The ORT Times

A monthly newsletter featuring UHN Trainees

Seasons Greetings

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Editorial

Minding Your E-Manners: A Brief Guide to E-Mail Etiquette

By: Iris Kulbatski, PhD

Interacting via email is a large part of our day to day life. While it can be an effective means of communicating *it can also contribute to misunderstandings, frustration and wasted time. Here are tips to effectively and considerately communicate via email, because good manners never go out of style.*

Prevent misunderstandings

Pay careful attention to the tone and intent of your email. Expect that you will be misunderstood before you compose your email and keep this in mind as you write. What sounds right in your own mind is not always interpreted as intended, especially since the nuances of face-to-face communication are lost over email. Let this be your motivation when emailing: to be clear, concise and cordial.

Compose an effective email

Message Body

In the body of the message, use a polite greeting (see more on greetings below), summarize the purpose of the email and add relevant details as needed. Be considerate of your contact's time and effort by making it as easy as possible to read and interpret your email. Keep your sentences short and incorporate them into concise paragraphs to separate the text and make it more readable. Above all, keep it short and sweet. If you have a question or request, be mindful of how you ask so that you do not come across as aggressive or demanding. Say "please" and "thank-you"—a little kindness goes a long way and you're more likely to get a favorable response. Finally, do not send trivial emails. If you can find the information elsewhere, take the effort to search for it before you send an email. Don't expect others to do the work for you.

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UHN Toronto General Toronto Western Princess Margaret Toronto Rehab

Office of Research Trainees

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Format, Layout and Editing

Do not use excessive color, highlighting or fancy fonts. Keep the font clear, legible and simple. If you are sending a long email, it may be useful to highlight several key points in a different color or using the bold or underline function, but do this very sparingly. Use numbers or bullets to organize a list of points or questions. Minimize distractions in your email message, including verbosity, spelling/grammar errors, unclear writing and being blunt or demanding. These will all distract the recipient from the essential message and purpose of your email, and minimize the chance of a positive reply. Before you send your message, read it, then read it again, checking for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, email addresses, dates and times, correct name spellings and titles, your contact information, and overall coherence, appropriateness and tone.

Attachments and links
Include only those links and attachments that are necessary and relevant and make sure that they can be opened by the recipient. If the file you wish to attach is too large, consider uploading it to a file sharing portal. Be considerate of the size limitations of email servers and do not clog up people's inboxes.

Email replies
If you are the recipient, reply promptly (1-2 days), with clear and succinct answers to all questions. Not doing so will frustrate the sender and waste his/her time. If you are replying to a list of questions, it may be helpful to insert your answers in a different color after each question in the list and provide a brief remark stating that you have done so. Leave the original email thread intact so that the recipient can understand the context of your message without searching for the original email. If the thread is long and unmanageable, cut and paste or quote the section to which you are replying so that the receiver does not have to search through the entire thread. Only send a "Reply All" message if it is absolutely essential that everyone on the original list of recipients sees the reply. Nobody wants their inbox filled with irrelevant emails.
If you are waiting for a reply, don't expect to receive one immediately. During a work week, 1-2 days is a reasonable amount of time for receiving a response. If you do not receive an anticipated reply in a timely manner, send a gentle reminder and express appreciation for the recipient's busy schedule. Do not be aggressive or demanding.

Be professional
Use appropriate, polite, simple greetings and closings to address a contact and conclude your email. "Dear" or "To" are generally the most appropriate salutations for professional emails. "Sincerely", "Best Regards", or "Thank you for your time" are the most fitting closings. Use appropriate titles (Dr., Prof., Mr., Ms.), especially if it is the first time you are contacting an individual, and spell names correctly. If they sign their reply using their first name, they are indicating that they are comfortable with informal correspondence, so the next time you write to them you may address them by their first name. Also, professional emails should not contain emoticons or acronyms that are typically used in personal correspondence with family and friends.

Pay attention to style
There is a difference between being clear and concise versus being blunt and direct. Show respect for the person's time, opinions, thoughts and suggestions. For example, if they are responding to your research proposal and disagree with your hypothesis, thank them for their suggestion first, even if you disagree, then explain your thoughts in a clear and constructive way. At this point it may be better to request a time to discuss the issue in person. Some things are not meant to be dealt with by email alone, so know when to initiate face-to-face discussions. Also, avoid using all capitals or too much punctuation, or the words "important" or "urgent", as these can make the email appear aggressive or angry.

Always be courteous
This is non-negotiable. Please and thank you are simple words that go a long way in letting people know that their time and efforts are appreciated. Treat your colleagues respectfully and make an extra effort to do so via email where such sentiments are often lost.

success

Recent awardees

Every year, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) awards hundreds of scholarships to support trainees conducting a broad array of research projects in the health sciences . These awards are given to trainees who demonstrate an exceptional aptitude for research and a high potential to become future leaders in their areas of study.

