

## CSRF NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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#### The CSRF Executive:

##### **President**

Terry Humphreys

##### **Past-President**

Laurie Betitio

##### **President-Elect**

Robin Milhausen

##### **Treasurer**

Larry Brockman

##### **Secretary**

BJ Rye

##### **Student Representatives**

Jocelyn Wentland &

John Sakaluk

##### **Newsletter Editor**

Kristen Mark

Canadian Sex Research Forum members and guests enjoyed another successful meeting in Halifax in September 2009. Thanks again to Robin Milhausen and her team for organizing such a great meeting. The quality and variety of our speakers and research continue to be top-notch. Plenaries by Antia Clayton on clinical research design in female sexual dysfunction and by our own Sandra Byers on the quality of parent-child sexual communication, gave us plenty of food for thought. Congratulations to Corey Isaacs of the University of Western Ontario who received our award for best student presentation for his talk on a two-person model of condom use intentions and behaviour. Maryanne Doherty was presented with the CSRF award for service to the organization – a very well-deserved tribute.

Congratulations to all.

It was also wonderful to see our newest event, *CSRF After Dark*, continue

to bring us the lighter side of sexuality, while still being educational! It was a dual presentation with talks by Jonathan Huber on Gynecology and by Maggie Haywood and Shannon Pringle from Venus Envy in Halifax on the latest and greatest from the world of vibrators and other sexual toys, complete with a shopping opportunity. Many thanks to our CSRF student members for arranging the festivities. I for one am looking forward to the next After Dark session!

Speaking of which...plans are well underway for the 2010 CSRF meeting which will be held in Toronto at the Novotel, Toronto Centre, September 30 to October 02, 2010. So, block those dates off in your calendar and be sure to join us. Toronto is incredibly easy to get to (unlike some of our other venue choices...you know who you are Banff), and we want to see a great turn out. Keynotes are being prioritized as you read this, and the list is a

difficult one to choose from. Also, remember to renew your 2010 membership if you have not already. As Sandi Byers said in a past newsletter, "the price is right and the company is exceptional."

Our organization continues to be strong with a committed group of members and a very healthy student membership. I am particularly pleased to see how engaged many of our student members are in the success of the organization. We welcomed 16 new members in 2009, which brings our total numbers to approximately 100! Given these numbers, we are slowly moving toward more "formal" operations. Your executive has introduced a new CSRF logo, new membership renewal and conference registration forms, improved the website, added a second listserv for our student members, and introduced a new poster session opportunity for the 2010 conference.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED

Improvements continue to be made in the areas of tracking and communicating with our membership in a timely fashion and establishing an organizational history around policies and procedures. We continue to make small strides toward these goals. Personally, I continue to work on a database of sex programs and researchers in Canada. This database should be available to the CSRF membership in 2010. I have become smarter in my old age

and now have a practicum student working with me to help with the Internet searching.

Keep in mind that we are not having a full election of the CSRF Executive Council this year, as would normally be the case. Given Robin Milhausen's pregnancy (congratulations!) we are going to keep the Past President, President and President-Elect positions "as is" for one more year to give Robin a little more time before becoming President (you would

have voted on this motion recently). However, we still have the Secretary, Treasurer, and Newsletter Editor seats to fill. So there will be an election of sorts this year and we will resume normal elections next year. So, please consider nominating someone (for Secretary/Treasurer/Newsletter Editor) who you feel will continue the good work and forward momentum of the organization ...maybe that person is you!

