded with peas and grapes for target practice.

Even before doctors get their hands on the first prototype, its inventors are already thinking about how to improve the steerable needle's capabilities.

"We look at these types of applications and think ahead to even more advanced systems where we have computer-aided control," Rohling says. "The first iteration has a little joystick and the control is all in the operator's [doctor's] hand. The second may be to let the computer handle the joystick and monitor the needle's progress and provide the corrections. Eventually, a robotics system may take care of both pushing the needle and steering the tip."  $\Box$ 



### **Retiring Within 5 Years?**



Rohling says the steerable needle won't change the basic aspects of the biopsy procedure. Like a conventional needle, it is inserted into the body by puncturing the skin at the best access point, and pushed in until the tip reaches the desired target. The big difference is that, once inserted, the doctor can use the thumb-controlled joystick to steer it along straight or curved paths.

He envisions doctors using the device in conjunction with ultrasound another medical technique he is working to improve.

"The steerable needle will give doctors an extra degree of control," Rohling says. "We expect the first applications will be the more difficult, deeper insertions [but] it is also possible that the steerable needle will help a novice reach their target on the first attempt - without trial and error."

As the director of Surgical Techniques Training Programs for UBC's medical undergraduates, Karim Qayumi has guided many residents through the needle insertion procedure. He's also performed countless needle insertions himself. He says it's not an easy experience.

While there may be many popular places to kiss on campus, in 1951 UBC engineers were concerned with the quality of the kiss not the location. That year, at the annual Engineer's Ball, the most popular attraction was the Kissometer. Engineers claimed it registered the intensity, heat, and pressure of the kiss, and then transformed them to a numerical rating on the needle graph. When the needle hit ten, a large red neon sign with the letters "STOP" lit up. It was reported in the 1951 UBC yearbook that few patrons of the ball missed out on a trip to the Kissometer.  $\Box$ 

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#### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**2004 President's Service Award For Excellence Nominations** *The committee is seeking nominations of outstanding staff and faculty who have contributed outstanding service to the university* 

For a nomination form, please go to <u>www.external-affairs.ubc.ca/ceremonies/</u>

Please mail nominations to: president's service award for excellence committee C/0 ceremonies office 2nd floor, ponderosa b CAMPUS ZONE 2.

Deadline for nominations is Feb 27, 2004

The STEPS-Forward Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Society advocates for, and facilitates, the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. The goals of the society are to advance the values of inclusion, active citizenship, and diversity in all communities. In September 2003, with the financial support of the Vancouver Foundation, and the support and cooperation of UBC and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, STEPS-Forward began assisting students with intellectual disabilities to audit regular classes and participate in campus life. In May 2004, STEPS Co-op will begin placing students in summer jobs with the cooperation of local Rotary clubs and the support of the Vancouver Foundation.



to explore new research initiatives. The proposal should be broadly interdisciplinary and involve basic research. The deadline for the Spring 2004 competition is March 1st.

For more information, contact the Wall Institute by phone (604) 822-4782, or e-mail info@pwias.ubc.ca or visit our web site at www.pwias.ubc.ca



Teenager Sean Carleton's artwork is basis for look of site, developed by Cossette Interactive Vancouver.

### For Teens in Crisis, Help can be a Click Away

UBC Education professor pilots web-based crisis hotline for youth

#### **BY ERICA SMISHEK**

Youth in crisis in the Lower Mainland can now turn to their computers for help.

UBC Education professor Shelley Hymel is piloting Canada's first webbased "hotline" for youth in collaboration with the Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of B.C. (Crisis Centre in Vancouver) and SAFER (Suicide Attempt Follow-up, Education and Research) Counselling Service.

"Young people are increasingly comfortable with computers and may use the web to seek support in a time of crisis," says Hymel, an expert on bullying and youth in crisis. "We want to find an effective way to reach them.

"Kids need to talk. If they're talking on

the Lower Mainland. It features a oneon-one free and confidential link enabling youth to talk to someone online, in real time (limited number of hours); an e-mail address for youth to write about their problems and receive a guaranteed response in 24 to 48 hours; the 24-hour Distress Line phone number to the Crisis Centre in Vancouver as well as links to other crisis centres in B.C.; a list of youth-preferred resources available in the Lower Mainland; and information and facts about common problems that youth face, including bullying and harassment, stress, suicidal feelings and teenage pregnancy.

