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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# UBC REPORTS

December 2010

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UBC puts a priority  
on mental health

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a Bhangra beat

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## Who is watching the children?

This researcher  
is working with the  
United Nations to help  
track the youngest  
among us 4

By Heather Amos





©istockphoto Robert Koopmans

## In the news

### UBC REPORTS

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#### Executive Director

SCOTT MACRAE scott.macrae@ubc.ca

#### Editor

RANDY SCHMIDT randy.schmidt@ubc.ca

#### Design Manager

ARLENE COTTER arlene.cotter@ubc.ca

#### Public Affairs Studio

PING KI CHAN ping.chan@ubc.ca

SARAH ENRIGHT Production/Retouch

#### Photographer

MARTIN DEE martin.dee@ubc.ca

#### Web Designer

TONY CHU tony.chu@ubc.ca

#### Contributors

HEATHER AMOS heather.amos@ubc.ca

LORRAINE CHAN lorraine.chan@ubc.ca

JODY JACOB jody.jacob@ubc.ca

BRIAN LIN brian.lin@ubc.ca

BUD MORTENSON bud.mortenson@ubc.ca

BASIL WAUGH basil.waugh@ubc.ca

#### Advertising

PEARLIE DAVISON pearlief.davison@ubc.ca

#### Distribution

EMMY BUCCAT emmy.buccat@ubc.ca

#### Printer

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## Highlights of UBC media coverage in November 2010

Compiled by Heather Amos

### Can a volcano spawn salmon?

The **BBC**, **NPR**, **Nature News** and the **Globe and Mail** reported on the speculation that a 2008 volcanic eruption on an Alaskan island was responsible for this year's salmon run in B.C. rivers—the largest since 1913. “The food chain set off by that ash and the phytoplankton growing was enough to cause a considerable increase in growth and survival of the Fraser River salmon,” said **Tim Parsons**, a retired oceanography professor. “It's as good as any other theory we have at this time,” says **Carl Walters** from the Fisheries Centre, who noted that the last big salmon run in part of the Fraser River, in 1958, came two years after a huge eruption on the Kamchatka Peninsula.

### Shift work linked to higher risk of work injury: UBC study

The **Canadian Press**, **CTV**, **CBC**, **Canada AM** and the **Vancouver Sun** picked up on a new report by UBC researchers that suggests Canadians who work night shifts are almost twice as likely to be injured on the job as those working regular day shifts.

“The hypothesis behind this is that working shift work increases sleepiness and reduces alertness which, in turn, can lead to injury,” said **Imelda Wong**, a PhD candidate at the School of Environmental Health and the study's lead author.

The study was co-authored by **Chris McLeod**, a research associate at the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, and **Paul Demers**, clinical faculty member at the School of Population and Public Health.

### Jon Stewart and his rally may shun politics, but attendees are embracing it

The **New York Times**, **Postmedia News**, **CBC** and **CKNW** spoke to journalism professor **Joe Cutbirth**, who studies news satire, about Jon Stewart's Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear. Cutbirth said he believes the majority of people attending the event see Stewart as a credible critic of politics and the media.

“I think [Stewart] is a sincere guy who seriously is troubled by what he sees going on in America. And I think he has chosen to use his talent to live in that area and use it.”

### Text messages helped Kenyans with HIV

Sending simple text messages by cellphone to HIV patients in Kenya increased the likelihood that they would stay healthy, found researchers from UBC and the University of Manitoba.

Study participants who received the messages were more likely to follow their medication regimen compared with those who didn't get the texts. Those who received messages were also more likely to have an undetectable level of HIV a year after starting treatment, as was reported by **Scientific American**, **Agence France Presse**, the **Canadian Press** and **CBC**.

“It's not actually reminders, per se, it's actually the support that they seek, and timely triggers to be able to report on any problems that they have,” said study author **Richard Lester**.

### Increased age of sexual consent in Canada may not protect teens at greatest risk: UBC study

A new study found that increasing the legal age of sexual consent does not protect youth most at risk, as children 12 years old and younger have reported sexual experiences with adults. The **CBC**, the **National Post**, **CTV** and **City TV** ran versions of this story.

Legal age of consent increased in 2008 to 16 years old from 14 to protect younger teenagers. But the study shows the change clearly isn't helping children at greatest risk, said **Elizabeth Saewyc**, a professor of nursing and adolescent medicine at UBC.

“The law was changed to protect 14 and 15 year olds from adult sexual predators. But it turns out they're not the ones at greatest risk,” said lead investigator **Bonnie Miller**.

### Correction

Alongside a story about UBC's new dean of the Faculty of Arts, we incorrectly indicated that other original faculties at UBC were Medicine and Law. The correct original three were the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Applied Science and the Faculty of Agriculture (now known as Land and Food Systems). The Faculty of Medicine began in 1949, and the Faculty of Law began in 1945.

Martin Dee Photograph



# Dentist cures root canal blues

If all you want for Christmas are your two front teeth, then give Santa a call. But if you're facing a complicated root canal, a dentist trained in endodontics would be a better bet.

By Lorraine Chan

**Houman Abtin** compares doing root canals to playing the blues. Read more at: [www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/ubc-reports](http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/ubc-reports)

### Faculty of Dentistry graduate student Houman Abtin embodies the traits and skills that anyone in knee-buckling pain would hope to find.

“I know I'm capable of saving the patient's tooth without causing discomfort,” says Abtin, a dentist with 10 years of experience who is earning a master's degree in craniofacial science with a diploma in endodontics, the treatment of diseases of the tooth root and pulp.

Abtin says he has learned a lot from working with diverse populations, thanks to a community outreach program at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH).

“Sometimes a person needs dental care, but is also hooked up to a heart monitor or could be receiving immune suppressant drugs for an organ transplant,” says Abtin.