CIHR Banting Post- Doctoral Fellowship

Congratulations to *Dr. Protze* who received the CIHR Banting Post- Doctoral Fellowship.

Project title: Derivation of sinoatrial node pacemaker cells from human pluripotent stem cells for the generation of bio-artificial pacemakers.

It is now possible to routinely generate cardiomyocytes from human embryonic stem cells (hESCs). While there is some diversity in the cardiomyocytes that are obtained from hESCs, there are currently no approaches to specifically derive and purify certain subtypes of human cardiomyocytes (CMs) like atrial CMs, ventricular CMs, or pacemaker cells. Sinoatrial node pacemaker cells (SNPCs) represent a myocyte population that is of special interest to cardiac research as these cells are the primary pacemakers of the heart. Patients with a failing sinoatrial node suffer from arrhythmias and slow heart rate. Currently these patients are subjected to implantation of electronic pacemaker devices that require recurrent surgeries. My postdoctoral project aims to specifically derive SNPCs from hESCs. Preliminary findings from my research show that it is possible to isolate hESC-derived SNPC-like cells, which beat faster than control cardiomyocytes and express pacemaker specific genes. The major goals of my project are to further characterize these cells to formally demonstrate that they are SNPCs and to define the signalling pathways that regulate their development. Ultimately being able to produce SNPCs has important clinical applications and represents an important step towards the long-term goal of generating a bio-artificial pacemaker.

Awardee: Dr. Stephanie Protze
Supervisor name: Dr. Gordon Keller,
TGRI, McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine

TRI Research Day

Toronto Rehab's 9th Annual Research Day, November 26, 2013

Toronto Rehab's 9th Annual Research Day was a wonderful event highlighting how scientists at the Toronto Rehab Institute (TRI) are revolutionizing rehabilitation and maximizing life for people living with the effects of disabilities, illness and aging.

One Minute Madness session: A great overview of all the research that is currently ongoing at TRI. This session briefly explained what researchers are doing in the fields of communication, mobility, cardiopulmonary fitness, optimization of the rehabilitation system, neural engineering and therapeutics, cognition, artificial intelligence and robotics in rehab, and technology. Topics ranged from biomarkers associated with depression in patients with coronary artery disease to singing therapy for rehabilitating facial and vocal expressive deficits associated with Parkinson's disease. The advances being made in technology, artificial intelligence and robotics are fascinating: researchers are working on devices that will support daily activities in older patients with dementia without the assistance of a human caregiver. Also, by using wireless monitors to evaluate walking speed, researchers can reliably detect mild cognitive impairment in older adults. Smart home systems are being created to measure vital signs and physical activity in seniors with heart failure, reducing the burden that is placed on users and their caregivers.

Keynote speaker Bob MacDonald, commentator for CBC television and CBC News Network. Having listened to the one minute madness session, he **emphasized the importance of being concise, clear and passionate when discussing one's science**. The keys to being a good speaker, according to Bob McDonald, are to be able to communicate effectively and enthusiastically. He regaled us with his adventure of flying in a zero gravity airplane and feeling what it's like to be in space. He was thoroughly entertaining and captivated the audience.

I look forward to the 10th Annual Research day to learn about further advances in rehabilitation world.

By: Nimerta Rajwans, M.Sc.

TRI Research Day

Awards:

Winners of the one minute madness determined by official judges:

1. **Master's level**: Tahir Wasim (Supervisor: Alex Mihailidis)

2. **PhD level:** Alexandra Oatley (Supervisor: Robin Green)

3. **Post-doc level:** Steven Livingstone (Supervisor: Frank Russo)

Best Research Video, people's choice:
1st place: Mobility Team

TechnoVation Award winner :
Emily King (Supervisor: Geoff Fernie)

Team Excellence Awards:

Elham Dolatabadi, Gabriela de Melo Ghisi, Bhanu Sharma, Vicky Chang, Diana Frasca, Katie Fraser, Julia Fraser, Cameron Moore, Rasha El-Kotob, Charlene Chu, Kristen Pitzul, Dan Vena, with keynote speaker Bob McDonald and Institute Director Geoff Ferni

TD Scolarship for Students with disabilities:

Kaley Roosen, Ivan Solano, Meagan Warnica and Stefania Moro.

conference reports

Trainee: Iran Rashedi, MD, M.Sc., PhD candidate
Supervisor: Dr. Armand Keating, OCI
Conference: : Till and McCulloch Meetings, Oct 23-25, Banff, AB

