

# PHARM CIRCLE

*Connecting stories from Memorial's PharmD for Working Professionals Program*

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**Advance your practice,  
Lead your profession**

*Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD)  
for Working Professionals*

## From the Dean's Desk

**Dr. Shawn Bugden**

We welcomed the latest cohort of students to the working professionals' program this past September as they began their PharmD journey at Memorial University. They completed their first three-day clinical skills course in September and enjoyed time together on-campus. We share a little glimpse of that visit inside this newsletter.



We are excited to congratulate three more students who received their Doctor of Pharmacy degree at the fall 2024 convocation and are happy to welcome them to our growing alumni family.

This issue recognizes Ms. Lisa Little, the experiential learning coordinator, who oversees the program's advanced pharmacy practice experience courses. She works closely with students to help them secure placements within the direct patient care setting and plays a key role in preceptor development and advocacy. We also catch up with Dr. Tara Ventnor, a former student from the very first cohort, who continues to incorporate and build on the skills she acquired from completing her PharmD. Our student spotlight section features four students from across the country who are embracing the student experience and learning from the program and each other.

The working professionals program at Memorial was always intended to be a limited time offer. We are accepting our final cohort of students in September 2025, so let your pharmacist colleagues know this will be their last chance to participate in our highly flexible PharmD program. While it is our final intake, we remain committed to supporting our students and will continue to celebrate our program and share stories about its people.

We wish you a very happy and safe holiday season.

*We have a diverse group of faculty, external content authors, and instructional designers who work together to make this program a success. We will share their profiles in every issue.*

# Instructor Spotlight Lisa Little



Lisa Little is the Pharmacy Practice Coordinator (experiential learning) in the School of Pharmacy. She is responsible for the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) courses in the Doctor of Pharmacy for Working Professionals Program. She is also part of the experiential learning team in the entry-to-practice program and is involved in preceptor development initiatives.

Lisa graduated from Memorial University with a BSc in biology in 1995 and a BSc in pharmacy in 1998. Following graduation, Lisa worked in community pharmacy in a small town in Ontario for nine years before returning home to Newfoundland with her family in 2007. She continued working in community pharmacy practice until 2010 when she shifted to long term care (LTC). Lisa settled in quickly in her new role and developed a love for geriatrics. She very much enjoyed the interprofessional collaboration within LTC and became a Board-Certified Geriatric Pharmacist.

When Lisa worked in community pharmacy and LTC, she served as a preceptor for pharmacy students and declares she learned just as much from her students as they may have learned from her. This preceptor experience eventually led her to the School of Pharmacy's working professionals' program as the new experiential learning coordinator. She joined the team in 2019 and was instrumental in developing two APPE courses in time for their launch in 2020, just at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, this presented quite a few hurdles. Ingenuity became her fast friend as she navigated through a challenging time to ensure students completed their rotations without sacrificing the integrity of the course or the student experience.

Almost five years later, Lisa is still working hard behind the scenes to advance the experiential learning portion of the program. She has taken on several initiatives to help create efficiencies relating to the administration of the APPE courses and in building strong preceptor relationships. Drawing from her experience as a preceptor working in busy pharmacy environments, Lisa wanted to create meaningful tools and resources for preceptors to help them balance their workload and integrate students into their work environment in a way that benefited the student and the site. Lisa understands that preceptors really want to provide good learning experiences for students and want to see them succeed, even flourish. She sees this as a benefit of the role of the preceptor and being a part of making the process more fluent for them is very important to her.

Though developing the APPE courses was challenging, it was equally rewarding. Lisa encourages the working professionals' students to think outside the box and invites them to embrace the APPE experience. She believes it can be a career enhancing opportunity, sometimes even career changing. So when students are interested in exploring certain areas of patient care, Lisa is very supportive and does what she can to help make it happen. She is a great ambassador for the students and the program.

The pharmacy profession surrounds Lisa, both professionally and personally. Her husband is also a pharmacist. They have been married for 25 years and have two adult children. They like to travel around the world together when time allows. Lisa also enjoys reading, embroidery, knitting, and binge-watching shows on streaming services.

