

Michelle Harkness Awards recognize Mentorship Excellence Canada-wide

HAMILTON, ON (29 October 2021)

AllerGen Inc. is pleased to announce the winners of the 2021 Michelle Harkness Mentorship Awards (MHMA). Three exemplars of mentorship excellence from across the country are being recognized with MHMA recognition awards, and one mentor-in-development is being supported by an MHMA mentorship development grant.

In terms of recognition awards, the 2021 MHMA *Lifetime Achievement Award* is awarded to **Dr. Dean Befus**, University of Alberta. Dr. Befus is Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry and Co-director of Alberta Respiratory Centre. His nominees attested to his deep commitment to mentorship:

"Dean acts as a beacon, a guide in the scientific world, and a key player in the development of our character. He promotes honesty, empathy, and humility... He shows how through collaboration we can achieve so much more than through isolation and fosters an environment where teamwork can flourish. What's more, he stresses the importance of mindfulness and wellbeing in our everyday life, of honesty, respect and togetherness with our team and our families... He is absolutely my role model not only as a scientist but also as a citizen."

The 2021 MHMA *Mentorship Excellence Award* for an established academic researcher is awarded to **Dr. Kelly McNagny**, University of British Columbia. Dr. McNagny is a Professor in the Department of Medical Genetics and a Senior Scholar of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research. His nominators stated:

"Besides science, Kelly prioritizes his students' success by continuously supporting them to attend conferences, to publish, and to pursue any feasible idea... He takes great care when looking at students' written work and does not just brush over a thesis... Undergraduates seek out a research position in Kelly's lab after experiencing his passionate class lectures. Everyone wants to be in an environment where their work is valued... I don't think I could find a more supportive, creative or fulfilling environment than in his lab."

The 2021 MHMA *Mentorship Excellence Award* for a researcher-in-training, research support staff, practitioner or advocate goes to **Dr. Jenny Thiele**, Queen's University. Dr. Thiele is the Lab Manager of the Dr. Anne Ellis Laboratory, which focuses on understanding and developing treatments for allergic rhinitis. In their nomination testimonials, her mentees state:

"Jenny devotes all her time to improving Dr. Anne Ellis' students' learning experience... her goal is to ensure each student is comfortable in the laboratory and takes autonomy for their experiments and role in the team. Any new student is welcomed with open arms and provided a positive environment to succeed... Jenny treats all students as family and always goes above and beyond to ensure that students are supported, even outside of the lab."

Dr. Lori Connors, Dalhousie University, is the recipient of the 2021 MHMA *Mentorship Development Grant*. Dr. Connors is an Associate Professor of Medicine and a clinical immunologist and allergist with an academic and a community practice.

The MHMA *Mentorship Development Grant* does not recognize past mentoring achievements but rather supports activities by which applicants seek to strengthen their mentoring skills. The 2021 grant facilitated Dr. Connors' participation in a Canadian Women in Medicine Leaders Course, and in the Canadian Women in Medicine Annual Conference, both of which will enable the achievement of her goal: to develop a Women in Allergy and Immunology conference as a means to develop and mentor upcoming and current women in allergy.

"Every year, the MHMA awards remind us of the value of role models in our lives, and they lead us to appreciate the generosity and goodwill of those who make the extra effort to help others to thrive and achieve their best," observes AllerGen's President & CEO, Dr. Diana Royce.

"Again this year, our MHMA recipients truly do justice to Michelle's ideals. We congratulate and thank them all!"

MHMA recognition awards are bestowed upon Canadian allergy and immunology researchers, practitioners and advocates who are nominated by their peers and/or mentees, and whose mentorship contributions are adjudicated by mentorship practitioners. MHMA mentorship development grants support relevant training or experiential activities undertaken by aspiring mentors in the Canadian allergy and immunology community.

About the Michelle Harkness Mentorship Award

The [Michelle Harkness Mentorship Award](#) (MHMA) program was established in 2017 in honour of Michelle Harkness, the Manager of AllerGen's Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) Training and Events program from 2011 to 2017, who passed away unexpectedly in August 2017. The MHMA awards celebrate the high value Michelle attributed to the practice of mentorship and perpetuate her encouragement of mentoring relationships.

About AllerGen Inc.

[AllerGen NCE Inc.](#) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the work of Canadian researchers and organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life of people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. AllerGen NCE was a national Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) supported by the Government of Canada from 2004-2020.

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