

2013-14 SHEELA BASRUR CENTRE

A Year in Review

Building leaders in public health

As the Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) maintains its focus on communications and leadership development, we continue to offer current and future public health leaders the knowledge and training to effectively communicate about key issues. In 2013, we launched three new programs at the Centre: the Advanced Media Training Workshop, the Don Low Communications Fellowship, and the Communications Student Award.

With the increasing demand on public health professionals to advance their media and spokesperson skills, SBC designed a series of media workshops for both novice and experienced training levels. In addition to the introductory level media training offered by the Centre in previous years, the Advanced Media Training Workshop offers interactive and in-depth training to a small group of public health professionals who are frequently called upon to engage with the press.

Named in honour of Dr. Donald Low, one of the great public health communicators, the Don Low Communications Fellowship supports public health professionals in the development of communications skills. As the Fellowship continues to be awarded annually, SBC is building a network of fellows to share their skills and knowledge they acquire through the Fellowship with their public health colleagues.

Tomorrow's public health and communications leaders showcase their ideas, knowledge and creativity through the Communications Student Award. Students develop communications strategies on critical public health issues, competing for the top prize and the opportunity to present their campaigns to delegates at public health conferences and events.

With the expansion of our SBC program roster in 2013, the Centre continues the legacy of great public health communicators, as exemplified by Dr. Basrur.



Sheela Basrur Centre

IN THIS EDITION

- 3 | **Effective communication is the cornerstone of public health**

- 5 | **The Don Low Communications Fellowship: Profile of a Fellow**

- 7 | **SBC Student Awards and Programs: Tackling public health issues with creative communications**

- 9 | **2013 Student Travel Bursary Award: The future public health leaders**

- 11 | **New look for SBC**

- 11 | **Donate to the Sheela Basrur Centre**

- 12 | **Supporting the Sheela Basrur Centre**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Media Training Workshops
November 2014

Student Travel Bursary
Call for Applicants
Winter 2014

Sheela Basrur Symposium
March 2014

Effective communication is the cornerstone of public health

Rapidly evolving events require timely communication. Sometimes it is necessary for policy decisions to be made and health messages to be communicated in an environment of uncertainty about the magnitude and exact nature of the risks. Poorly handled communications can create or exacerbate the misunderstanding of risks.

2013 SBC Media Training Workshops

IN November 2013, SBC and PHO held two interactive media training workshops for public health professionals seeking to advance their communications and media spokesperson skills.



Introductory Media Training Workshop 2013. Photo credit: Claude Martel

The Introductory Media Training Workshop was attended by over 40 public health professionals from across the province. This workshop brought together renowned journalists and media experts to provide public health professionals with knowledge and insight into how the media operates, and how they can utilize the press to deliver their messages to the public. Participants received hands-on experience in message crafting and gained vital communication skills to better convey these key points to journalists as well as the general public.

In collaboration with Science Media Centre of Canada, the session featured leading journalists Helen Branswell (Canadian Press), Jim Handman (Quirks and Quarks) and Sandra Gionas (The Agenda with Steve Paikin), who offered their insight into the media landscape and how the press can be utilized to disseminate key messages to the public.

The afternoon session delivered practical, hands-on experience as attendees broke into working groups, collaborating with communications advisors to review and refine key messages. Attendees also participated in mock broadcast interviews and a group discussion on print and television interviews.



Very good and knowledgeable presenters. I really enjoyed hearing perspective of communications experts and journalists.”

— Introductory Media Training participant,
November 2013



The Advanced Media Training Workshop offered in-depth training to a small group of attendees, focusing on interview and delivery techniques, key message development, press conferences and performance in phone and television-style interviews.

Media trainer Karen Gordon of Squeaky Wheel Communications led this intimate and interactive workshop. In addition to a discussion of media pitfalls, traps and bridging, participants had an opportunity to learn about verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and to finesse their performance and delivery techniques.



As painful as it can be, the camera session was useful.”

— Advanced Media Training Workshop participant, November 2013

Each participant honed their interview techniques while engaging in mock interviews. Maureen Taylor, an SBC Advisory Council member and journalist, served as an advisor. Interviews were recorded and reviewed to allow participants to observe and critique their delivery on-camera, and receive feedback through group discussion.

