

## Canada's first department of dermatology created in Vancouver

VANCOUVER, BC—On February 1, 2006, the Department of Dermatology and Skin Science was formed at the University of British Columbia. It is the first university dermatology department in the country, and Department Head Harvey Lui, MD, hopes it will be the first of many.



Dr. Lui

"In Canada, Dermatology has been slotted as a subset of internal medicine for decades. This isn't the appropriate place for us," Dr. Lui told *Dermatology Times of Canada*.

The announcement is the culmination of much patience and persistence during the past six years. However, the process really began 50 years ago, when the division founders tried but failed to gain department status.

This year the department status was granted once the Faculty of Medicine became convinced that dermatology is a distinct specialty with a specific area of knowledge, and that it had demonstrated that it had reached the academic critical mass with proven research productivity. This was confirmed by an external review committee composed of U.S. and Canadian academic leaders. (In the U.S. there are approximately 69 departments of dermatology.)

Aside from the recognition of being distinct, one of the big benefits is that the department will be able to set its own agenda with its own vision, based on its own resources, Dr. Lui said.

For example:

- It will be easier to put forward a case for why there needs to be a sufficient number of dermatology training programs.
- It will ensure that dermatology is an important part of the medical undergraduate curriculum. "At the undergraduate level, we teach two separate courses in dermatology in the medical school. At UBC all medical grads must take and pass both dermatology courses to get their MD," Dr. Lui said.
- It will be easier to establish and maintain research collaborations within its five existing dermatology research labs.

"There will be new opportunities for residency training

starting this year. We are doubling the number of slots," Dr. Lui said. New faculty members, from Victoria and Prince George, have already been recruited.

Members of the Department of Dermatology and Skin Science are paying tribute to the many who made it happen. In particular, the late Dr. Donald Williams, founding head of the division; Dr. William Stewart, who worked tirelessly to unify academia with clinical practice; Dr. David McLean, who established the Skin Care Centre, the research labs, and assembled most of the current team; and Dr. Stuart Maddin, the longest-serving faculty member, who with a steady, guiding force lent his historical and practical perspectives to the efforts.

"Creating this new department sends a signal to society saying that dermatology matters to us, and it deserves its own dedicated group of people," Dr. Lui said. "The best is yet to come."

All of the dermatology research laboratories at UBC have reached the milestone of achieving funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research:

- Laboratory of Skin Immunotherapeutics  
Dr. Jan Dutz
- Laboratory for Advanced Medical Photonics (LaMP)  
Dr. Harvey Lui, Dr. David McLean,  
Dr. Haishan Zeng
- Skin Cancer Biology Lab  
Dr. Gang Li, Dr. Vincent Ho
- Predictive Medicine and Therapeutics Laboratory  
Dr. Youwen Zhou
- Hair Biology Research Laboratory  
Dr. Jerry Shapiro, Dr. Kevin McElwee

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