Abstract Title: Cardiac Lineage Reprogramming of TLR-Primed Human Mesenchymal Stromal Cells

Click here to read Iran's conference report

Trainee: Amanda Steiman, MD, M.Sc. candidate
Supervisors: Drs. Murray Urowitz and Dafna Gladman, TWRI
Conference: American College of Rheumatology Annual Scientific Meeting, Oct 25-30, San Diego, CA

Abstract title 1: The Interferon-Alpha Signature in Patients with Serologically Active Clinically Quiescent Systemic Lupus Erythermatosus

Abstract title 2: Clinical Correlates of Chronic Isolated Thrombocytopenia in Patients with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus

Click here to read Amanda's conference report

Trainee: Dr. Dannie Bernard, post doctoral fellow
Supervisor: Dr. Aaron Schimmer, OCI
Conference: AACR-NCI-EORTC International Conference on Molecular Targets and Cancer Therapeutics, October 19-23, Boston, MA

Abstract title: Select Microtubule Inhibitors Increase Lysosome Acidity and Promote Lysosomal Disruption in Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) Cells

Click here to read Dannie's conference report

Trainee: Cynthia Luk, PhD candidate
Supervisor: Dr. Minna Woo, TGRI
Conference: 16th Annual Canadian Diabetes Association/CSEM Professional Conference and Annual Meeting, as part of Vascular 2013, Oct 17-19, Montreal, QC

Abstract title: Adipocyte-Specific FAK Deletion in Mice Leads to Insulin Resistance but Divergent Adipose Tissue Remodeling under Lean and Obese Conditions

Click here to read Cynthia's conference report

Published in Science!

Christian Bassi examines the role of nuclear PTEN in cancer.

The phosphatase and tensin homolog on chromosome 10 (*PTEN*) gene is a prominent tumour suppressor gene that plays an important role in the development of many human cancers. In the cytoplasm, PTEN acts as an inhibitor of the phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI3K) signalling pathway. Mutations of PTEN that lead to its loss of function result in increased cell proliferation and reduced apoptosis. However, the role of PTEN in the nucleus is not fully understood.

A recent study by Bassi and colleagues (2013) examined the nuclear localization of PTEN, specifically the role that the small ubiquitin-like modifier (SUMO) plays in the process. The authors demonstrated the presence of high molecular weight PTEN (SUMO-PTEN) in the nucleus, and that SUMOylation controls the nuclear localization of PTEN. Moreover, they have shown that SUMO-PTEN is quickly excluded from the nucleus via the action of the protein kinase ataxia telangiectasia mutated (ATM) in cells that are genetically stressed by factors such as ionizing radiation. In the absence of nuclear PTEN, cells exhibited increased susceptibility to DNA damage. The authors distinguished this effect, which depends on both nuclear localization and SUMOylation, from PTEN's ability to inhibit PI3K. These findings imply that standard genotoxic cancer treatments (e.g. chemotherapy or radiation) combined with PI3K inhibition (via specific targeting drugs) may provide a more effective strategy for countering PTEN-deficient tumours. Clinical testing of these concepts is currently in progress.

Reference:
Bassi C, Ho J, Srikumar T, Dowling RJ, Gorrini C, Miller SJ, Mak TW, Neel BG, Raught B, Stambolic V. Nuclear PTEN controls DNA repair and sensitivity to genotoxic stress. ***Science***. **2013 Jul 26;341(6144):395-9.** doi: 10.1126/science.1236188.

Questions for Trainee:

Which type(s) of cancer do you think would benefit most from these findings?
PTEN inactivation is observed in a variety of human cancers and more prominently in breast, endometrial carcinoma, glioblastoma multiforme, skin and prostate cancers. In theory every tumour with a *PTEN* mutation (or deletion) could benefit from this combination strategy. However, we have to keep in mind that most of the time a single tumour contains more than one mutation. Combined, these mutations affect multiple pathways and lead to variations in treatment response.

What are the future directions based on the results of this paper?
Based on the heterogeneity of response that is invariably observed with any given treatment, it will be fundamental to identify factors that can predict outcome. Using more refined models, we can use biomarkers that are associated with *PTEN* mutations to identify tumours that will respond best to the proposed treatment.

Can you identify any limitations of this work?
In treating cancer, more than one drug is usually used in combination regimens. The rationale is to use drugs that work by different mechanisms, thereby decreasing the likelihood that resistant cancer cells will develop. But this also means that the side effects of both drugs will be combined. In this specific case, where a genotoxic agent, which can have severe side effects on its own, is combined with a PI3K inhibitor, we have to carefully monitor for adverse effects.

alumnus career profile

Dr. Gurjit Singh Ph.D., Aud(C), Reg. CASLPO

Senior Research Audiologist, Phonak Canada

Dr. Gurjit Singh: "Say yes to all opportunities!"