# Building Connections Beyond the Classroom

## The 2024 Cohort Begins their PharmD Adventure at Memorial University

In September, new students completed their first three-day clinical skills course. Many of them travelled from different parts of the country, arriving in St. John's to meet their classmates and instructors for the first time.

This course kick-starts the program and orients students to the fundamental knowledge and skills of advanced practice. It covers topics like patient assessment, physical assessment, and motivational interviewing, and incorporates a variety of didactic and hands-on teaching strategies. Students often appreciate the opportunity to work in small groups and enjoy lively class discussions.

For the new cohort, their visit to campus was about more than classroom learning and skills development though. It was also a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other, network, and bond.

Many of them ventured out together in the evening, spending time together over good food and conversation. Some even participated in a traditional screech-in ceremony to become honorary Newfoundlanders (where purity syrup was optional). Before heading home, a few students opted to extend their stay so that they could enjoy a mini-vacation with family and take in some tourist attractions.

When the three days together came to an end, students left campus knowing their first course was in the rear-view mirror. The memories and interactions created will help establish a foundation of peer support and friendship that will serve them well throughout their PharmD journey at Memorial University.





## Catching up with program alumnus:

*Dr. Tara Ventnor*  
(PharmD, 2021)

Tara did not intend to become a pharmacist. In fact, her educational and professional career path was winding and diverse. But a random conversation one day sparked her interest in the pharmacy profession. The rest, as they say, is history.

### **Diverse career paths**

After she completed a bachelor of biology (hons) program at McMaster University, Tara moved to Australia for a gap year while considering different career paths. When she returned to Toronto a year later, she worked as a receptionist in a law firm. She later enrolled in Humber College's paramedic program. While there, she had a conversation with someone who introduced her to the idea of pharmacy as a career path. That fateful encounter led her to the bachelor of pharmacy program at the University of Toronto.

When she graduated, she spent 10 years in community practice before transitioning to hospital pharmacy and eventually to the intensive care unit (ICU) at a local community hospital in Welland, Ontario. Despite her best efforts to keep up-to-date on current knowledge, she still encountered situations not seen since her pharmacy school days. Many of her colleagues were graduates of PharmD programs too so she felt completing a post-baccalaureate PharmD degree was essential to keeping current and making meaningful contributions to the ICU team.

While a student in the PharmD for Working Professionals program, Tara provided care to the ICU and telemetry units in the same hospital. She continues to work in the same

area today, incorporating and building on the skills she acquired from her PharmD.

### **Expanding skills means expanding scope**

In addition to boosting her confidence, clinical knowledge, and expertise, Tara felt the working professionals program helped enhance her technical skills.

During her second advanced pharmacy practice experience rotation, her preceptor was an antimicrobial specialist pharmacist. Her final project involved creating a fillable PDF care plan to be used at that practice site. Tara learned how to design the form, incorporate calculations, and edit them. This was an unexpected but welcomed outcome. She still uses these forms in her practice site today and has even learned to adapt them for other documentations, including warfarin and vancomycin dosing. Without completing her PharmD degree, she feels she would not have developed these highly useful technical skills that helped expand her skillset and significantly improve the organizational and critical care she can provide.

Tara's ability to research clinical questions and seek information to help patients has also improved. She is much more efficient in using online and library resources,

which is another useful skill she honed throughout her PharmD.

Since graduating, she also became a preceptor and even precepted a student from her alma mater, Memorial University. She found her confidence increased significantly after earning her PharmD. She now enjoys the enthusiasm that pharmacy students bring to their placement and they help her to maintain a sharp set of clinical skills. Her work as a preceptor was recently recognized by Niagara Health when they presented her with the Interprofessional Practice Award.

Expanding her skillset is like 'a gift that keeps on giving', and her patients and students are her biggest beneficiaries.

## A memorable experience

When Tara enrolled in the program in 2018, it was with the intention of obtaining a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree. While goals are important, sometimes those little things become the most memorable. For Tara, that 'little thing' was travelling to campus in her first semester to complete the first clinical skills course. She found it to be a great opportunity to meet her classmates and instructors in person. Those initial meetings became instrumental in building friendships and establishing a support network that became so valuable throughout the program, particularly for group work activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted the second visit to campus in year two, making that initial visit all the more special and one of the most impactful experiences of the program for her.