Despite these challenges, the rewards are immense, says Abtin, recalling how impressed he was by the regenerative power of one particular patient. One 85-year-old male patient at VGH complained of toothache in his back molar. Abtin removed the diseased tissue from the root and saw from the man's X-ray that bacteria had caused substantial bone loss around the molar root.

However, during a check up 10 months later, Abtin found the patient had up to 10 millimeters of bone growth around the treated tooth.

“When a root canal is irrigated and bacteria are cleaned out, the bone can grow back 90 per cent of the time,” says Abtin, adding, “It's an amazing feeling to know that my treatment has created an environment where the body can repair itself.”

The community service experience, given its breadth and diversity, is invaluable for helping students deal with the unexpected, says Dr. Jeffrey Coil, head of the endodontics division and an assistant professor who teaches oral biological and medical sciences.

Coil explains that students get to refine and augment their clinical skills and also translate their cutting-edge research into front line care. “For instance, graduate students will have studied the most effective treatments for root canal disinfection, looking at different combinations and concentrations of irrigants such as sodium hypochlorite, EDTA and chlorhexidine.”

To read more about the Faculty of Dentistry's endodontic research, visit: [www.dentistry.ubc.ca](http://www.dentistry.ubc.ca)

## Students augment their regular clinical training with community service, which at VGH can mean treating medically compromised patients.

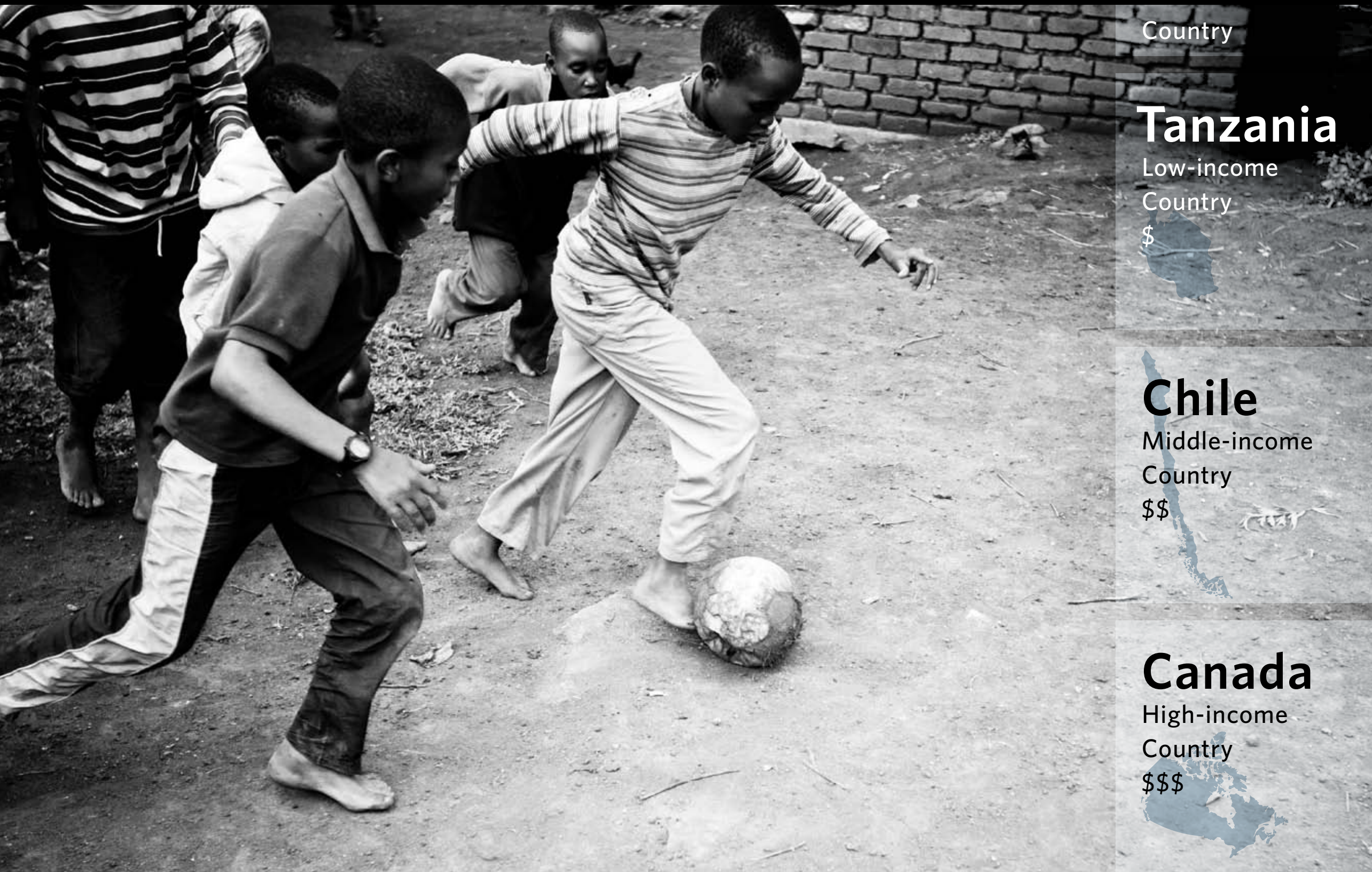


# UBC pioneers child rights monitoring

By Heather Amos

Ziba Vaghri is working with the United Nations to highlight the rights of the youngest members of society.

## Early childhood rights around the world



Country

### Tanzania

Low-income Country

\$

### Chile

Middle-income Country

\$\$

### Canada

High-income Country

\$\$\$

Profile

Violations

Ziba Vaghri says:

**Tanzania** is a low-income country but recent developments have stimulated dialogue around young children and the ways their well being could be enhanced. The Ministry of Education has committed to the provision of universal access to pre-primary education, and the government has agreed to the development of an Integrated Early Years Strategy.