The feedback we received from participants was overwhelmingly positive. The SBC Media Training Workshops

offer interactive, safe and fun learning environments, providing participants with invaluable feedback from media and communications experts.

Information about the 2014 Media Training Workshops is available on the **Sheela Basrur Centre** website.



Top: From left to right: (bottom row) Sandra Gionas (The Agenda with Steve Paikin), Jim Handman (Quirks and Quarks) and Helen Branswell (Canadian Press); (top row) Cathy Mallove (Public Health Ontario), Anne Simard (Public Health Ontario) and Penny Park (Science Media Centre of Canada).

Above: Advanced Media Training Workshop 2013

Photo credits: Claude Martel

Profile of a Fellow

The Don Low Communications Fellowship supports public health professionals in the development of communications skills, empowering them with the necessary tools to become effective spokespersons.

The Fellowship provides public health experts with valuable opportunities to advance their current work in communicating with the public and stakeholders.

Congratulations to Cameron Clark, our inaugural Don Low Communications Fellowship recipient.

His commitment and demonstrated leadership spans 23 years in public health and exemplifies the intention, spirit and purpose of the Fellowship.

As Manager, Environmental Health and Infectious Diseases at the Timiskaming Health Unit, Cameron works on a variety of challenging public health initiatives impacting rural Ontario. Whether working with small drinking water system operators, farmers markets or participating in health equity conversations, Cameron embraces a practical community engagement approach.

Cameron used his Fellowship to attend the *Effective Risk Communication: Theory, Tools and Practical Skills for Communicating About Risk* course at the Harvard School of Public Health in May 2014. The Fellowship deepened Cameron's knowledge of risk communications, and supports his role as a key spokesperson for the Timiskaming Health Unit. Working in the smallest health unit in Ontario, Cameron is often called upon to advise the public on local issues or explain study results of a sensitive nature to the community.

“The ongoing challenge is to help communicate the perceived or actual risk and subsequent priorities.”



SBC: How much of your current job requires communication with the public and stakeholders?

Cameron Clark: With a role that requires support for public health inspectors (i.e. addressing operator complaints), being accountable to the Board (updates on food safety or Smoke-Free Ontario Act issues) or collaborating with other agencies (municipal governments for emergency exercises or housing issues) the ongoing challenge is to help communicate the perceived or actual risk and subsequent priorities.

SBC: What type of public health issues/risks do you generally inform the public/stakeholders about?

Cameron Clark: At least once or twice a month, on an informal or formal basis there seems to be a need to interact with a member of the public or another agency that involves some sort of crisis situation and hence, risk analysis (e.g. spill report, adverse water result, northern community evacuees, a vector-borne disease presentation).

Over the past 6 months I have dealt with:

- Media interviews concerning a cryptosporidium outbreak with vet tech students and a field trip source
- Mediation between a town's role as landlord, a tenant that had their drinking water cut-off, and the subsequent health equity issues
- Work involved with a municipality's flood management appendix of their Emergency Plan
- A town's Boil Water Advisory due to a lab error with mixed perceptions of risk and subsequent municipal duties
- Community engagement with a municipality, focusing on their residential malfunctioning septic systems (through the water upgrade notification procedure)

SBC: What prompted you to apply for the Fellowship?

Cameron Clark: I work as a program manager for Environmental Health and Infectious Diseases at the smallest health unit in Ontario. Despite the same programs, standards, protocols and community needs as our counterparts, we are challenged by the lack of specialized roles available in areas with a larger population and additional funding. It has been hard to find the time, resources and practicality for specialization on such topics as risk communication. Although we pride ourselves on our adaptability, the small number of staff that we have wear many hats. Therefore, such a professional development opportunity empowers our team with the right mix of skills to tackle risk analysis and risk management issues while remaining flexible, yet accountable to our performance indicators.

“The context in how information is presented and the way it is received can mean the difference between a resolved problem and an ongoing issue.”

SBC: What aspects of the Harvard Risk Communication course resonated with you the most?