## No time like the present

Tara believes that no educational opportunity is a waste. Every challenge is a chance to learn and grow and there's no time like the present to develop and expand a skillset. While it may seem like there is never enough time, it somehow magically appears when you need it.

She completed her PharmD while raising two young daughters and working full-time. Life was definitely busy and stressful. But the time passed quickly and before she knew it she was a graduate. Tara is proud of herself for taking on the PharmD challenge and setting a great example

to her daughters, showing them that hard work pays off and goals can be achieved with a little determination, persistence, and time.

## Exploring a new passion

Tara's friend made her a circular sock-knitting machine using a 3D printer. These knitting machines existed for centuries and were traditionally used to make socks for soldiers. They make knitting socks incredibly fast, but there is a steep learning curve to master the technique. Channeling her inner-PharmD student persona, Tara used those honed research skills and perseverance to conquer the task.

No stranger to the concept of 'a gift that keeps on giving', she now enjoys making homemade socks on her sock-knitting machine for friends and family. They have become the biggest beneficiaries of her relaxing and addictive hobby.



Knitting socks on her sock-knitting machine

# Students in the Spotlight

*We like to celebrate our students and let readers know a little more about the people in our neighbourhood. We share student profiles in every issue.*

## 2021 Cohort

# Emma-Jean Slobodesky

Emma-Jean grew up in Bedford, Nova Scotia, and completed a bachelor of science degree in immunology & microbiology (Hons) in 2012 before completing a bachelor of pharmacy degree from Dalhousie University in 2016.

After graduation, Emma-Jean moved to Miramichi, New Brunswick, with a handful of her classmates and began her career as a pharmacist at a small pharmacy in a rural community. She eventually moved to Fredericton where she worked as a community pharmacist and managed for a period of time. She returned to Nova Scotia with her husband in 2021 making the Annapolis Valley home.

In 2022, Emma-Jean took a clinic lead position at one of the first pharmacist-led walk-in clinics in the province. During that time, pharmacist-led clinics were in their infancy. It was exciting for her to be a part of an innovative and trail-blazing initiative and provide primary care to patients in the community. These clinics paved the way for what are now known as the Community Pharmacy Primary Care Clinics, which continue to open all across Nova Scotia and aim to increase patient access to healthcare in the community.

Emma-Jean is committed to life-long learning and always had interest in pursuing a PharmD. She enrolled in the program at Memorial University in 2021. After practicing in the community for five years, she felt she had a good foundation and was ready to advance her skills as a practitioner. After her first year in the program, she took a position at the pharmacist-led clinic, feeling more confident approaching patient care from a primary provider perspective – ordering labs, collaborating with a nurse practitioner, and managing chronic health conditions. She just finished her final semester in the program after completing the second clinical rotation in November. She is grateful for the experience and opportunity to have met pharmacists from all over the country, reconnect with former classmates, and learn from knowledgeable practitioners, instructors and preceptors.



Although it was a difficult decision to make, Emma-Jean decided to leave her position in primary care and embark on a new journey as a hospital pharmacist. She attributes her success and career path over the past few years to the PharmD program, which has provided opportunities and gave her the confidence to pursue exciting new endeavors. She says, “the PharmD program gave me the skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue a career in hospital pharmacy, which has always been a long-term professional goal of mine”. She is excited to begin this journey at the hospital in her community when she officially completes the program. She plans to graduate at the February 2025 in-absentia convocation.

Emma-Jean hopes to encourage and inspire other pharmacists considering the program to take a leap and enroll while the program is still being offered. Although it is hard work and demanding at times, she was able to finish her degree in three and a half years while balancing full-time work, planning a wedding, moving provinces, starting a new position, and becoming a new mom.

When not at work or studying, Emma-Jean enjoys spending time with her husband Jeff, daughter Elise, and dog Elliott.



## 2022 Cohort

# James MacMillan

Born and raised in Miramichi, New Brunswick, James was introduced to pharmacy practice at a young age. Watching his mother assist in the management and optimization of his older relatives' medications taught him the importance of patient advocacy and patient-centered care and influenced his decision to become a pharmacist. He graduated with his bachelor of science in pharmacy degree from Dalhousie University in 2022. Immediately after graduation, James began his career working as a staff pharmacist at the Miramichi Regional Hospital where he still works today.