National Crime Prevention Canada's Community Mobilization Program. Critical to the success of this unique online resource was the support of At Large Media and Cossette Interactive Vancouver.

"We jumped in," says Ian Ross, executive director of the Crisis Centre in Vancouver, a registered non-profit organization that has provided free programs and services, including a 24-hour, 7-days a week Distress Line, to people of all ages and walks of life since 1969. "We were on the same wavelength with Shelley and SAFER. It was really natural for us to move into an online service."

Distress Line volunteers receive 60

### "We don't do therapy online. We focus on providing non-judgmental support to callers through the 'art of listening' and then if appropriate provide options and resources."

the web, then that's where we need to go."

The web-based hotline is a place where youth can comfortably talk about issues they are facing at school, at home and in the community, such as relationship or family problems, bullying, racial discrimination, mental health issues, victimization, addictions and more. The site allows youth to connect with volunteers aged 19 to 25 who have been specially trained to provide crisis intervention, psychological first aid, support and resource information.

The site went live in January and is being promoted in Burnaby secondary schools through the 2003/04 school year, with the potential to expand throughout



"We did a lot of brainstorming with kids about what would work," says Hymel. "One of our graduate students, Rina Bonanno, conducted focus groups with secondary students and asked them what they wanted on the site. They said, 'give us a professional site that says you mean it, that you really care."

Youth were brought in as consultants on content and design – Sean Carleton, for example, provided original artwork that would become the basis for the look of the site; a young person who lost a teenaged brother to suicide last year, shared her experience and ideas.

The initiative began more than a year ago following a talk on bullying Hymel gave at a local Vancouver community centre shortly after a young male victim of bullying committed suicide by jumping from the Patullo Bridge. She was approached by a local businessman who wanted to help victimized kids and kept after her to do something.

An inspired Hymel came up with the idea for an online hotline. The businessman provided \$4,500 in seed money for the initiative, and stepped away, never to be heard from again. She persevered and, through various serendipitous connections, including partnerships with the Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of B.C. and SAFER (part of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority), received \$45,000 from hours of crisis intervention training and on-going support from professionals from the Crisis Centre in Vancouver

"We're looking for people with the potential to be good listeners," Ross says of volunteers. "We don't do therapy online. We focus on providing non-judgmental support to callers through the 'art of listening' and then if appropriate provide options and resources."

Kaylie, a 23-year-old UBC psychology graduate, volunteered in order to get experience helping others with similar situations in which she has found herself. According to her site profile, "The stress of school, a major break-up, and deaths in my family have made this year a tough one for me. Also back when I was 16, I found out I was pregnant. I had a lot of friends to talk to but I really wish I had someone like the Crisis Centre to help me through it. There are so many times when you just need someone to talk to; someone who won't judge you and can't tell anyone else what you tell them because they don't know you."

Researchers will monitor use of the site through June to determine the efficacy of the online hotline. If the webbased focus proves successful, they hope to secure more funding to keep the site live after June and eventually expand this form of crisis assistance provincially and nationally.

For more information, visit www.youthinbc.com.  $\Box$ 

### LIVING AT UBC

### INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR FACULTY AND STAFF ON HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

If you're like most faculty and staff, your day starts in traffic. Fortunately, there are other options. UBC is creating residential neighbourhoods around the academic core that offer urban living, recreational and cultural amenities in a spectacular physical setting.

Faculty and staff could be among the first to have the opportunity to rent or own. For example, through the innovative co-development housing program, you could join a group to purchase and develop your own home. To register for an information session, call 604.731.3103 or email info.universitytown@ubc.ca



### UNIVERSITY TOWN

For more information visit www.universitytown.ubc.ca, or call 604.731.3103 to register.

## k u d o s

**Anne Martin-Matthews** has been appointed scientific director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Aging.

The appointment is effective for the term Jan. 1 to July 1, 2004.

Martin-Matthews joined UBC in 1998 and is a professor of family studies in the School of Social Work and Family Studies. Her research interests include families and aging, intergenerational relationships, widowhood and health.

A fellow of the Gerontological Society of America, Martin-Matthews most recently served as vice-chair of the advisory board of the Institute of Aging.

One of CIHR's 13 institutes, the Institute of Aging is dedicated to supporting research that promotes healthy aging. The institute links



researchers located in university, hospital and other research centres across Canada.

CIHR is the Government of Canada's premier agency for health research.  $\Box$