

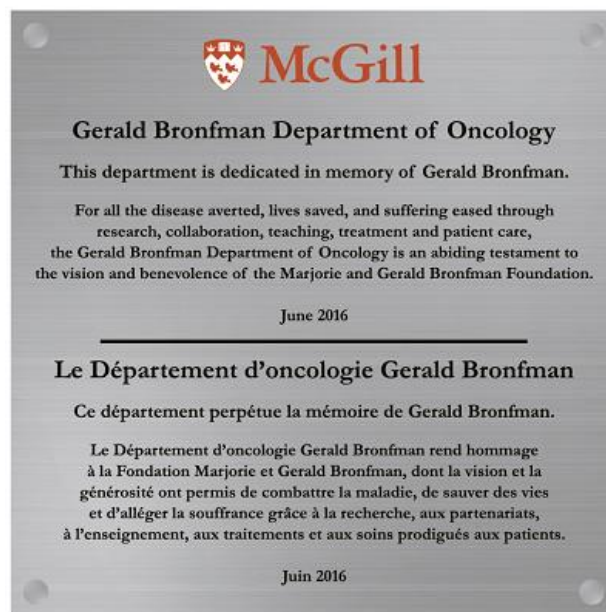


## Seventh Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology Distinguished Lecture and Awards Ceremony

**Celebrating More Than 30 Years of Excellence in  
Education, Research and Patient Care**



Portrait of Gerald Bronfman



Plaque dedicated to the memory of Gerald Bronfman

The Seventh Gerald Bronfman Distinguished Lecture and Awards Ceremony was held at the Faculty Club on November 27, 2023. This annual event is in recognition of the Department's leading patron, Gerald Bronfman, and his family. In her opening remarks, Dr. Lesley Fellows, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, talked about the importance of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of cancer research in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, thanked Dr. Eduardo Franco for the creation and implementation of this annual event during his tenure as Department Chair, expressed her appreciation to Dr. Armen Aprikian for serving as Interim Chair of the department, and acknowledged the generous support of the Bronfman family. Dr. Aprikian acknowledged the previous department chairs, Dr. Brian Leyland-Jones, Dr. Henry Shibata and Dr. Gerald Batist, and thanked Dr. Franco for his outstanding achievements as the most recent Chair. Dr. Aprikian also thanked Dr. Gayle Shinder, Stephanie Larocque and Rania Iliyan for providing invaluable support as he fulfilled his role as Interim Chair, before introducing the Distinguished Speaker, Dr. Morag Park.

### **Distinguished Lecture**

*The cancer research ecosystem, lessons learned, gaps in knowledge, future directions.*

Dr. Morag Park is a Distinguished James McGill Professor in the Departments of Oncology,

Biochemistry and Medicine at McGill, the Diane and Sal Guerrero Chair in Cancer Genetics and the Director of the Rosalind and Morris Goodman Cancer Institute. In addition, she is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and a Knight of the Ordre national du Québec.

In her presentation, Dr. Park described the evolution of cancer research from the 1980s to the present day whereby the fundamental discoveries in the 1980s and 1990s was followed in the mid-1990s by the notion of stratifying cancers based on biomarkers and the concept of personalized medicine. By the mid-2000s there was a shift to genomic based personalized medicine with a further shift in the late 2010s to immune based personalized medicine.

Dr. Park also illustrated through several examples the immense value both scientifically and with regards to funding, of building large-scale multi-institutional collaborative research initiatives. In one project regarding pediatric and young adult cancers, a small initiative to sequence the pediatric genome and look for drivers of pediatric cancers eventually led to a much larger pan-Canadian initiative called Precision Oncology For Young People (PROFYLE) funded by the Terry Fox Research Institute and other funding sources. Another initiative to build a breast cancer tissue bank to link clinical data with patient outcomes became a large interdisciplinary and multi-institutional network funded first by the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation and then by the Cancer Research Network of the FRQ-S. The Terry Fox Research Institute's Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network is comprised of regional consortia across Canada pursuing cancer research centered around precision oncology. More recently, McGill announced that it had received \$165 million from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) for its DNA to RNA (D2R) research program focused on inclusive genomic-based RNA therapeutics. Precision oncology is one of its prioritized diseases. This initiative will include many partners including from academia and industry. In summary, the creation of large networks focusing on specific domains of cancer research allows for the broader sharing of ideas and resources thus facilitating research that would be more difficult for an individual researcher or institution to do on their own.