-Terry Humphreys



Terry Humphreys, PhD  
Current CSRF President

"Our organization continues to be strong with a committed group of members and a very healthy student membership"

## Q &amp; A Student Research Feature: Karen Blair, PhD(c)

*Karen Blair, a PhD student at Queen's University, recently embarked upon a research experience of a lifetime—6 months spent in Utah working with well-known sex researcher Lisa Diamond. Here, she answers some questions about her experience:*

**Q: What was the process that led you to working with Lisa Diamond at Utah?**

A: When SSHRC announced their MFFWEIFEH award for existing CGS award holders to study outside of the country for 6 months I immediately thought of asking Dr. Diamond if she would be interested in hosting me in her lab. I had met Dr. Diamond the previous summer at the first LGBTSI at the University of Michigan where she was a mentor for week. She was a great addition to the institute and her research on female sexuality was of great interest to me, but my desire to work with her actually went back much further, as I had considered applying to Utah for my PhD before deciding that I would rather remain in Canada. The SSHRC award seemed like the perfect opportunity to have the best of both worlds - continuing to work on my PhD and still getting to work with Dr. Diamond in Utah. The SSHRC award required submitting an application which

included a research proposal, an explanation of where and with whom you wanted to work, as well as a letters of support from both Dr. Diamond and my supervisor at Queen's. I passed the idea by my supervisor and then fired off an email to Lisa asking if she would be willing to have me as a visitor in her lab for 6 months - she was delighted with the idea and we submitted the application to SSHRC.

**Q: What was your experience like going from a Canadian university to studying sexuality in the USA, especially in a place that is known to be conservative, like Utah. Were there any differences?**

A: Utah has a surprisingly large and liberal gay community. The psychology department at the University of Utah is wonderful, with a number of researchers doing sexuality and LGBT research. In fact, while sitting in on a graduate statistics class, more than a third of the students in the class were doing some kind of LGBT relevant research! This was a first, as I've never been in a class where there was more than one other sexuality researcher, let alone more than one researcher investigating LGBT issues. There seem to be many underlying dif-

## Q & A Student Research Feature: Karen Blair, PhD(c) continued

ferences in the politics of research funding, but in terms of my own personal experience doing sexuality research with the lgbt community in Utah, I have nothing but positive things to say! Of course I did get picked on for saying "Eh" and "Sorry," - typical Canuck.

**Q: How long were you in Utah for? Did this detract from your studies at Queen's University?**

A: I moved to Utah in October, and stayed until the Middle of April, so I was there for 6.5 months and had a chance

to help Lisa out with two different studies that she was running in her lab as well as sit in on a number of different classes. All of my own personal research for my work at Queen's is internet based, so I was able to run my study and continue collecting data without any problems while living in Utah. I was also able to continue being a Queen's TA by TA'ing correspondence courses, so other than the hassles of moving my dogs 3500 km across the continent, the trip didn't interfere much with my work at Queen's.

-Karen Blair, PhD (c)



Karen Blair, a PhD student at Queen's University and CSRF student member

## Student News...

Halifax, Nova Scotia is a city rich with culture, great food and an exciting night life. Add to the mix three days of stimulating sex research presentations and the students agreed that this year's CSRF will be tough to beat. Every year the student representatives work hard to plan events that the students can attend during the conference. This year was no exception. On the agenda was a student dinner, a tour of the Alexander Keith's Brewery, and a moonlight harbour front boat cruise.

The student dinner is a CSRF tradition that is usually held on the first night of the conference. True to form, this year's student dinner took place at the Economy Shoe Shop on Argyle Street after the first round of presentations on Thursday night. The Economy Shoe Shop provided a unique Halifax dining experience and a great setting for returning students to reconnect and for new students to get to know each other.

After a fabulous dinner out, the students came back to the hotel for the second annual CSRF Afterdark. The CSRF Afterdark was co-created by Dr. Jonathan Huber, Amy Muise, and Jos Wentland, as an attempt to incorporate less academic presentations into an already full conference agenda. The atmosphere of the CSRF Afterdark is less formal and everyone is encouraged to cozy into the conference room with their favourite cocktail in hand. This year CSRF Afterdark presenters included our very own Dr. Jonathan Huber and Halifax's Venus Envy. Dr. Huber presented on the basics of gynecology (bringing with him some of the tools of the trade) and Venus Envy presented on the history of sex toys (bringing with them a selection of products for purchase after the event).

