Researchers identify genes that give cannabis its flavour
March 29, 2017

UBC scientists have scanned the genome of cannabis plants to find the genes responsible for giving various strains their lemony, skunky or earthy flavours, an important step for the budding legal cannabis industry. “The goal is to develop well-defined and highly-reproducible cannabis varieties. This is similar to the wine industry, which depends on defined varieties such as chardonnay or merlot for high value products,” said Jörg Bohlmann, a professor in the Michael Smith Laboratories and faculty of forestry at UBC. “Our genomics work can inform breeders of commercial varieties which genes to... Read More

Dr. Brett Finlay makes the cover of Allergic Living magazine
March 14, 2017

Yeast Found in Babies’ Guts Linked to Childhood Asthma
Researchers at the University of British Columbia have identified a yeast in the guts of children in Ecuador that they say contributed to the likelihood of the children having asthma. Dr. Brett Finlay, a world-leading microbiologist at UBC and author of the book Let Them Eat Dirt, says he and his colleagues performed the research after data from a large study group of Canadian children identified four gut bacteria that seemed to have a protective effect against asthma. The question was: Is this protective effect universal? “We found in... Read More

MSL Recipients Pal Bains And Natalie Marshall Recognized With A Dean Of Science Excellence In Service Award
March 1, 2017

Left to right: Jim Kronstad, Director of the Michael Smith Laboratories; Pal Bains (recipient), Finance Manager in the Michael Smith Laboratories; Simon Peacock, Dean of Science; Natalie Marshall (recipient), Graduate student in Microbiology & Immunology and the Michael Smith Laboratories; and Mike Gold, Head of Microbiology & Immunology. Each year the Faculty of Science recognizes staff, students and faculty whose service contributions have had a significant positive impact in achieving UBC Science’s mission. This year the Michael Smith Laboratories is thrilled to have two of our... Read More

Certain bacteria protect against a disease that is a growing threat
February 23, 2017

Can you be too clean? That is the question posed by the hygiene hypothesis, which seeks to explain why, as many illnesses have become rarer in rich countries, some have become more common. The hygiene hypothesis posits that the rise of several of these diseases, including asthma, eczema and type-1 diabetes (all of which seem associated with malfunctions of the immune system), has been caused by improvements in hygiene of the sort that have helped get rid of other illnesses. Exactly how that might happen is unclear. But at the AAAS meeting Brett Finlay of the University of British Columbia, in... Read More

Recent publication in PNAS proposes the use of a pain drug to suppress migraine symptoms
February 22, 2017

Dr Stuart Cain, a Research Associate in Terry Snutch's research lab is the lead author on a recent publication in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS): In vivo imaging reveals that pregabalin inhibits cortical spreading depression and propagation to subcortical brain structures. Full article here. The study in mice suggests a potential treatment for some forms of migraine with aura. The phenomenon that underlies migraine aura is called spreading depression or SD. This is a wave of neuronal activation followed by inactivity that travels... Read More

Dr. Christian Kastrup wins the Major Sir Frederick Banting Award
November 24, 2016
Dr. Christian Kastrup was awarded the 2016 Major Sir Frederick Banting MC, RCAMC Award from the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR). The award honors Major Sir Frederick Banting, physician, world-renowned researcher, and Nobel laureate who discovered insulin. The award was given to Dr. Kastrup for findings he published with PhD student James Baylis titled Self-propelled particles that transport cargo through flowing blood and halt hemorrhage. The research lays the foundation for treating one of the leading causes of death identified by the Canadian Armed...

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- Dr. B. Brett Finlay investigates how microbes that live on us affect our health and development
  February 3, 2017
  
  Humans and microbes are intrinsically linked. Microscopic life forms are found on our skin and in our guts. Often we blame these microbes for making us sick when we feel bad, however most microbes play beneficial and highly specialized roles in our day-to-day lives. The collection of microbes found living in equilibrium with us (our microbiome) has played a crucial role in our survival and evolution as a species. There is much insight to be gained from a better understanding of the human microbiome. Dr. B. Brett Finlay is doing just that as the program co-director of the “Humans & the...
  Read More

- Forest technology building better renewable resources
  January 24, 2017
  
  Vancouver, BC – Spruce trees are Canada's most significant forest resource because they grow in almost every region across the country and are the largest species by the number. Spruce trees also produce high quality wood and fibre that is widely used in the industry. With roughly 400 million seedlings planted per year, spruce are the most reforested trees in Canada. Climate change and unpredictable forest product markets require innovative new tools and technologies for tree breeding programs to deliver reliable spruce stock for future seed and seedling production. A $10.5-million...
  Read More

- Canada 150: Michael Smith figured out how to target genetic mutations
  January 10, 2017
  
  To mark Canada’s 150th birthday, we are counting down to Canada Day with profiles of 150 noteworthy British Columbians. This brilliant Nobel laureate was best known as a regular guy — rumpled, humble, generous and as happy mentoring the broader public regarding the importance of science to their lives as he was enthralled by the complexities of his difficult research. He like camping, hiking, sailing, skiing and listening to Sibelius. Light reading ran to The New Yorker and The Guardian. If the stereotype of the driven genius is a cold aloofness, Smith, say his colleagues at UBC, is remembered...
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- Dr. Jörg Bohlmann looks to “Spruce-Up” Canada's most significant Forest Resource
  December 9, 2016
  
  “The natural resource and environment sectors are areas where genomics is just starting to emerge as a powerful tool to help address issues facing many traditional industries. These new projects will tap into the huge potential for innovative, genomics-based solutions that will help some of our key industries – mining, forestry, fisheries – revive and thrive in the face of climate change, while also protecting our precious ecosystems, drinking water and wildlife.”–Marc LePage, President and CEO, Genome Canada Canada’s natural resources and associated industries sustain around 1.8 million jobs...
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