**Baby girls are subject to female genital mutilation**  
*Violation of the right to health and development*

**Female children are given many chores so there is no time for leisure and school work**  
*Violation of the Right to a non-discriminatory code of conduct*

**“When we got to Tanzania, we didn't have to convince anyone about the need for Early Child Development (ECD). There was already a lot of enthusiasm and excitement about this project. The problem is that they're missing the capacity to implement the convention right now.”**

**Chile** has a history of advocating for ECD and child rights. The Chilean government has made children a focal point of its political agenda. In 2006, the Ministry of Education committed to building a model for early childhood education that can be implemented on a national scale to strengthen language, literacy and health practices in Chile.

**Children living in congested urban quarters do not have a physical space at home and/or in the neighbourhood to play**  
*Violation of the Right to play and leisure activities*

**“The previous president of Chile was a pediatrician and very much pro-ECD. We expect to see a greater focus on children and a greater amount of preexisting capacity in terms of child right related policies and programs.”**

**Canada** is a wealthy country with a large number of pre-existing policies and programs that address ECD, but with fragmentation across the provinces. The size of the country, the amount of information to report and the governance structure in Canada will make the process more complex.

**Children cannot go to a well-developed ECD programs like daycare because of the cost**  
*Violation of the Right to access to ECD programs*

**“With the various ECD policies and programs in Canada, the jurisdictional challenges and the number of stakeholders, our main goal is to help Canada understand the full range of activities that are needed to fulfill rights in early childhood.”**

**Finding affordable and quality child care for preschoolers is a familiar challenge for many Canadian parents. What may be surprising is that the inability to access this type of service could be a violation of child rights.**

The United Nations' Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) was enacted in 1989 and has been ratified by 193 countries, including Canada. Countries that have signed the CRC have an obligation to invest in early child development through programs and services for children and by supporting parents and caregivers so they can raise their children appropriately.

“We often don't think of very young children as right bearers and active members of society”, says Ziba Vaghri, the director of the International Research and Initiatives Program

at UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP).

Countries that have ratified the CRC are obligated to submit periodic progress reports to the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC). In the past, these reports have mostly overlooked very young children—children below the age of eight.

“Early childhood is a critical age,” says Vaghri. “Experiences in the early years influence a person's health, education and economic potential throughout their life.”

Vaghri and her colleagues at HELP maintain that by protecting the rights of children in their earliest years, they are put in the best position to succeed in life. And this paves the way for society's health and prosperity.

The missing information on

young children in the reports to the UN-CRC worried experts in the field. Their concern was that this was just the tip of the iceberg and an indication of countries tendencies to overlook obligations to children in their early years.

In 2006, the UN approached Clyde Hertzman, the director of HELP who was recently named Canada's Health Researcher of the Year, and other international development agencies such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF, to create a guide to support countries through the process of writing and submitting their progress reports. A key focus for the group has been to ensure that the reports include information on the rights of children in their early years.

Hertzman and Vaghri have been leading the process and have developed

a series of child rights indicators that are based on health, development, education and other parts of a child's care. The use of indicators as a report writing tool will help countries to become mindful of the existing gaps in child rights systems.

“Writing reports in this way will create a body of information that itself can inform infrastructure and policy development,” says Vaghri.

But before this report writing tool can be adopted and applied in all 193 signatories to the convention, it has to be rigorously tested. HELP and its partners have to successfully complete six pilot projects—two each in low-income, middle-income and high-income countries.

The first of these pilots was carried out in 2009 in Tanzania, considered a low-income country. In early 2011,

**The 2008 UNICEF Report Card, which compares the status of early childhood education and care in the 25 most affluent countries, ranked Canada at the bottom for investment in early child development.**

Hertzman and Vaghri will launch a pilot in Chile, a middle-income country. In 2012, the team will implement a pilot in Canada.

“As a country with high standards of living, Canada should be a global model of how a society supports human development, starting with early childhood,” said Vaghri.

The 2008 UNICEF Report Card, which compares the status of early childhood education and care in the 25 most affluent countries, ranked Canada

at the bottom for investment in early child development.

“As Canada fails to fulfill its obligations to young children, its leading role on the world stage will be compromised,” says Vaghri. “Our hope in bringing the pilot to Canada is to take inventory of the policies, programs and commitments in place. This will raise awareness of the current gaps, and bring stakeholders together to engage in a constructive dialogue.”

If all goes according to plan, the

report writing tool will be endorsed by the UN-CRC and will be accepted globally within three to five years.

“As UNICEF reports, ‘a great change is coming over childhood in the world's richest countries,’” says Vaghri. “Let's just hope that we play a leadership role in this exciting change ahead of us.” ●



# UBC makes mental health a priority

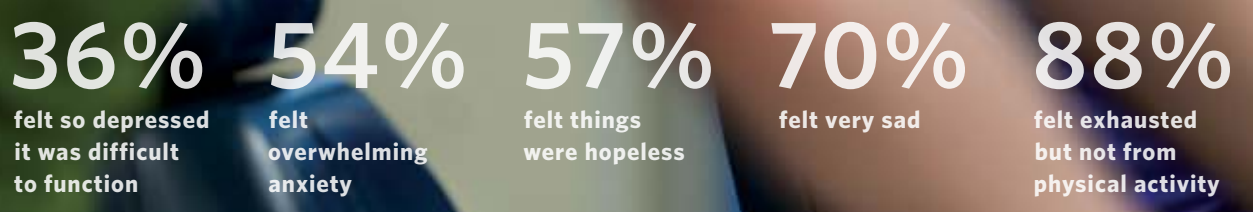
One of the most important factors affecting a student's academic success is mental wellbeing. The university is developing an integrated plan to build awareness and improve access to services.

By Heather Amos

Cheryl Washburn, director of Counseling Services at UBC, tells UBC Reports about the university's plan to make mental health a priority.



According to a 2009 NCHA survey, UBC students said they experienced these issues at least once in the last year.



December is typically filled with cheer, joy and happiness. The semester wraps up and there's plenty of holiday celebration and family time. But the holiday season also comes with a wide range of demands that can leave us feeling more drained, financially strained and disappointed. Come January, when some of us feel a little down, it can be challenging to grasp what's happening to our minds and bodies.