Cameron Clark: The emphasis on trust in terms of knowing your audience. The underlying motivations for trust were explored in the context of public perception (e.g. take someone out of their comfort zone and they think differently) and emotions (e.g. anger can give people control through blame). Although the foundation of risk communication was explored during a PHO presentation at our health unit last fall, this additional insight was strengthened with relevant case studies. These case studies focused on risk communication factors, for instance, how the media may amplify issues of low

probability, challenging negative perceptions of regulators and how too much transparency can enable certain interest groups.

SBC: What elements of the course can you apply to your work in the Timiskaming Health Unit?

Cameron Clark: The distrust factor is an interesting one. It helps during crisis communication to first ask if there is trust and if there is not, to understand why. If there appears to be a lack of trust, I would want to ask myself if it is due to a perception of being incompetent, inefficient or unfair. For example, regarding the perception of inefficiency, the release of a mine tailings report within one of our communities two years ago was fraught with delays, miscommunications, and inefficiencies that resulted in distrust by the community. This community is also economically distressed, and felt this pending report could have a negative impact on tourism. Having the knowledge I obtained from this course, I would have crafted key messages around the theme of market variables and cost benefits when discussing exposure and risk upon the release of the report.

Having trusted sources is also important because emotion drives social network opinions, and since the traditional media sources have less money and tighter deadlines, it is important to fill the void during a crisis, to engage and get in the game early to build trust.

SBC: What advice would you give to future public health professionals?

Cameron Clark: I would emphasize to public health professionals (especially public health inspectors) entering this field that evidence is not enough. The context in which information is presented and the way that information is received can mean the difference between a resolved problem and an ongoing issue. Although many new public health professionals are technologically savvy, insight into the values, politics and hidden emotions behind a message is essential to designing a communication strategy. This vital component will ensure that realistic advice is given and trust is gained.

I would like to thank the Sheila Basrur Centre for this opportunity. The Harvard School of Public Health staff coordinated the sessions in a proficient manner, and the class atmosphere was warm and collegial. Upon reflection, it was interesting how the instructors exuded a compassionate intelligence that was reminiscent of Dr. Donald Low.



Tackling public health issues with creative communications

The Sheela Basrur Centre Communications Student Award provides students from public health and/or communications disciplines an opportunity to showcase their talents, knowledge and creativity by developing communications strategies on critical public health issues.

SBC Communications Student Award Recipients

The inaugural Sheela Basrur Centre Communications Student Award was launched in tandem with Public Health Ontario's Vaccine Sciences Symposium on December 5, 2013. Students developed communications strategies/campaigns that focused on restoring public confidence in immunization and addressed vaccine hesitancy.

Four teams of finalists presented innovative and thought-provoking campaigns on the challenges posed by vaccine hesitancy, outlining promotional concepts for bolstering public confidence in immunization and vaccine effectiveness.

A panel of judges from both public health and communications disciplines awarded Jennifer McWhirter and Caroline Bravo from

Above: From left to right: Dorothy Pringle (SBC Advisory Council Chair), Vivek Goel (President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario), Delaney Hines and Yoshith Perera.



the University of Waterloo for their campaign titled, “Roll Up Your Sleeve.” Jennifer and Caroline’s campaign offered creative methods to tackle public misconceptions and immunization hesitancy, while engaging the public across multiple demographics.

For our second competition, students developed communications strategies focusing on the controversial use of e-cigarettes.