Throughout his career to date, James has worked on several projects and has covered different units within the Miramichi Regional Hospital. He currently works in Miramichi's emergency department but also covers the palliative care unit, a short-stay medical unit, and is the local infectious disease/antimicrobial stewardship pharmacist. He also previously helped pilot a remote order verification project for the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital in Fredericton.

James applied to the PharmD for Working Professionals program after discussions with his coworker (now manager), Keith Noseworthy, who was enrolled in the program at the time. Although James was a new pharmacy graduate, he saw the PharmD program as a way of honing his skills and felt he could learn a lot from his classmates who had experience working in various practice environments across the country.

Despite most classes being taught online, James feels he has fostered good relationships with several of his classmates and has learned a lot about optimizing practices through course discussions and informal conversations with peers throughout the program. Completing a PharmD degree also enabled him to establish a neuroleptic reduction program for hospitalized patients admitted to long-term care in Miramichi. Overall, the program gave him the confidence to bring forward innovative ideas that can be implemented within his own practice site and has taught him the importance of never settling for the status quo.

Upon graduation from the PharmD program, James hopes to continue to innovate and improve the efficiency of hospital pharmacy practice. He is a strong believer in process standardization and aims to continually advance technology systems to improve overall quality of care. James is hopeful that he will be able to aid in the implementation of a province-wide clinical information system (CIS) to help improve and standardize patient care across New Brunswick.

Aside from working and studying, James is a self-professed computer nerd who enjoys spending time online with friends. He also enjoys the great outdoors and exploring nature (while playing Pokemon GO, of course). When life gets stressful, he can always rely on his dog, Doug, to help keep him calm and put a smile on his face.



## 2023 Cohort

# Manish Singh

Manish Singh was born and raised in India, New Delhi. He attended Jamia Hamdard University, completing a bachelor of pharmacy degree in 2003 and a master of pharmacy degree in phytochemistry in 2005. He then became an analyst for Fortis Clinical Research Limited in Delhi and was part of a clinical research team for a bioavailability and bioequivalence study. He worked on analytical instruments (like liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry, HPLC and gas chromatography) and developed analytical methods for bioequivalence and bioavailability studies that several countries used to regulate generic drug approvals (including Health Canada, US-FDA, ANVISA in Brazil, CDSCO in India).

In 2008, he visited his brother in Canada and really liked the country's culture and people. He liked it so much he decided to go through the immigration process in order to move here. Four years later, he moved to Canada and settled in Ontario. He completed the International Pharmacy Graduate Program at the University of Toronto in 2013 which helped him prepare for the PEBC examination process. When he obtained his pharmacy license, Manish joined a busy independent community pharmacy in Peterborough, Ontario. Within a year, he was promoted to a manager position and played a key role in growing the business.

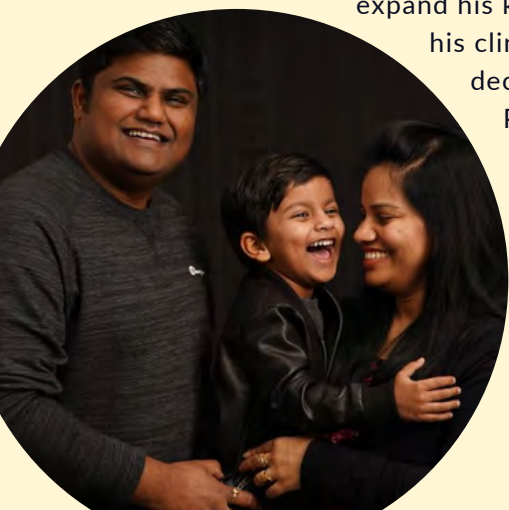
After nine years in community pharmacy, Manish switched to hospital pharmacy. Becoming a clinical pharmacist was a dream job for him. He quickly realized that in order to thrive in his new role, he needed to expand his knowledge and enhance his clinical expertise. So he decided to pursue his PharmD and chose Memorial University's program because he felt it was more diverse and economical.