For UBC students trying to understand why they might be sleeping more or feeling a little moody and unmotivated, there are plenty of new resources on campus. These resources are part of a new and more comprehensive approach to student mental health at UBC.

This approach has been adopted in response to cumulative National

College Health Association (NCHA) survey data that indicate that mental health concerns have the greatest negative impact on students' academic performance. In the 2009 NCHA survey, 40 per cent of students reported that stress negatively affected their academic performance, 30 per cent were affected by anxiety, and 16 per cent by depression. Analysis of responses to questions on resilience, developed for the UBC survey by Cheryl Washburn, director of UBC Counselling Services, pointed to the importance of developing a pro-active approach to enhancing student mental health. The survey, spearheaded in 2004 by Dr. Patricia Mirwaldt, director of UBC Student Health Service, is conducted at every two years.

"We understood we needed to promote student mental wellbeing if we wanted

our students to succeed academically," says Washburn. "We want students to get a lot out of their experience here and we need to create the conditions that will help them thrive."

In 2009, Enrolment Services and Student Development and Services

**"We understood we needed to promote student mental wellbeing if we wanted our students to succeed academically."**

engaged in an integrated planning process focussed on improving the student experience at UBC. Improving student mental health emerged as one of three top priorities of an integrated action plan. This planning process was facilitated by higher education consultant Richard Keeling.

Student mental health is also being promoted through initiatives coming out of UBC's focus on excellence in advising, such as the Student Learning Plan and Early Alert System.

"Improving student experience at UBC meant we had to enhance student health and wellbeing," says David Farrar, the Provost and Vice President Academic at UBC. "It's part of fulfilling one of the major commitments in our strategic plan, *Place and Promise*."

The new approach to mental health and wellbeing is based on prevention

and intervention. It aims to increase awareness and skills for maintaining mental wellbeing, create a more supportive learning environment, provide early identification and support for students experiencing difficulties and improve access to mental health services, says Washburn.

"We want to develop an approach that involves students, faculty and staff because everyone has a role in maintaining the mental health of our students," says Washburn.

Specific strategies have been put in place to achieve this goal and others are in development. The university will continue to monitor NCHA data and will also look at UBC's data from the National Survey of Student Engagement. Together these student surveys will provide a snapshot of student wellbeing and experience at UBC.



©iStockphoto Forest Woodward

## Strategy to improve student wellbeing

- Awareness and Skill Building**  
Students may not necessarily recognize that they are struggling until their problems become overwhelming. "There is often a lack of awareness of early signs that they are having difficulty coping," says Washburn. She explains that the university wants to help students recognize early warning signs of stress and learn strategies for coping effectively. Initiatives include:  
**Live Well Learn Well** Visit this website with self-assessments, skill building toolkits and links to UBC services and resources. [www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell](http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell)  
**Thrive** Attend the annual week-long series of events encouraging UBC students, staff and faculty to invest in healthier living  
**Suicide Awareness Campaign** Reduces stigma and increases awareness of warning signs of suicide and resources available to students.  
**Healthy Minds at UBC blog** Builds students' capacity to maintain mental health by increasing awareness and reducing stigma.  
**Wellness Matters workshops** Provides skills for managing your stress, time and health  
**Wellness Centre in the SUB** Student volunteers answer questions about your mental and physical health

- Creating a More Supportive Learning Environment**  
Washburn says UBC is implementing systems wide strategies to create a more supportive learning environment which also promotes student mental health. She says that first year students can feel isolated and unsure of their academic choices. They may also feel unsupported more generally in terms of how to manage multiple demands.  
**The faculties of Arts and Science are piloting learning plans** that provide students with a framework to foster learning, goals clarification and planning, as well as meaningful engagement in the campus community. Plans are underway to make this available to all first year students.  
**An admissions business process review is underway** to recommend changes to better support students from admission through their first year.

- Identification**  
Washburn says UBC is implementing several programs that enable identification of students with difficulties and connection to supports to prevent students from reaching the point where they are unable to cope.  
**Early alert system** to identify students who may be experiencing difficulties and provide timely connection to appropriate resources and services.  
**QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer):** Training for faculty, staff, and students in how to recognize warning signs of suicide, reach out and ask about suicidal thoughts and feelings and refer to appropriate services.

- Improved access to mental health services**  
Counselling Services has implemented several new approaches to provide students with more timely access to the services and resources.  
**Initial screening appointment** within 24 hours and matching to appropriate services and resources on and off campus.  
**Onsite counselling** at the First National House of Learning three times a week to increase access for Aboriginal students.  
**Increased access** to group programs focusing on mood and self-management skills.  
**Streamlined referral** to Student Health Service psychiatry.

**More information on Counselling Services and the Student Health Service can be found at Live Well Learn Well: [www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell](http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell)**

## Depression

UBC's "Live Well Learn Well" website explains depression and says what to watch for


- Signs and symptoms**  
Fatigue or loss of energy and motivation  
Difficulty concentrating  
Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much  
Difficulty making decisions  
Poor appetite or overeating  
Irritability, feelings of guilt or self-criticism  
Thoughts of suicide

- What to do**  
Set some goals—make them small, specific and realistic  
Exercise regularly, eat well, get enough sleep and have fun  
Hang out and talk with friends, they provide emotional support  
Focus on positive parts of your life  
Avoid alcohol or drugs

- When to get help**  
Mood is persistently low  
Symptoms interfere with your ability to do day-to-day activities  
Suicidal thoughts

- Who to call**  
UBC Counselling Services: **604.822.3811 (office hours)**  
Student Health Service: **604-822-7011**  
**1-800-SUICIDE (1.800.784.2433)** at any time

 **More information available at: [www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/learn-about-wellness/depression/](http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/learn-about-wellness/depression/)**

 **Take this quiz to assess your wellbeing [www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/assessment-and-toolkits/assess-your-wellbeing/](http://www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/assessment-and-toolkits/assess-your-wellbeing/)**



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A division of UBC Food Services

# Bhangra delivers safe farming message

Anne-Marie Nicol is getting creative with communicating health risks to members of British Columbia's farming community—Bollywood-style.