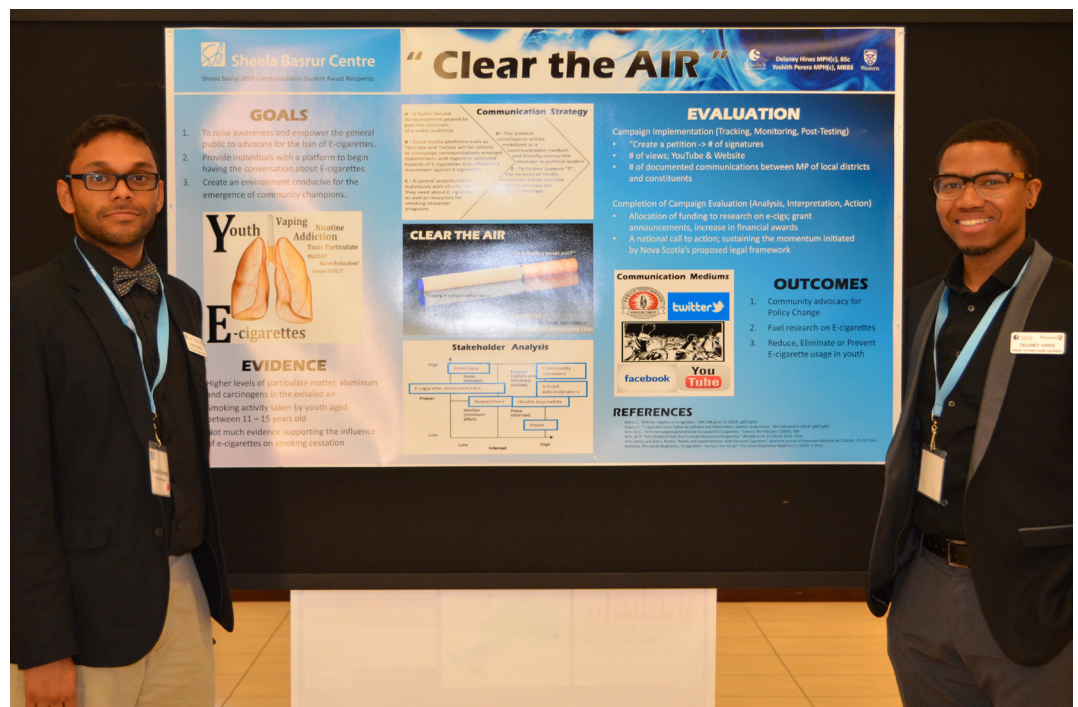
Yoshith Perera and Delaney Hines were awarded the 2014 Communications Student Award for their “Clear the Air” communications campaign. Both students are currently enrolled at the Schulich Interfaculty Master of Public Health program at the University of Western Ontario. Their campaign was recognized for its creative ideas to raise awareness about the health risks

of e-cigarettes, targeting the public and government policy decision-makers. “Clear the Air” was showcased (in poster format) at TOPHC 2014, giving the duo an opportunity to speak with delegates about their communications strategies on this emerging public health issue.

In September 2014, students will compete once again, presenting their communications campaigns focusing on health care worker influenza vaccination at the Infectious Diseases Surveillance and Management for Public Health Workshop.

Above: 2013 SBC Communications Student Award winners, Caroline Bravo (left) and Jennifer McWhirter (right).

Right: 2014 SBC Communications Student Award winners Yoshith Perera (left) and Delaney Hines (right).



The future public health leaders

Two exceptional master of public health candidates from the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto were selected as the recipients of the 2013 Sheela Basrur Student Travel Bursary.



Barbara Fowler

While working towards the completion of her Master's of Public Health at the University of Waterloo, Barbara Fowler completed a 14-week practicum in Uganda with the Shanti Uganda Society. This non-governmental organization's mission is to improve infant and maternal health and support women living with HIV/AIDS in the rural Luweero district of Uganda.

Barbara's primary project was to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy for Shanti's birth house services. The birth house offers antenatal care, laboratory testing, labour and delivery and postnatal care. Barbara explains, "The placement allowed me the opportunity to practice in three areas of public health that I am passionate about – research, monitoring and evaluation, and international development. I discovered that I would like to pursue more focused opportunities in monitoring and evaluation work, either in regional or provincial public health arenas, or for an international NGO."

Although her time spent in Uganda was short, Barbara maintains that the experience was invaluable both personally and professionally. "I wish to sincerely express my gratitude to the Sheela Basrur Centre for providing me with the funding that helped make this experience possible."



Water was precious and required boiling. Food, although plentiful, lacked variety. Village life, however, demonstrated to me a number of important values; family and community, simplicity and resilience, hope and faith, acceptance and gratitude, and ingenuity and achievement."