Manish is almost halfway through the program and is enjoying the experience. He really appreciates that the majority of courses are online which allows him to continue working full-time without having to move or incur additional expenses. So far, the program has opened doors to advanced clinical, academic, and research roles. He has gained deeper knowledge and skills as well as enhanced his ability to make evidence-based decisions within his practice. He really appreciates the program's flexibility, interactive learning schedule, and live interactions with other students.

His long-term career goal is to work in higher management. So, when he completes his Doctor of Pharmacy degree, he plans to pursue a Master of Health Management at McMaster University. He also feels that continuing to work as a clinical pharmacist and using the clinical knowledge gained through the PharmD program will benefit him, his patients, and his career trajectory.

Outside the pharmacy profession, Manish loves spending time with his six-year-old son, Mihir. He enjoys taking him to the park and teaching him to play cricket and speak Hindi. He dreams of taking his family on a Disney Cruise some day – a dream that can hopefully become reality when he graduates.







## 2024 Cohort

# Mona Mourad

Mona is an industry pharmacist currently working for Baxter Healthcare in the Medical Affairs department. Her main areas of focus include infusion drug safety, pharmacy informatics, and data analytics. She also works part-time as a community pharmacist to stay connected to patients and patient-facing activities.

Mona completed her bachelor's degree in pharmacy and master's degree in hospital pharmacy at the University of Montreal. She feels privileged to have gained clinical experience in oncology, internal medicine, and at the neonatal intensive care unit at McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) in Montreal. She later moved to Ontario where she worked in drug information and as a Medical Scientific Liaison leading up to her current position in Medical Affairs.

Being an avid learner, Mona was always passionate about her growth and development. She was keen to continue her learning journey as a pharmacist and joined the PharmD for Working Professionals program in September 2024.

With one semester under her belt, Mona's experience with the program so far has been nothing short of stellar. Not only does she find Memorial University's PharmD program robust with knowledgeable faculty and an outstanding support team, she also appreciates that it was developed with the adult learner in mind. Most of the students are full-time pharmacists with other life responsibilities to juggle. She feels the program is designed to accommodate their lifestyle and offers enough flexibility for learners to maintain their schedules while completing the program. Mona also considers herself lucky to be among a cohort of brilliant colleagues, who bring tremendous collective experiences and knowledge to the online learning environment. She looks forward to progressing through the program with this fantastic group of individuals.

Mona is excited for this learning journey over the next few years and is eager to apply the skills and confidence she will acquire to continue advocating and educating other health care providers on safe infusions. She is also looking forward to leveraging her updated knowledge in the development of innovative technologies that support patient safety and safe drug administration. Additionally, she is excited to reinvigorate her practice in the community setting by applying new leadership skills and using tools and techniques she acquires to optimize patient care.

Important  
Dates

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**  
for future applicants:

The last cohort of students will be admitted in fall 2025

Final application deadline date:  
**March 1, 2025**

For current students:

*PHAR 4900 Clinical Skills I*  
Onsite: **September 19-21, 2025 (tentative)**

*PHAR 6900 Clinical Skills II*  
Onsite: **May 2-4, 2025**

# Happy Happenings



## WELL DONE!

Kristie MacDonald, a student from the 2022 cohort, received the David J Collins Award for NL Pharmacists



## SALUTE!

Prabhjot Sran received the Preceptor-of-the-Year award



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Emma-Jean Slobodesky, a student from the 2021 cohort, received the Travel Award for Working Professionals in Pharmacy

## HATS OFF TO OUR NEWEST GRADUATES!

Three students conferred their degree at the October 2024 convocation ceremony. Congratulations to:

Mohammed Al-Sukhni  
Anant Mrar  
Heather Zhang

## STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON SCHOOL OF PHARMACY COMMITTEES (2024-2026)

Academic Council  
**Samantha Sweetapple**

Professional Suitability  
**Holly Nofall**

Recruitment  
**Gail Wilson**

Undergraduate Student Admissions  
**Allan Choi**

Undergraduate Studies  
**Sarah Hyslop**

*Have a safe, restful, and happy holiday season*