By Brian Lin



Bollywood lends help—with purple rubber gloves—to educate about safe washing instructions.

**While conducting her post-doctoral research in the Fraser Valley, Anne-Marie Nicol, now an assistant professor in the School of Environmental Health, found that women and other family members are exposed to as much pesticide as full-time farmers.**

Para-occupational exposure, or second-hand exposure, where proximity to work sites is as dangerous as active participation in the work, has been well documented in industries such as lead and asbestos mining and is sometimes referred to as the “subtle killer.”

“But it hasn’t been addressed or studied as closely in the agriculture industry,” says Nicol. “And you don’t have to travel very far from downtown Vancouver to witness it first hand.”

Many women participate in farm

work, including mixing pesticides. If not handled properly, protective clothing worn into the household could transport and contaminate other clothing and household items. Long-term exposure to pesticides has been shown to be associated with dermatitis, neurological damage and higher rates of cancer, such as Non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

While the government promotes safe pesticide handling guidelines to farmers, the information is not effectively reaching many women who live or work on farmland—grandmothers, wives, daughters—because they don’t self-identify as farmers, says Nicol, who specializes in health information communication.

“They are essentially part of an invisible, unpaid work force, and when

you consider that many of them are new immigrants to Canada and may be illiterate both in English and Punjabi, they are quite literally falling through the cracks.”

That is, until Nicol came up with an entertaining and culturally relevant solution. “Flyers won’t do the trick, and the current standard of guidelines written in English, posted on a web site aimed at male farmers certainly won’t, either” says Nicol. “But it was clear from speaking with farm women in the Fraser Valley that the majority watch and enjoy Bollywood-style productions.”

Nicol enlisted the help of Punjabi-speaking UBC students, Simon Fraser University’s Media Analysis Lab in the School of Communication and its award-winning N.S.M.

Bhangra dancers to produce a TV spot featuring Bollywood actress and Leo Award-winner Balinder Johal. The public service announcement depicts a mother-daughter conversation (with Johal and her real life daughter, Michelle) about safe washing instructions in Punjabi, complete with a Bollywood dance sequence.

“We chose laundry as a gateway to discussing health issues with women because it’s an activity that falls squarely in the female domain in the community,” says Nicol. “We were lucky to have such a recognizable actor as Balinder, who donated her time on the project—we couldn’t have afforded her usual fees.

“It was freezing cold the day of filming and the dancers were in these beautiful but very thin costumes. I was extremely



Bollywood actress **Balinda Johal** donated her time for the Wash With Care PSA.

**While the government promotes safe pesticide handling guidelines to farmers, the information is not effectively reaching many women who live or work on farmland.**



## Wash with care: Safe-laundering instructions for protective clothing

Protective clothing should be washed after each use and separate from regular laundry. Many pesticides are made to adhere to crop surfaces and withstand rain.

**1**  
Use hot water

**2**  
Use the highest water level and longest wash cycle

**3**  
Use strong detergent

**4**  
Hang clothes to dry in the sun

**5**  
Run washing machine through an empty cycle after use

**6**  
Always use gloves

moved by their dedication to the project.”

In addition to showing the TV spots on Shaw TV, Nicol has also brought the message to local gurdwaras, or Sikh temples, grocery stores and to the recent Diwali festival. Helping her deliver the message were the SFU dancers and some eye-catching purple rubber gloves.

“The use of rubber gloves is vital in limiting contamination and we really wanted something that would appeal to women—the decision to pick the purple ones was pretty easy and unanimous,” says Nicol, who will evaluate the effectiveness of these tools in the spring.

The project has already inspired one of Nicol’s students to look more closely at the role of turbans as a potential

source of environmental contaminants and could inform future endeavors to communicate health information to specific communities. ●

*Wash with Care was supported in part by the Vancouver Foundation and has developed into a team project which includes SFU’s David Murphy (Communications) and Kitty Corbett (Health Sciences), and Satwinder Bains (Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies) from the University of the Fraser Valley.*

**For more information and to view the public service announcements, visit [www.washwithcare.ca](http://www.washwithcare.ca).**



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# Tweet, click, blog: A new way to learn business

By Lorraine Chan

# COMM 101



Instructor **Paul Cubbon** explains the COMM 101 grading system

**In total, participation is worth 25 per cent of the grade, in a combination of clicker questions, in class, hand-in assignments and verbal contributions. The other 75 per cent comes from individual papers, a group project plus presentation, blog entries and end-of-term reflections on learning takeaways.**

We assign value to being able to ask good questions and link concepts to each other and to specific situations. This requires confronting ambiguity and the more abstract challenges.

Halfway through the course students are invited to give themselves an interim grade on participation, and set their own course of action for the second half of term. This is part of helping students to take responsibility for their own learning.

To date, the mean grades are at least as good as a typical first-year commerce course. However, we are seeing an improved quality of critical thinking and professionalism. The focus on engagement and dealing with concepts as opposed to just facts can be disconcerting for some students in the first instance. However, we observe rapid improvements in many students through the course of the term.

COMM 101 is a social-media-meets-pedagogy experiment that is drawing strong reviews from Sauder School of Business students.



**To get good marks, students have to read newspaper articles, attend class and share ideas whilst tweeting, clicking and blogging. There are no textbooks or exams.**

COMM 101 is a business foundation course covering fundamentals such as supply chain, marketing, accounting, ethics, finance, sustainability, social enterprise and leadership.

"It really feels like the first time school is at the same pace as the outside world," says first-year commerce student Maria Sun. "I love the interactions in the classroom. You really have to be alert because ideas move so fast in the room."

