

BCIT RETIREES' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

www.bcitra.ca

Contact us at: info@bcitra.ca

Edition 6

JUNE 2019

INSIDE

- AGM High-lights
- Gordon Farrell
- Mark Angelo
- Up Coming Events
- Soaring to New Heights
- DE prescribing
- Health Insurance After Retirement
- MEDOC

BCITRA 2019 AGM HIGHLIGHTS



- Changes to the Constitution/Bylaws were approved and in effect. To review the current document visit our website www.bcitra.ca
- An increase to Membership dues was approved effective January 2020. Yearly dues will be \$20; a new 10-year option will be \$175
- Paul McCullough gave a talk on the upgrades occurring at BCIT with regards to new buildings and fund raising for new infrastructure.
- Dave Malcolm presented a brief presentation on prostate health, awareness and assistance. For more information visit www.prostatecancerbc.ca
- Johnson Insurance provided a brief presentation and answered questions
- Thanks to BCIT



Gordon Farrell Steps down from the Board

After three terms as president, Gordon is stepping away from his board responsibilities. His leadership will be missed for some time.

Gordon provided an enormous value added component as a BCITRA Board Member, most notably strengthening ties to the management of BCIT and reaching out to other post secondary institutions. In the past year he devoted a lot of time and energy to the development of our new constitution and bylaws. These would not have been possible without him. Well done Gordon.



Congratulations to ONE of OUR OWN

Mark Angelo

Mark on June 4th was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the **TRENT UNIVERSITY** for his work with Rivers conservation. Mark has been a consistent advocate for the well-being and protection of our rivers systems. Mark founded the BC Rivers Day events and Foundation, as well as World Rivers Day. Mark has also been awarded the prestigious Order of Canada. Congratulations Mark!

On the Horizon – Up and Coming Events

At our last Board Meeting we had a good discussion of events for the fall. We were joined by two of our three volunteers and they brought a new level of energy to the discussion. As a result I am pleased to announce the following proposed events:



As our previous Firefighters' Public House lunches have proven to be successful we will continue to hold them, bimonthly if possible, with various weekday times rather than just after a board meeting. Eblasts will be sent out for each to inform the members and allow enough time for registering through info@bcitra.ca and making adequate reservations at the pub. You are welcome to just show up if your schedule is unpredictable.



We are trying to improve attendance at our COSCO seminars and will try to have a lunch offsite after the workshops, possibly the buffet at the casino. Members will be able to register for the workshop and/or the buffet lunch. Tentative dates for fall workshops are September 25 and October 23. Stay tuned for more details.

COSCO SEMINARS

Seniors Helping Seniors Workshops

This November marks the 25th anniversary of our BCITRA organization. We will be having a party with all the trimmings – door prizes, balloons, cake, an emcee and other goodies. We are especially interested in contributions from all the members with anecdotes and stories related to the Retirees' Association. We also welcome volunteers who wish to help with the party.

All of the events will be added to the event calendar on our website to remind members of dates, times and venues. We hope you can attend some or all of you have additional suggestions or ideas we welcome message to info@bcitra.ca to let us know what's on your

our events. If them. Send a mind.

Have a great summer. I hope to see you in the fall.

Donna Foster, President, BCITRA



Alumni Celebration



In the BCIT hierarchical structure the Retirees' Association liaises with the Alumni Association (AA). They provide us with needs such as stationery, room bookings, and computer network space and access.

On May 28, 2019, I attended the AA AGM along with Gina Ng, who is helping the board as a volunteer re events. The AA celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. The AGM took place in a conference room at the BCIT Downtown Campus, which was filled to capacity. This event gave us some further ideas related to our own upcoming 25th anniversary this fall. I was even introduced to the audience as your president so it was a worthwhile use of our time.

An added bonus was an enthusiastic keynote address by Kevin Lawrence, a '92 alum of Marketing Management and author of Your Oxygen Mask First. He spoke about the need for leaders to think of themselves and their own needs before giving all their time, energy and attention to others. He had a pragmatic model which may avoid many of the common pitfalls associated with leadership. His talk was informative and inspirational.

We would like to thank Leslie Courchesne, executive director, Alumni Association, for the invitation to attend this event, It was much appreciated.

Donna Foster, President, BCITRA

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS, ASTRONOMICALLY!

by Brian Antonson

A recent trip to The Big Island of Hawaii saw me on top of the tallest mountain on Earth, Mauna Kea, home to 13 rather stellar telescopes!

