Dr. Hieter and CSMB: Ensuring a strong future for science and scientists
December 5, 2017

As scientists make fast and concerted advancements in life-saving technologies, the squeeze on funding could threaten their momentum. That’s where Dr Philip Hieter, President of the Canadian Society for Molecular Biosciences (CSMB), comes in. To get the ‘biggest bang for their buck’, the CSMB is leveraging its collective knowledge and talents by focusing on the most pressing issues facing fundamental research, like funding. Through advocacy and education, they aim to influence not only present and future scientists, but decision makers in the Canadian government and the world. In 1957 the...

Cited podcast wins top journalism award
November 30, 2017

In two small offices of the Michael Smith Laboratories, among the controlled chaos of labs and data, a small team of industrious journalists record a radio show and podcast called Cited. Last month, their hard work was rewarded with one of British Columbia’s most prestigious awards for journalism: The Jack Webster Award in Feature and Enterprise Reporting, for their episode The Heroin Clinic. Cited originally rose out of The UBC Terry Project. Founded by Dr. Dave Ng, science educator and director of the Advanced Molecular Biology Laboratory at the MSL, and Dr. Allen Sens, a professor in UBC’s...

Inside the Microbiome: Why Good Gut Bacteria Is the Big Hope For Allergic Disease
November 30, 2017

Pioneering researchers are finding astonishing evidence that tiny gut microbes may hold the key to preventing – or even curing – asthma and food allergies. Here’s why they say it’s time we learn to love our bacteria. First published in Allergic Living magazine; to subscribe click here. Microbes exist everywhere – in water, air, soil, plants and animals, and from the coldest regions of the Antarctic to the boiling hydrothermal vents at the bottom of the sea. According to microbiologist Brett Finlay, there are far more bacteria on Earth than there are stars in the sky...

Canadian Medical Hall of Fame inducts UBC microbiologist
November 27, 2017

These renowned individuals are among the 125 laureates of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF), which recognizes Canadian heroes whose work has advanced health. Established in 1994, the national charitable organization aims to inspire pursuit of careers in the health sciences, while celebrating the country's rich medical history. In April of 2018, an induction ceremony will see Canadian and international leaders recognize six new laureates. Among the inductees will be Dr. Brett Finlay — UBC Peter Wall Distinguished Professor at the Michael Smith Laboratories — who will add this prestigious...

Unravelling the mechanism behind beta-glucans metabolism by Bateroidetes
November 6, 2017

The great quantity of microbes that call our large intestine home have far-reaching influences on our overall health. Dietary fiber, known to scientists as complex polysaccharides, drive gut homeostasis by providing a food source to the intestinal microbiome. Prof. Harry Brumer established an international collaboration with Prof. Eric Martens, at the University of Michigan, and Prof. Gideon Davies, at the University of York, to unravel the intricate strategy adopted by the gut symbiont B. ovatus and other Bacteroidetes species to utilize dietary fiber. Together, they combined their expertise...

Creature no larger than a grain of rice colours BC forests a deathly red
October 30, 2017
Aided by climate change, the Mountain Pine Beetle has already spread into BC's forests and threatens forests in eastern Canada. A quiet battle is being fought in the forests of western North America, and millions of pine trees are dying in its wake. Shades of green that once permeated the flora of British Columbia's forests are disappearing. The insides of lodgepole pines are turning blue with a fungus — it is aptly named the blue stain fungus. The trees' needles are shifting to shades of dull brownish-red. Aerial surveys have observed rolling hills of northwestern pine forests stretching... 

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How do your allergies develop?
October 10, 2017

Lisa A. Reynolds and B. Brett Finlay - both from the Michael Smith Laboratories at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada - explain in an article published in the journal Nature Reviews Immunology how the immune system reacts to foreign substances. Our immune cells are always on the lookout for dangers, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, and toxic substances. When these molecules enter the body - through the lungs, mouth, intestine, or skin - the immune system can react by labeling them as either harmless or dangerous. Most of the time, our bodies accept or... 

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Dr. B. Brett Finlay among the new 2018 laureates inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame
October 3, 2017

Dr. Bryce Taylor, Chair of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (CMHF) announced today that Dr. B. Brett Finlay was among six new laureates who have been selected for induction into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. Finlay is a Professor in the Michael Smith Laboratories, with joint appointments in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology, and the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He is internationally recognized in the field of host-microbe interactions and a major leader in efforts to improve Canadian health. Finlay's research interests are focused on understanding how... 

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Why Dirt and Microbes Could Be Good for Us – Finlay speaks at The Royal Institution
September 13, 2017

Dr. Finlay speaks at The Royal Institution, an organisation devoted to scientific education and research, based in London England. Let Them Eat Dirt: Raising our kids with their microbes Q&A period

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Genome BC: Cannabis traits unlocked for better regulation
August 16, 2017

Medical cannabis production is one of the fastest growing agri-biotech industries in BC, a province which is home to over 20% of Canada's licensed producers of medical cannabis. The federal Cannabis Act, which is currently before parliament, will legalize the non-medical use of cannabis and further expand cannabis production and distribution into a regulated, multibillion-dollar industry. However, a major issue for the industry is access to well-defined cannabis varieties, with supporting scientific information on their select traits. "Hundreds of different small molecules contribute to the... 

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