Although not exclusively a student event, the Keith's Brewery tour was well received by both the students and professionals alike. The tour was given by three very animated actors who took us back to "a simpler time" when Alexander Keith first started brewing his fine ale. During the tour the audience was asked to participate in a number of brewery activities, one of which afforded Dr. Jonathan Huber the opportunity to share with us his "expert grinding technique." The tour ended with a lovely dinner and free beer tasting. Since this was a mixed event for students and professionals, it offered a more relaxed environment in which the students could network with some of the leading sex researchers from across the country.

On the last night of the conference the students took advantage of Halifax's night life by going on a Harbour Cruise. Not knowing what to expect, the students were surprised to discover that they had crashed a local Costco staff party. Needless to say, this made the evening adventure rather entertaining. Although it was cold in Halifax that night, a few brave sex researchers stepped outside to take in the view of the Atlantic harbor while on the water. The student night ended at Lower Deck where dancing and mingling with the locals was mandatory. It was the perfect way to bring to an end what had proved to be another fabulous CSRF.

In addition to all the fun, there were a number of important changes made to CSRF student processes this year. Specifically, the students voted on and accepted the motion to create a student list serve and to change the nature of the student representative positions. The student list serve, that is maintained by

## CSRF STUDENT NEWS CONTINUED

students in an effort to allow direct communication with each other, is up and running and so we invite all CSRF student members to join this mailing list. It was also decided that under the new student representative regulations, student representatives will commit to two years of service, being a junior rep for the first year and a senior rep for the second. The senior rep will teach the junior rep how to fill the role of student rep, so as to improve the transition of this position over the years. This year it was decided that Jos Wentland from the University of Ottawa would continue on as the senior representative as we transition to this new system. John Sakaluk from the University of Guelph was voted in as the new junior representative.

Saddened when the Halifax conference came to an end, the students look forward to what next year's CSRF has in store. With a great group of student members that continues to grow every year, we want to encourage the participation of all student members in the planning of

events for next year's conference. This year we had the help of non-students reps such as Heather Andruff, Jonathan Huber, and Amy Muise, in the planning and facilitation of student driven events, such as dinners out and the CSRF Afterdark.

Next year we will be meeting in Toronto, Ontario where more great student activities will be planned. If you are interested in becoming more involved or would like to be added to our new list serve, please contact either Jos Wentland or John Sakaluk. Finally, we would like to ask you all to stay tuned for more information regarding increasing the CSRF's student membership. See you all next year!

Justine McNulty (former student representative)  
John Sakaluk (junior student representative)  
Jos Wentland (senior student representative)

Founded in 1974, The Canadian Sex Research Forum has as its focus, the encouragement and dissemination of information related to teaching, research and clinical activities of Canadian researchers and professionals involved in areas relevant to human sexuality.

The primary objective of the CSRF is to foster an interdisciplinary exchange in the area of human sexuality, and to encourage scientific research in this domain, specifically in the area of sexual behaviour.

We are on the web!  
[www.csrf.ca](http://www.csrf.ca)

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Kristen Mark, MSc

Hard to believe spring is here and summer is just around the corner. This means that fall, and our next CSRF meeting, is less than 6 months away! I'm looking very forward to our meeting in Toronto, as I have moved south of the border and therefore have a great excuse to come home while also hearing about exciting Canadian sex research.

The CSRF student section has been active in reformatting the election process and Terry Humphreys has been incredibly helpful by agreeing to another year of service as President of CSRF.

On that note, a big congratulations to Robin Milhausen who is expecting her second child and will therefore serve as President-Elect for her year of maternity leave. However, the role of Newsletter Editor (in addition to Secretary and Treasurer) will be open for election during the meeting this Fall. If anyone is interested in the Newsletter Editor position, feel free to email me with questions about what is involved!

For my current role as Newsletter Editor, I would happily take on any suggestions you would like to see implemented in upcoming newsletters. If you are conducting research you would like to share with the CSRF membership or have a story to share and would be willing to write about it for the next newsletter, it would be great to hear from you.



## Research Feature: The Wassersug Lab at Dalhousie University

Up until six years ago, Richard Wassersug had spent most of his academic career studying sexless animals, namely tadpoles. Now he runs a busy sex research lab.