Describe your training/education?
I began my studies as an undergraduate in Psychology at the University of Manitoba. From there I received my MA in Social Psychology from the University of Waterloo and an MSc in Audiology from the University of Western Ontario. At the University of Toronto, I completed my Psychology PhD with a focus on Cognition, and post-doctorate degree in Teleaudiology while located at Toronto Rehab.

What is your official title?
Senior Research Audiology, Phonak Canada Ltd.
Adjunct Scientist, Toronto Rehab Institute.
Adjunct Lecturer, Dept. of Speech-Language Pathology, University of Toronto.

How did you obtain your current position?
By saying "yes" to any and all opportunities that crossed my path, even if the payoff was not immediately obvious. By doing so, I could demonstrate successful outcome on short-term projects. Such success helped me to convince the company to create a new position based in Toronto. I also tried to not become too discouraged by the several companies who turned me down!

Describe what you do in your position? (do you also get to supervise students and postdocs?)
My research focuses on hearing, hearing loss, and hearing rehabilitation, and the specific topics that I investigate are strongly influenced by my training. These days, much of my focus is on teleaudiology, or the application of telemedicine to audiology, how cognitive processes (e.g., attention) inform the ability to listen in complex environments, and how social forces (e.g., social support, stigma, etc.) inform listening. In my position, I am able to supervise Masters students and Post-docs on my own and co-supervise PhD students.

Click here to read the remainder of Gurjit's interview and learn what advice he has for trainees interested in pursuing a similar career path.

UPCOMING EVENTS & FUNDING CALENDAR:

01/09 **Funding Opportunity.**

FY13 DoD – Breast Cancer Research Program Postdoctoral Fellowship Award

APPLICATION DEADLINE JANUARY 9TH, 2014

Purpose: The Postdoctoral Fellowship Award supports exceptionally talented recent doctoral or medical graduates in pursuit of innovative, high-impact breast cancer research during their post-doctoral training and allows them to obtain the necessary experience for an independent career at the forefront of breast cancer Research.

More information: http://cdmrp.army.mil/funding/bcrp.shtml

01/24 **Funding Opportunity.**

CIHR Synapse Award. Available to graduate students or post-doctoral fellows. Nominations due Jan 24, 2014 . Click here for more information

02/03 **Funding Opportunity.**

Parkinson Society Canada – Basic Research Fellowship

Application Deadline: February 3, 2014

Click here for more information

02/03 **Funding Opportunity.**

The Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) Personnel Awards Competition for Doctoral Student Postdoctoral, and Clinical Research Fellows. Application Deadline Feb 3rd, 2014

Click here for more details.

02/15 **Funding Opportunity.**

Krescent/CIHR Post-doctoral Fellowship (2014)

Application Deadline Feb 15th, 2014

Click here for more information.

01/09 **Job Opportunity:**

Project Manager, Education and Professional Development

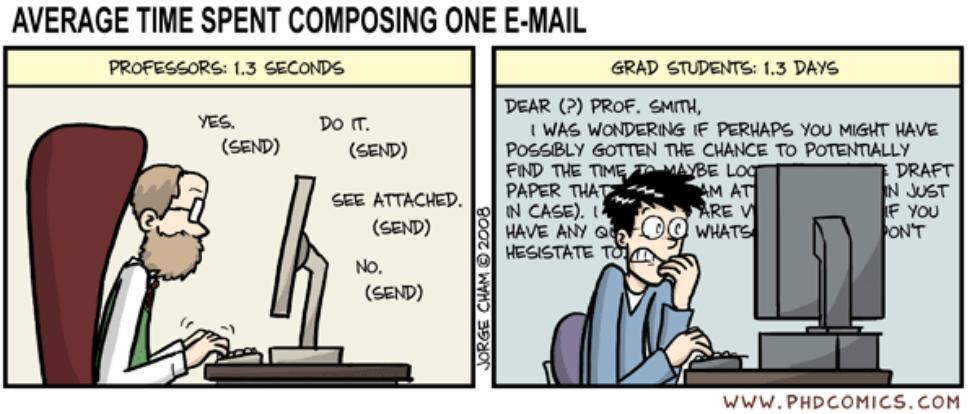
https://www.recruitingsite.com/csbsites/uhncareers/JobDescription.asp?SiteID=10031&JobNumber=719166

Kimchi Korean House.....149 Dundas Street West

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Located on the south side of Dundas near Bay, Kimchi Korean House serves great Korean food. Prices are reasonable and service is excellent. They provide a wide selection of side dishes with each order and unlimited tea. The kimchi is very good!

Tel: (416) 599-1989



"Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham
www.phdcomics.com