Distinguished Lecturer, Dr. Morag Park

## Awards Ceremony

Before commencing the Awards Ceremony, Dr. Aprikian expressed, on behalf of the department, his appreciation for the generous support of the Bronfman family. The Awards Ceremony was divided into three parts: (i) presentation of two Kuok Fellowships; (ii) presentation of four Merit Awards and (iii) presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Aprikian introduced the fellowship and award recipients. The citations for each of the Merit Award recipients were read by their respective nominators while Dr. Aprikian read the citation for the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

### (i) Kuok Fellowships

The Kuok Fellowships, offered by the Rossy Cancer Network (RCN) in collaboration with the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, support graduate training opportunities in research domains relevant to the RCN. Two doctoral level Kuok Fellowship awards were presented:

- **Callum Mullen**, PhD candidate (supervised by Dr. Eduardo Franco) for the project entitled, *Correlates and impact of delayed diagnosis and treatment in children with cancer in Québec*.
- **Aissatou Bintou Khairy Thilor Ndiaye**, PhD candidate (supervised by Dr. Talía Malagón) for the project entitled, *Short- and Long-Term Impact of COVID-19 on Ovarian Cancer Control and Care in Canada*.



Dr. Eduardo Franco, Callum Mullen, Dr. Armen Aprikian



Dr. Talía Malagón, Thilor Ndiaye, Dr. Armen Aprikian

### (ii) Departmental Merit Awards

The *Academic, Clinical or Research Support Award* was given to **Veronica Atehortua** (nominator, Dr. Peter Metrakos). As Ms. Atehortua was unable to attend the event, Dr. Metrakos accepted the award on her behalf. Ms. Atehortua is the administrative assistant for the Cancer Research Program (CRP) at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre. She provides support to the CRP program including organizing its Research Day and scientific seminars, assisting with the budget and purchases, and drafting letters, memos, and minutes. She also works with the Principal Investigators providing administrative support in matters related to human resources, management of grants, financial reports and student stipends.



Veronica Atehortua, Drs. Armen Aprikian, Peter Metrakos, Lesley Fellows



The *Teaching and Mentorship Award* was given to **Dr. Valerie Panet-Raymond** (nominator, Dr. Tarek Hijal). Dr. Panet-Raymond is an Assistant Professor in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, Division of Radiation Oncology, and a radiation oncologist at the Cedars Cancer Centre of the McGill University Health Centre. She is currently the Director of Oncology Undergraduate Medical Education and has recently served as Interim Director of the Radiation Oncology Residency Training Program. Dr. Panet-Raymond has been a supervisor to many students, residents and fellows and has received the Radiation Oncology Resident Teaching Award three times (2012-2013, 2016-2017, 2017-2018). She has served as an examiner for the combined CHUM and MUHC Radiation Oncology resident oral examinations, a preceptor for medical students shadowing during multidisciplinary oncology tumour boards, lecturer in neuro-oncology and breast cancer for the Canadian Radiation Oncology Royal College Refresher Course, and co-organizer and lecturer of the Oncology Module for the McGill International Medical Student Summer Course.



Drs. Tarek Hijal, Armen Aprikian, Valerie Panet-Raymond, Lesley Fellows

The *Research Award* was given to **Dr. Josie Ursini-Siegel** (nominator, Dr. Ivan Topisirovic). Dr. Ursini-Siegel is a Professor in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, an Investigator at the Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research (LDI) and the Scientific Director for the Molecular Oncology Group at the LDI. She runs an internationally recognized breast cancer research program where she has demonstrated the important role of the protein ShcA in breast cancer growth, progression, and the tumor microenvironment. Moreover, she has created numerous innovative animal models of breast cancer which she enthusiastically shares with the broader scientific community and has many productive collaborations with colleagues at McGill as well as nationally and internationally. Dr. Ursini-Siegel has published in internationally recognized journals including Nature Communications, Cancer Research, Journal of Clinical Investigation Insight, and Breast Cancer Research. Her research has been well-funded with grants from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute and the Cancer Research Society.