Richard's emergent interest in sexology followed his diagnosis of prostate cancer (PCa) and exposure to cancer treatments that altered his own sexual function. He now collaborates with students and colleagues in Nova Scotia, Alberta, Ontario, Massachusetts, and California to explore questions related to androgen deprivation (AD), estrogen's role in males, erectile dysfunction (ED), gender identity, dildo use, and lesbian couple dynamics.

Researchers in the Wassersug lab are interested in how adult males respond to AD from physical or chemical castration. The majority of androgen-deprived men in Western cultures are advanced PCa patients, who accept this treatment with the hope that it will extend their lives. A consequence of AD treatment is a variety of emasculating physical and psychological side effects that can be stressful and demoralizing to both men and their partners. Researchers in the Wassersug lab seek to help these folks recognize, adapt to, and overcome the impact that castration can have on their intimate relationships.

Here are some of the lab's major players and the projects they have underway:

- *Erik Wibowo* is a PhD student using brain electrode implantation, plus behavioral observations, to see how estrogen affects sleep patterns and sexual responses of castrated male rats. Erik and Richard suggest that estrogen may be superior to other castrating drugs used to treat PCa because it increases libido and stops hot flashes that can disrupt sleep.
- In collaboration with *Lauren Walker* MSc, *John Robinson* PhD and *Bejoy Thomas* PhD in Calgary, Richard is working with PCa couples to develop an educational intervention that will help them maintain intimacy of a sexual and non-sexual nature after the men are chemically castrated to treat PCa. With funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and other sources, the Calgary-Halifax team has written an educational booklet that they are currently testing out with couples in both cities.
- Richard is also exploring other ways of helping couples maintain or restore sexual intimacy when AD leads to impotence and reduced libido. In 2006 he coauthored a report on an impotent PCa patient, who used a strap-on dildo to achieve orgasmic sex (Warkentin et al. 2006).

Restoration of satisfying sex for a castrated cancer patient with complete impotence: a case study. *J Sex Marital Ther.* 32:389-399). Their he proposed a neurophysiological model for how strap-on sex can be satisfying to a male based on multi-sensory integration, as occurs in the "rubber hand illusion" (e.g., Ehrsson et al. 2008). Upper limb amputees can be induced to experience a rubber hand as their own. *Brain.* 131:3443-3452). Richard and *J. Mary Burnet*, a recent MA graduate in Women and Gender & Sexual Diversity Studies, are now working

on a more detailed paper about how and why strap-on dildo use for couples—whether they be queer women, PCa patients and their partners, or male-female couples engaged in pegging—can be rewarding.

Mary and Richard are offering an alternative explanation for Stuart Brody's results on the quality of female orgasms from penile-vaginal intercourse versus clitoral masturbation (2007. *Vaginal orgasm is associated with better psychological function. Sex Relat. Therapy*, 22:173-191). They propose that it is not the penetrative aspect of orgasmic vaginal sex that causes the most positive physical effects compared to other forms of orgasmic sex. Rather, they believe it is due to the multi-sensory integration associated with having maximum body-to-body contact and proximal head placement, which occurs more often during penetrative sex with a penis or strap-on dildo, versus during masturbation or oral sex.

- Research Assistant *Imhokhai Ogah* and *Irena Rot* PhD, another faculty member in Richard's department at Dalhousie, are gathering data via an internet survey on how people understand the risk of cancers of the reproductive system and their treatment. They hope these data will help guide health professionals in their education of both patients and their partners on various cancers and their treatment options, which can affect sexual function.

- In addition to projects on sexuality and cancer, Richard and his colleagues study voluntary eunuchs and eunuch "wannabes"—men who actively seek out and obtain chemical or surgical castration, with no clear or explicit physical need. *Kayla Vale*, now in medical school at McMaster University, *Thomas Johnson* PhD, from California State University in Chico, and Richard are exploring what motivates these men to seek genital ablation. They have shown that some have a nonspecific gender identity disorder, others a body integrity identity disorder, and some an extreme sadomasochistic paraphilia. Kayla, Tom, and Richard have found that common risk factors for castration and/or penectomy ideation include childhood sexual abuse, having been raised by "very devout" religious adults, having witnessed animal castrations, and having been threatened as a child with castration for behavior deemed inappropriate.

