

Bringing the Benefits of Evidence & Research to Patients

Dr. Ellen McDonnell, ND (Class of 2015),
brings her passion for patients to
a new research residency at the OICC





Dr. Dugald Seely, ND, centre, with the team at OICC



New OICC Research Resident Brings Enthusiasm and Care

The first time you meet Dr. Ellen McDonnell, ND, you are struck by her energy, sense of purpose and full engagement with whatever she happens to be doing. Interested in health care from a young age, Ellen recently embarked on a two year research residency at the Ottawa Integrative Cancer Centre (OICC).

“Cancer has overtaken heart disease as the number one cause of death in Canada, and two in five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime,” says Ellen. “Only 5-10% of cancers are hereditary. The vast majority are linked to diet, lifestyle choices and the environment. Naturopathic doctors can make an enormous impact in reducing the incidence of cancer by working on primary and secondary prevention.”

An Early Interest in Preventative Medicine

Ellen readily admits that her interest in health care was developed at a young age. “I have always been interested in preventative medicine, the power of nutrition and exercise to improve health, and treating the root cause of illness.” After completing a Bachelor of Science at the University of Ottawa in biochemistry, with a minor in psychology, Ellen went on to graduate from CCNM. In her fourth year she had the opportunity to do a two week externship in Ottawa at the OICC, working with Executive Director Dr. Dugald Seely, ND. “During her externship, Ellen had the opportunity to see what it is like to work in an integrative clinic and how it operates,” recalls Dugald.

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Nutritional guidance is one of the elements of OICC's patient-focused care

Clinician and Researcher

Ellen notes that one of the most valuable experiences during her externship was to work with cancer patients. “While I learned a great deal about how to provide adjunctive treatment for many different types of cancers...the most valuable experience for me was the opportunity to see what working with this population is like. Every day of my two weeks at OICC I left feeling inspired, invigorated and wanting to learn more about integrative cancer care.”

But in addition to being inspired by patients, and being in Dugald’s words, a “fantastic clinician with great potential,” Ellen also identifies with the influence that research can have.

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Being Proactive

With that in mind, and nearing the end of her time at CCNM, Ellen proactively put together a proposal for a two year research residency at the OICC and made her case. The timing was particularly fortuitous, as CCNM’s research department/OICC has recently begun its pioneering involvement in the Canada/US Integrative Oncology Study (CUSIOS).

Forty per cent of her research residency will consist of a clinical component with the rest having her engage with the CCNM research department conducting synthesis research as well as involvement in clinical trials underway at OICC.

The Future

“I look forward to working on several clinical trials and observational studies at the OICC to add to the body of evidence supporting the use of naturopathic medicine in adjunctive cancer care,” says Ellen.

A native of the Maritimes, Ellen’s long term career goal is to one day open her own integrative clinic in Halifax, Nova Scotia. “The Atlantic Provinces are limited in terms of accessibility of integrative cancer clinics, so I hope to fill that gap.” *