



University of  
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release — Tuesday, May 23, 2023

## University of Lethbridge celebrates International Clinical Trials Day

Back in 1747, James Lind, a surgeon, started a clinical trial with sailors sick with scurvy aboard a Royal Navy ship. He gave them a variety of dietary supplements and saw a remarkable recovery in those who were treated with citrus fruits. Lind's work not only saved the lives of sailors, but laid the foundation for modern clinical trials.

Today, clinical trials — a type of clinical research that involves voluntary human participants or their blood and tissues — involve interventions such as treatments, procedures, devices or changes to lifestyle. They are used to determine the safety and effectiveness of the intervention. International Clinical Trials Day on May 20 provides the opportunity to recognize the achievements of the clinical research community.

“Clinical trials are essential to the advancement of human health and well-being,” says Dr. Dena McMartin, vice-president research. “Clinical trials help us develop new treatments such as drugs and vaccines, as well as medical devices and procedures. ULethbridge researchers who conduct clinical trials help improve the quality of life for many people.”

While many pre-clinical research trials are conducted at the University of Lethbridge, many researchers work with human participants.

For example, Dr. Darren Christensen, a Faculty of Health Science professor with expertise in addictions, and a team of researchers are [investigating the potential for naltrexone](#), a drug usually prescribed for people with alcohol or opioid abuse disorders, to treat disordered gambling.

“The results we gather in this study will give us important scientific evidence for an application to Health Canada to introduce the first regulated drug treatment for gambling disorders,” says Christensen.

In the Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education, [Dr. Jon Doan](#) (PhD '06) and his team have long examined the ability of people living with Parkinson Disease (PD) to retain their skating skills.

“Paradoxically, many people living with PD maintain their skating skills,” says Doan. “A recent clinical trial from our lab combined an ice-skating intervention with stickhandling a hockey puck or ringette ring and found that people living with PD had significantly improved functions in their upper extremities with the intervention.”

Dr. Bonnie Lee, a professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences’ Addiction Studies program, conducted a clinical trial in the provincial health system using [Congruence Couple Therapy](#) (CCT), a counselling model that treats the person with addiction and their partner together rather than separately. The results showed that CCT produces significantly better outcomes for clients with alcohol and gambling problems compared to individual treatment.

In the Department of Neuroscience, Dr. Robbin Gibb and her team developed the [Building Brains Together](#) program to promote play-based activities for children and enhance adult capability around child development. The goal of the program is to improve executive function (EF) and resilience in both children and their families. Originally targeted at preschoolers, the team has recently developed an EF skill-building play program for adolescents that is now being tested in Lethbridge classrooms.

Also in neuroscience, [Chase Petruska](#), a student in Dr. Gerlinde Metz’s lab, is working with individuals with physical disabilities to better understand their personal stresses and mental well-being. This research aims to find areas where individuals with physical disabilities lack proper support and attempt to build resilience via a powerchair soccer intervention.

These are just a few of the many activities where ULeithbridge researchers are using clinical trials to make important advances in their fields of study, enhancing the health and well-being of society.

Anyone interested in learning more about clinical trials can visit the [Alberta Clinical Research Consortium](#) or [Be the Cure](#).

The [Office of Research and Innovation Services](#) also supports the University’s research community in the pursuit of external grants and funding and helps them conduct their work with the highest academic, scientific and ethical standards.

This news release can be found online at [International Clinical Trials Day](#).

—30—

**Contact:**

Caroline Zentner, public affairs advisor  
University of Lethbridge  
403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)  
[caroline.zentner@uleth.ca](mailto:caroline.zentner@uleth.ca)

*Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.*