

“Dalhousie’s Facilities of Medicine, Health and Dentistry attract, retain, and develop world-class talent and that’s what the DMRF Breakthrough Breakfast is all about: celebrating global research excellence that is happening right here, in the Maritimes.”



Emily Howes Vallis



Alyson Zwicker



Dr. Gabriela Ilie

BREAKTHROUGH BREAKFAST UPDATE

On Wednesday, November 7th, 2018, Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation celebrated our third annual Breakthrough Breakfast event, with over 400 guests – our biggest turnout yet. The theme of *Celebrating Global Research Excellence Happening Right Here*, made us Maritime-proud as we learned about world-class health research at Dalhousie University. Dalhousie’s Faculties of Medicine, Health and Dentistry attract, retain and develop internationally-competitive talent, and our researchers are having a global impact. This year, we were pleased to highlight the outstanding work of Drs. Alon Friedman (Israel), Shashi Gujar (India), Gabriela Ilie (Romania), and Tony Reiman (Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick) in a panel hosted by Dalhousie VP of Research and Innovation, Dr. Alice Aiken.

In addition to showcasing world-class research, our 2018 Breakthrough Breakfast raised important funding to further research progress, as it has done every year. Funds raised from this year’s Breakthrough Breakfast will support a mid-career research award, as part of Dalhousie’s retention strategy for top talent.

A BREAKFAST WITH IMPACT

Funding from our two previous Breakthrough Breakfasts also continue to have an impact. At Breakthrough Breakfast 2016, we honoured the generous contributions that Frank and Debbi Sobey continue to make to DMRF. Here, Dr. Sultan Darvesh, *the DMRF Irene MacDonald Sobey Chair in Curative Approaches to Alzheimer’s Disease* at Dalhousie University, presented on his latest breakthrough and discussed how it will impact the lives of those living with Alzheimer’s disease. Funds raised from this event have subsequently supported the creation of the *DMRF Frank and Debbi Sobey Lectureship* – with a focus in Alzheimer’s research, prostate cancer research, or cardiovascular research – aimed at bringing renowned talent to Dalhousie to increase global knowledge sharing and research innovation. Nominated by Dalhousie’s Dr. Gabriela Ilie, Norway’s Dr. Karol Axcrona will soon make a trip to Nova Scotia to exchange expertise with Dalhousie researchers in the area of prostate cancer.

“Dr. Axcrona’s expertise will speak to the Departments of Urology, Radiation Oncology, Medical Oncology, Surgery, Medicine, Community Health and Epidemiology, and even other departments on campus such as Psychology and Neuroscience,” says Dr. Gabriele Ilie, Endowed Soillse Research Scientist in Prostate Cancer Quality of Life Research, Dalhousie University. “His visit to Dalhousie has the potential to create a fruitful environment for international collaborations with Europe, including linking our surveillance methods for prostate cancer survivorship between our countries.”

At Breakthrough Breakfast 2017, we heard from Lindsay family member Deborah Rotta-Loria about her struggles with Bipolar Disorder and celebrated the family’s \$500,000 gift toward severe mental illness research at Dalhousie. Funds raised through this Breakthrough Breakfast created the DMRF Lindsay Graduate Studentship in Severe Mental Illness Research. Two recipients were selected this year for this Studentship, divided between one Masters level and one PhD level category. Today, recipients Emily Howes Vallis and Alyson Zwicker are both actively working in Dr. Rudolf Uher’s lab at Dalhousie on research that supports early detection and intervention in mental illness.

“This Studentship has allowed me to focus on my PhD research projects examining relationships between genetic factors, family history, and early indicators of risk for serious mental illness,” says Alyson Zwicker, PhD Candidate. Notably, Alyson’s leadership has been instrumental in Dr. Uher’s FORBOW program (Families Overcoming Risks and Building Opportunities for Well-being), helping to identify youth who may benefit from early intervention.

“I am very thankful for the Lindsay Family Graduate Studentship for supporting my research,” says Emily Howes Vallis, Masters in Psychiatry Research Candidate. “This funding has allowed me to carry out my Master’s thesis research examining visual memory in offspring of parents with severe mental illness.” In close collaboration with the FORBOW team, Emily’s work is also making a unique contribution to early risk identification and prevention efforts in young people affected by mental illness.

Undoubtedly, the Breakthrough Breakfast is about more than eggs and coffee. It’s about celebrating global research excellence happening right here in the Maritimes, and the individuals and families this very research is intended to benefit. On behalf of DMRF, Dr. Gabriela Ilie, Alyson Zwicker, Emily Howes Vallis and numerous Dalhousie researchers, thank you for joining us.