Part of that alertness, says Sun, means doing the assigned reading before class. Without a textbook to rely on, students must go online and read

the five to six pages of news articles from sources that often include the Harvard Business Review.

Currently, there are 480 students enrolled across multiple sections of COMM 101. Jeffrey Fong counts himself lucky to have been one of the 90 students in the COMM 101 pilot earlier this year between January and April.

"I struggled in my lecture-based courses," recalls Fong, "but excelled when it came to reading and analyzing a case, exploring possibilities and generating recommendations and conclusions."

Now in second-year commerce, Fong says he's reaping the benefits. "COMM 101 gave me a solid foundation that allows me to constantly think about ties between different aspects of business. I now think about marketing issues during my managerial accounting classes. I think about human resource issues during my managerial accounting."

Designed by Sauder instructors Paul Cubbon and Jeff Kroeker, COMM 101 uses a kinetic, high-energy format to

stimulate and engage learners.

Upon entering the large lecture hall, students are greeted by upbeat music playing before class starts. Music again punctuates changeovers from large-group to small-group discussions. There are often two lecturers at the helm plus a teaching assistant and the occasional guest speaker.

Cordless microphones are passed around to make sure everyone's voice is heard during discussions. Several large screens show the class Twitter account as well as other materials such as video clips or student presentations.

Twitter serves several purposes, says Cubbon, a marketing and social media expert. One is to document the rapid-fire exchanges. "We looked at other platforms and tools, but they don't have the ability to archive in-class discussions in a flexible, real-time format."

Students work in small groups of three or four, distilling their arguments into crisp, succinct points, 140 characters at a time. Out of a total of 30-40 tweets projected onto the screens,

**Students' tweets become part of a digital portfolio as do their weekly 200-word blogs where students apply class concepts to interpret the business news.**

the instructors refer to three or four to spur class debate.

Topics run the gamut from whether Canadian Tire should sell groceries to how trendy fashion retailer Zara can produce and ship designer knockoffs to stores within three weeks.

"We run the 80-minute class like a business meeting," says Kroeker.

"Twitter can make a 100-plus class feel like 30 where everyone is able to share their ideas and ask questions."

Also projected onto the screens are students' clicker responses. Clickers are an electronic device that works like a TV remote, instantly relaying results for surveys such as, "How many of you drive a hybrid?" or multiple choice questions. Students are assigned clickers that record their class participation.

Clickers provide another means for students to employ critical thinking and shift from passive listening into active mode, explains Kroeker, who teaches accounting. "This tool allows everyone in the class to apply concepts from their readings."

Students' tweets become part of a digital portfolio as do their weekly 200-word blogs where students apply class concepts to interpret the business news. Slowing down the pace at the end of each class, the instructors schedule a reflection period for students to make notes on key points and principles. ●



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# mHealth: The next big thing in global health, and at home?

By Richard Lester, MD, FRCPC

The passage of another **World AIDS Day on Dec. 1** provides a fitting occasion to take stock of the disease's toll, but also the progress we've made in combating it.



Richard Lester Photograph

There were more than 16.3 million cell phone subscribers in Kenya in 2008.

## I quickly realized that the primary language to learn was not Swahili, but Short Message Service (SMS).

cellular phone "epidemic" to increase the odds of maintaining their medication. The system we created was simple: Our nurses or clinical officers sent weekly check-ins—"How are you?" ("Mambo?" in Kiswahili)—that required patients to respond by texting either that they were doing fine ("Sawa") or had a problem ("Shida"). Those with a problem, or who didn't respond, were followed promptly with a call from the clinic to provide advice or triage for any problems. For patients who sometimes traveled up to 600 kilometres to attend the clinic, this access to a medical expert was a hit.

To ascertain if it truly made a difference in patient outcomes, we conducted a randomized clinical trial. The results, recently reported in *The Lancet*, showed that patients who received weekly SMS "check-ins" were 12 per cent more likely than a control group to have an undetectable level of the HIV virus a year after starting antiretroviral treatment. We estimated our text-messaging program would cost \$8 per person per year, and if scaled up in Kenya would result in an extra 26,000 people

with HIV levels suppressed to undetectable levels. I had the opportunity to present this evidence, on behalf of our team, at a conference last month devoted to such mobile health strategies. The mHealth Summit in Washington, D.C., attracted 2,400 delegates from the private sector, governments and non-governmental organizations, and included keynote sessions from Bill Gates, Ted Turner and John Holdren, the Chief Technology Advisor to the White House. The themes that arose at the conference—the need for hard evidence, the emphasis on ground-up innovation and the importance of using existing, low-cost technologies—bolstered my conviction that our experiment was worth replicating.

We are now undertaking a pilot study to take what we've learned in Kenya and apply it here in British Columbia, not only with people infected with HIV, but those with tuberculosis, a disease that also requires ongoing medication. Cell phones provide an opportunity to foster the patient-caregiver relationship in tangible ways that can ultimately improve human health. There is a long way to go, but perhaps technology is on our side. ●

**Richard Lester is an assistant clinical professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases in the UBC Faculty of Medicine, and Lead Physician in the Division of Sexually Transmitted Infections/HIV Control at the BC Centre for Disease Control.**

### The development of antiretroviral medication ranks as one of modern medicine's great achievements. But we are far from declaring victory.

Unlike the polio vaccine, which effectively eradicated the disease in places where it was widely distributed, antiretroviral therapy requires an infected person's lifelong adherence to an extensive medication regimen. Moreover, the people most affected by HIV—those living in Africa—also face the greatest challenges adhering to the medication.

Even if the cost of the treatment is covered, as the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has largely done in Africa, HIV-infected Africans often live far from clinics, or find themselves at the mercy of food shortages, economic hardship and wars that undermine the stability necessary for ongoing treatment.

But as I discovered during a five-year research fellowship at a Kenyan HIV clinic while I was at the University of Manitoba, there is at least one simple, low-cost method of countering those seemingly overwhelming challenges: mobile phone text messages.