Kayla's sister *Rachel Vale*, who is also a medical student, has taken the lead on a study examining who does these voluntary castrations. Most of the castrations are not performed by qualified surgeons; rather, the wannabes go to "underground cutters," several of whom are eunuchs themselves.

- The lab has also been studying the sexuality of voluntary eunuchs. *David Fudge*, a Dalhousie medical student, Tom, and Richard have found that a high percentage of voluntarily androgen-deprived males are not asexual as one might suppose, but rather report a change in their sexual orientation upon castration. This finding challenges a general belief that male sexual orientation is largely fixed before puberty and is relatively inflexible over a male's life. Dave's



Some members of the  
Wassersug Lab at  
Dalhousie University in  
Halifax, NS

## Research Feature: The Wassersug Lab at Dalhousie University Continued...

data show that castration can produce in males an increase in sexual plasticity not unlike that documented for females.

- *Lesley Roberts*, now a medical student at Queens, leads a project exploring the impact of AD on the “big five” personality profile of voluntary eunuchs.
- As a result of their work with voluntary eunuchs, Tom and Richard are developing diagnostic criteria for a male-to-eunuch gender identity, which they hope will be incorporated into the next edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- Finally, *Alison Che*, another Dalhousie medical student, leads an online survey about the meaning of handholding for women in same-sex couples. In handholding heterosexual couples, the man’s hand is usually in front. Alison and Richard want to find out what determines the front hand position when the heterosexual gendered power dynamic is reduced or eliminated. Is the individual with the lead hand simply the tallest, the one who makes the most money, the partner who has more “say” in relationship, etc.?

Richard is on sabbatical right now, spending the first half of 2010 as a Visiting Professor at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society in Melbourne. He is proud of all the folks working with him, and is confident they will keep the research going while he is holed up on the far side of the planet writing about emasculation.

-Richard Wassersug, PhD

## Guelph Sexuality Conference—Communication & Sexual Health: More than words

June 21-23, 2010

The Guelph Sexuality Conference is recognized as Canada's leading, annual, training and education forum for sexual health professions. Delegates are from public health, community health, education, social services, counselling, medical doctors and nurses, clergy and researchers. The program is dedicated to understanding the complexities of human nature and celebrating sexuality with dignity and respect. The conference provides an opportunity for researchers, therapists, administrators and service providers to showcase their success stories. This conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn, share knowledge, network, collaborate, enhance skills, inspire, exchange resources, and celebrate our passion. Over 500 individuals attend the conference each year. Communication is a vital tool in helping us express our sexual feelings, thoughts, and actions. In our modern day world, how do we communicate? Using more than words?

**We invite poster proposals to share this perspective on this year's theme "Communication and Sexual Health: More than Words".** Proposals for ABSTRACT POSTERS will be accepted until April 29, 2010.

Methods used in the workshop include brief presentations, discussion and reflections; references from video, music and literature; and panels of individuals sharing personal experiences.

The dates for the SAR are June 12-13. For more information, see:

<http://www.guelphsexualityconference.ca/sexual-attitudes.html>

Finally, we are pleased to offer the Intensive Sex Therapy Training Program, co-taught by CSRF member Dr. Peggy J. Kleinplatz, PhD., Registered Sex Therapist (BESTCO), Associate Professor, Medicine & Clinical Psychology, University of Ottawa and Joan Marsman, Registered Marriage and Family Therapist (OAMFT), Registered Sex Therapist (BESTCO). The dates for this program are June 14-18. For more information, see:

<http://www.guelphsexualityconference.ca/sex-therapy-program.html>

### To contribute to the CSRF Newsletter:

Send us your latest accomplishments, news, or anything else you would like us to include in our next newsletter.

Email Kristen Mark at [kpmark@indiana.edu](mailto:kpmark@indiana.edu)

We look forward to hearing from you!