Drs. Armen Aprikian, Ivan Topisirovic, Josie Ursini-Siegel, Lesley Fellows

The *Clinical Service and Innovation Award* was given to **Dr. Tarek Hijal**, (nominator, Dr. Valerie Panet-Raymond). Dr. Hijal is an Associate Professor in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, Division of Radiation Oncology, and a radiation oncologist at the Cedars Cancer Centre of the McGill University Health Centre. He is constantly seeking ways to improve processes in the clinic with the goal of improving the delivery of patient care. Examples include the implementation of an electronic waiting room system to optimize patient flow in radiation oncology and which has now been implemented throughout the Cancer Centre, and the co-creation of the Opal application, a patient portal in oncology which has won numerous prestigious awards in Quebec including *The Prix Banque Nationale – Innovation et soutien à la communauté*. Dr. Hijal is currently the President of the Comité National de Radio Oncologie which represents radiation oncology to the Health Ministry in Quebec and has brought many of his innovative ideas to the provincial forum.



Drs. Armen Aprikian, Valerie Panet-Raymond, Tarek Hijal, Lesley Fellows

### **(iii) Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Department's *Lifetime Achievement Award* was presented to **Dr. Richard L. Cruess**. Dr. Cruess played an instrumental role in the creation of the Department of Oncology in 1990 when he was Dean of Medicine. He was born in London, Ontario and his family moved to the US where he completed a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University in 1951 and an MD from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1955. He spent two years at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal doing an internship and then residency training in surgery before moving back to the US in 1957 to spend two years serving as a Lieutenant Medical Corps in the U.S. Navy where he was assigned as the Ward Medical Officer of Orthopaedic Service at the U.S. Naval Hospital in St. Albans, New York. From 1959 to 1962 he did residency training and then a fellowship in orthopaedic surgery at the New York Orthopaedic Hospital of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, and from 1962 to 1963 he was a Research Associate in the Departments of Orthopaedic Surgery and Biochemistry at Columbia University. Dr. Cruess became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada in Orthopaedic Surgery in 1963 and was certified as a specialist by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery in 1965 and as a specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Province of Quebec in 1967.

Dr. Cruess served as the Orthopaedic Surgeon-in-Charge at the Royal Victoria Hospital from 1968 to 1981, and the Surgeon-in-Chief at the Shriners Hospital (Montreal) from 1970 to 1982. He also was an Honorary Consultant in Orthopaedic Surgery at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from 1970 to 1996. At McGill University he has been a Professor of Surgery since 1972, Chair of the Division of Orthopaedic Surgery, from 1976 to 1981, Assistant Surgeon-in-Chief (Department of Surgery) at the Royal Victoria Hospital, from 1979 to 1981, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine from 1981 to 1995 and Associate Director of the Centre for Medical Education from 1995 to 2001. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the MUHC Research Institute from 2002 to 2014.

Dr. Cruess has received many honours including a Medal of Honor from the University of Paris, Val-de-Marne Campus (1989), the Duncan Graham Award for Outstanding Contributions to Medical Education in Canada from The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (1997), the Presidential Gold Medal from the Société Internationale de Chirurgie Orthopédique et de Traumatologie for contributions to the art, philosophy and science of medicine (1999), Officier of the L'Ordre National du Québec (2003), Quebec Medical Association's Prix d'Excellence (2006), Medical Council of Canada's Outstanding Achievement Award (2007), The Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Medal (2012), the Order of Canada - Member (1995), Officer (2000) and Companion (2014), and with his wife, Dr. Sylvia Cruess, the Flexner Award for Lifetime Contributions to Medical Education from the Association of American Medical Colleges (2018). In 2010 McGill established the Richard and Sylvia Cruess Chair in Medical Education and in 2018 the Department of Orthopedic Surgery established the annual Richard Cruess Achievement Award for faculty. During his long career, Dr. Cruess has been an invited speaker across Canada, the US and overseas, has published 221 articles and book chapters and has been the editor of several books.



Drs. Armen Aprikian, Richard L. Cruess, Lesley Fellows



Drs. Armen Aprikian, Valerie Panet-Raymond, Tarek Hijal, Richard L. Cruess, Josie Ursini-Siegel, Morag Park, Lesley Fellows

Photos at the event by Owen Egan and Joni Dufour