I had never used my mobile phone for text-messaging until my arrival in Kenya. I quickly realized that the primary language to learn was not Swahili, but Short Message Service (SMS). As with the rest of the African continent, Kenyans were taking up cell phones at a rate faster than anywhere else in the world, and text messaging is inexpensive, rapid and convenient.

Our clinic staff and some patient volunteers brainstormed how to harness the

Q.

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# UBC Library and the digital future

By Glenn Drexhage

Allan Bell says it is hard for libraries to be nimble when their goal is to preserve.



Martin Dee Photographs



“Google has done some amazing things using libraries. They partnered with libraries and then digitized scads of material, and made those available. We (the library community) could have done that.”

**Allan Bell still shudders at the memory.** Bell, the new Director of Digital Initiatives at UBC Library, recalls a recent technology conference that he attended. The speaker was a renowned academic from a prestigious business school. He was relaying his experience, in excruciating detail, about an online search using his library’s website.

Following numerous failed attempts, he finally opted to use Google Scholar—and the item he sought instantly appeared.

After the talk, Bell approached the

speaker and asked him if he had told the resident librarians about this experience.

“He gave me what he called the cold-hearted answer,” Bell recalls. “He couldn’t be bothered.”

It’s a tale that serves as a stark warning to all academic libraries in this brave new binary world—adapt and excel, or face possible consignment to the dusty stacks of yesteryear.

UBC Reports spoke with Bell—who previously worked at the University of Waterloo, Stanford University Libraries,

Ovid Technologies Inc., the University of Texas and McGill University for his thoughts on the role of libraries in the digital age.

**On his position, which is a new role at UBC Library:**

“The thing that really drew me to this job was that the digital agenda is a key part of the Library’s strategic plan (<http://strategicplan.library.ubc.ca>). That and the fact that if there is a future for libraries this is where that future will be made—in the digital realm.”

“The challenges are a lot more difficult now, because of the commercial ventures that are doing work that we arguably should or could have been doing. The Google Books project, Google Scholar, all those kinds of things are competing with us for our core audience in a way that we’ve never really had before.”

“I believe we can rise to the challenges. But I think the challenges could be fairly dire, especially if we don’t change our organizations and evolve to meet them.”

“Google has done some amazing things using libraries. They partnered with libraries and then digitized scads of material, and made those available. We (the library community) could have done that.”

**On libraries’ way forward:**

“We need to be more nimble, but it’s difficult to be nimble when your goal is to preserve things for a long, long time. So we’ve done pretty well by waiting to see what happens with new formats. But things are happening so quickly now that that waiting period doesn’t really exist anymore. So we really need to move a lot more quickly.”

“I think we need to provide the intellectual context that maybe isn’t provided by commercial entities. As information explodes, which it clearly is doing, the need for someone to wayfind for people, or guide them to the right place, becomes even more important.”

“Also, it’s important that libraries now seem to rent collections. We have a long history of building physical collections, but now we end up renting electronic content on a subscription basis. The fact that we are making material available from our own collections through digitization is an important step to building digital collections from the rich offerings at UBC.”

“In addition, we have to start looking at the things that are born digital and start integrating those into the Library and into our finding aids to become indispensable to teaching, learning and research at UBC.”

**What is a key emerging trend in terms of libraries and technology?**

“Digital preservation is something that we need to figure out sooner rather than later. It’s a complicated issue that will require a multi-pronged approach. If we’re doing digitization projects, that’s great, and it’s great that we have good backups for disaster recovery. But we really need to make sure that these inherently fragile digital objects are going to be authentic and available in 20, 30 years.”

“It’s not one of those issues where you do it once and forget it. Digital preservation is going to be something that we’re going to have to loop around and look at again and again and again to make sure that we’re doing it right for the future.” ●

## The problem of preservation

**Digital preservation is a major issue facing research libraries.**

**While the centuries-old format of paper remains a hardy medium for storing information—such as text and graphics—the ever-changing guises of digital technology (remember floppy disks?) present big challenges. Aged storage media and formats become obsolete, while newer ones may not be compatible with their older counterparts. If left unattended, websites, blogs and other digital information might simply disappear into cyberspace.**

**Given the implications, the problem of preservation has become a worthy area of study and research. For example, the InterPARES project, based at UBC’s School of Library, Archival and Information Studies and headed by Professor Luciana Duranti, focuses on the long-term preservation of digital records.**

**You can find out more at [www.interpares.org](http://www.interpares.org)**

# outtakes

## Reflections on academic life

Trapping antimatter “tremendously exciting” for Prof. Walter Hardy

A research team called the ALPHA Collaboration, with a strong contingent of Canadians, has trapped antimatter for the first time at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research), the world’s largest particle physics lab located in Geneva, Switzerland. Their discovery was published in the November 18 edition of Nature.

### How did you get involved in this project?

I and Mike Hayden, a UBC graduate and now professor of Physics at SFU, were asked to join the ALPHA project five years ago, mainly because of our work on cryogenic atomic hydrogen in the 1980s at UBC. Mike received his PhD in my group, working on precision spectroscopic measurements in atomic hydrogen in 1991. The ultimate goal of the ALPHA project is to use various spectroscopies to determine whether hydrogen and its anti-matter relative, anti-hydrogen, are identical or not.

First, however, the anti-hydrogen had to be produced, and then trapped. The Nature paper details the first successful trapping of antihydrogen, certainly in the world (and probably in the universe!).

UBC Physics and Astronomy professor **Walter Hardy** is part of the team at CERN, along with graduate students Sarah Seif El Nasr and Andrea Guiterrez. He shared his thoughts as news of the discovery broke.

### Why is this project important?

One of the great mysteries of physics, and particle physics in particular, is: why does the universe consist entirely of matter? Somehow, during the formation on the universe, matter won out over anti-matter.

Conventional theories predict that matter and anti-matter are identical, except for having the opposite charge. So far, the experiments that can be done show this seems to be true, but not to the level of precision that one needs.