— Barbara Fowler



Sanjana Mitra

In the summer of 2013, Sanjana Mitra worked in western Kenya for Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH). Sanjana's placement was a component of her Master's of Public Health Promotion program at the University of Toronto.

AMPATH was originally created to respond to Kenya's HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 2000s; however, the organization has recently expanded its focus to include chronic disease care



needs. AMPATH's mission is to provide care, training and research to meet the health care needs of western Kenya.

During her placement, Sanjana worked with the Community Health Volunteer Incentive Project. The goal of this project was to provide a better understanding of the context in which AMPATH's community health volunteers operate in western Kenya. "In reflecting on this project, my boundaries as an individual, student and researcher have



After observing the lives of health professionals working full-time in Kenya, and enduring my own short term experience, I was able to see how the injustices and inefficiencies within the health care system can quickly wear an individual down, particularly if one has few support systems."

— Sanjana Mitra

been broadened." Sanjana comments, "despite facing challenges, I was pushed to new stages of flexibility and adaptability in order to move the project forward. I am grateful that in addition to reinforcing the importance of adaptability in global health work, this project has made me more confident in my abilities and accepting of challenges."

Taking part in the internship made Sanjana come to realize that although she may not live abroad working on global health initiatives for extended periods of time, she will always remain engaged in global health work in some capacity throughout her career.

**Congratulations to the 2013
Sheela Basrur Centre Student
Travel Bursary recipients, Barbara
Fowler and Sanjana Mitra.**

New look for SBC

Launched this fall, the new SBC website showcases a sleek design and enhanced usability while providing the same up-to-date information on SBC activities, news and events. Easy navigation features offer public health professionals and students quick access to information about the Centre and SBC programs.

Visitors can also find out how to get involved by donating and supporting SBC activities.



Donate to the Sheela Basrur Centre



Much of the improvement of life expectancy over the past century is due to public health measures.”

— Dr. Sheela Basrur

Preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health. These principles are the basis for public health.

The late Dr. Sheela Basrur was a champion for ensuring the renewal of the Ontario public health system. Her legacy lives on at the Sheela Basrur Centre where our programs make a significant and lasting impact to support public health and health services.

Both individual and corporate donations help us build on Dr. Basrur’s legacy. Be a part of our key initiatives and programs at the

Centre. Donations to the Centre support professional development activities and public health programs, creating new ways to prevent, promote and protect.

Our partnership with the Toronto Community Foundation means that your contributions are tax-deductible. Toronto Community Foundation will issue the tax receipts on behalf of the Sheela Basrur Centre who receive the funds donated.

Make a donation to SBC online

1. Go to the Sheela Basrur Centre Fund webpage.
2. Click on the “Donate to Fund” button.
3. Complete the donation form and click on the “Contribute” button.

Make a donation to SBC by telephone/mail

Please contact:

Tory Robertson
Donor Relations Officer
Toronto Community Foundation
33 Bloor Street East, Suite 1603 Toronto
ON M4W 3H1
Tel: 416-921-2035 ext. 211

[Make a donation to SBC](#)

Supporting the Sheela Basrur Centre



The Toronto Community Foundation connects philanthropy with community needs and opportunities in order to make Toronto the best place to live, work, learn, and grow.

Established in 1981, the Toronto Community Foundation has grown to hold over \$250 million in assets and to work with hundreds of concerned Torontonians and high-impact community

organizations. The Toronto Community Foundation is a registered, public, non-profit organization created for and by the people of Toronto.

Sheela Basrur Centre
480 University Avenue
Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1V2

Tel: 647 260 7100
Fax: 647 260 7600
Email: SBC@oahpp.ca
www.SheelaBasrurCentre.ca

For more information about donations and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.sheelabasrurcentre.ca or contact us at SBC@oahpp.ca.

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SPONSORS

Founding Partners

The Sheela Basrur Centre gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our five founding partners whose five-year commitment to the Centre enabled its establishment and development.



Don Low Communications Fellowship Founder

The Sheela Basrur Centre would like to thank and recognize Pfizer for its contribution to establishing the Don Low Communications Fellowship.



Sheela Basrur Centre Event Partners

The Sheela Basrur Centre is grateful to our event partners who support the Centre's events throughout the year.