Studying anti-hydrogen, an anti-proton and an anti-electron, to the same precision as for hydrogen, has been a dream project for some time. After 10 years of effort, the all-important first step has been taken and precision studies of anti-hydrogen can begin.

### What is your role moving forward?

Prof. Hayden and I have been involved in a variety of projects within the overall collaborative effort. With trapping established, our expertise in precision microwave spectroscopy becomes central to the efforts to compare hydrogen to anti-hydrogen. ●

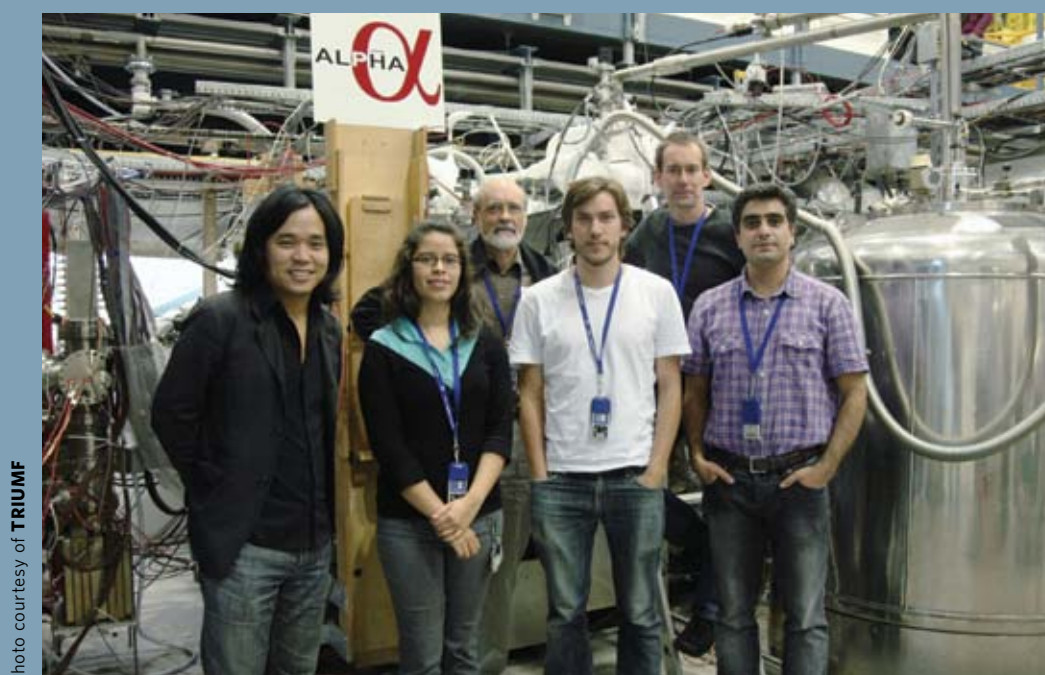


Photo courtesy of TRIUMF

UBC’s **Prof. Walter Hardy**, left back row, stands with other Canadian team members in front of the main magnet of the ALPHA experiment. Back right is SFU Prof. Mike Hayden (UBC PhD). Front left to right: U Calgary Prof. Makoto Fujiwara (UBC PhD), Andrea Guiterrez (UBC PhD student), Tim Friesen (U of Calgary PhD student), Mohammad Dehghani Ashkezari (SFU PhD student).





Martin Dee Photograph

UBC economist **Kevin Milligan** says doubling Canada's parental leave program has not improved childhood development scores.

## Expanded parental leave: Are children better off?

By Basil Waugh

**“When we compare early development scores of infants up to age 29 months before and after the increase in parental benefits, we find no evidence of improvement.”**

**View the study, *Evidence from Maternity Leave Expansions of the Impact of Maternal Care on Early Child Development*, at: [faculty.arts.ubc.ca/kmilligan/research.htm](http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/kmilligan/research.htm)**

**Nearly 10 years later, the national program that doubled parental leave benefits has produced little evidence of improved early childhood development.**

A study by researchers at the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto, which investigates the December 31, 2000, expansion of Canada's parental leave benefits from six months to one year, raises questions about the effectiveness of the taxpayer-funded program and provides insight into the impact of parental care on early childhood development.

According to the study, published in the current issue of the U.S.-based *Journal of Human Resources*, the reform significantly increased the amount of maternal care that children receive between the ages of 7-12 months, with corresponding decreases in mothers' full-time employment and childcare by relatives or unlicensed non-relatives.

However, despite these social impacts—paid for by Canada's Employment Insurance system with up to \$10,000 in additional benefits per child—the study finds a surprising lack of improvement across national early childhood development measures.

“When we compare the early development scores of infants up to age 29 months before and after this major increase in parental benefits, we see no evidence that this policy has improved their development,” says Kevin Milligan of UBC's Dept. of Economics, who co-authored the study with Michael Baker of the University of Toronto.

“This policy enables parents to spend more time with their children, so is incredibly popular,” says Milligan, who has two young children. “But the question is, is it fair for taxpayers to be paying for a policy that evidence suggests is failing in its expressed goal of improving childhood development?”

The study was made possible by the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), a Canada-wide survey of behavioral, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children. The researchers studied development scores of more than

2,100 infants over 6 birth-year cohorts.

After finding no post-reform improvements in developmental scores for infants aged 0-29 months, Milligan and Baker are now researching newly released NLSCY data to determine whether development impacts are occurring later in life, between the ages of 29 months and six years old.

“For infants under 29 months, we can track things like motor skills, temperament, and how quickly they sit up and walk,” says Milligan. “It can be difficult to assess cognitive development in infants, so the next phase of this study will look for any significant improvements in indicators that reflect this, like scores in math and literacy.”

Ten years later, Milligan says the reform still stands among the largest expansions of parental leave benefits in any country in generations, providing important fodder to other nations who may be considering similar policies. ●

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