Mauna Kea is one of two prime volcanoes...there are others!...that comprise The Big Island. The other is Mauna Loa. Between them, they've created the largest...and youngest...of the Hawaiian Islands. Another one is growing south of The Big Island, but has yet to break the surface of the ocean and will require a few million years yet to produce the lush vegetation and supreme beaches that make these Islands world famous.



The Author points to the Subaru and Keck 'scopes

The base of Mauna Kea is tens of thousands of feet below the ocean's surface, meaning the mountain rises higher than Mount Everest overall. Then, the rarified air at the 14,000 foot summit of Mauna Kea makes it an ideal home for professional astronomy. Soon, it will host yet another in its pantheon of world class structures, the Thirty Meter Telescope, or TMT.

This site has seen its share of controversy. Universities and international science consortia established 13 telescopes of varying sizes and purposes there in recent decades. They do world class astronomy. The recent 'first' photograph of a black hole in a distant galaxy involved six telescopes spread across the globe focussing on the same point, and one of those was atop Mauna Kea.

The plan to build the TMT there will see it host the world's largest telescope...with a mirror 98 feet across...but indigenous Hawaiians protested this construction, claiming it was yet another desecration of a traditional religious site. Earlier telescopes had avoided any ground considered sacred, but the objections and protests grew into court challenges that went all the way to the Hawaiian Supreme Court.



TMT proponents claimed they were respecting indigenous sensitivities, and promised to decommission and remove three of the existing 13 telescopes. They pointed out the tremendous financial value of the new 'scope...some \$1.5 billion American dollars...and the ongoing operational benefits to the local and global astronomical community. Opponents objected to the lack of consultation in the original process.

The legal wrangling carried on over many months, but finally the Supreme Court gave the go-ahead last fall, and design work is well-underway. Much of the manufacturing work will be done in the Lower Mainland by Port Coquitlam's Dynamic Structures, who have been part of the design and construction process for top telescopes the world over, including several on Mauna Kea. And, the lead designer for the TMT is a BCIT graduate!

The massive doors of the Subaru 'scope, with a mirror 27 feet, 8.3 meters, across.

The structure will be over thirty meters across. The designer said "Picture Rogers Arena...only it turns!" Most telescopes turn in some way so they can view different areas in the night sky. The enormity of this particular project puts a new wrinkle on that concept. Construction is expected to complete in 2023.

A visit to the summit of Mauna Kea is approached cautiously. The oxygen content at that height is 40% less than at sea level, so visitors are required to 'acclimatize' for an hour or so at the Onizuka Observatory at the 9300 foot level, named for American/Hawaiian astronaut Ellison Onizuka, who lost his life in the Challenger disaster. There is a visitor information center here and souvenirs and travel information are available while you wait to ensure your lungs are getting used to the thinner air. Nearby, a community of apartment buildings hosts astronomers and workers who will be spending extended time atop MK...their acclimatization takes two weeks! And people with heart or lung conditions are cautioned to not go up further.

Regular vehicles are not allowed above the Onizuka Observatory. The paved road disappears almost immediately and a well-maintained but rough road takes you most of the way to the summit, requiring a four-wheel drive vehicle. Harper's Car Rental near Kona is the only source of these vehicles on the Island. All other companies warn visitors to NOT travel this road, as their insurance will not cover any accidents that occur beyond the pavement.

The higher you go, the more the landscape resembles the Moon, or Mars. The red-dish brown tone of the rocky terrain made this area perfect for practicing for travel on the lunar surface by Apollo astronauts. It's steep, rough, with deep valleys.

As you near the top, pavement returns. Telescopes are delicate things and their mirrors are highly polished, so the pavement keeps ambient dust in the air to a minimum. Coming around a corner, you see bright white structures appear one by one, eventually accounting for 13 telescopes that occupy the summit. Names like Gemini, Subaru, Keck 1 and Keck 2, and others catch your eye. A series of roadways leads to different installations on different levels. Some are arrayed along the western edge of the mountaintop, and these can actually be seen from the highways far below on clear days.

The Keck 1 'scope, with a mirror 33 feet, 10 meters, across.

From time to time, rain or snow will fall up here, but for the most part, the summit is far above any weather activity, and many visitors feel like they're floating atop a marshmallow mattress. To the north, the southern shore of Maui is visible. At night, clear and dark skies display a wonderful horizon-to-horizon panorama, with the Milky Way arching overhead.



Did I mention it's cold up there? Thin air is just the start, and the summit can have temperatures that plummet dozens of degrees below zero, but sunny days can be reasonable. Indeed, the air is noticeably thinner and breathing is indeed not as easy as we found a few thousand feet lower.

The telescope buildings are dazzling, and several are huge, but for the most part they're closed to the public. We visited the Keck Visitor Center and watched the telescope move as it was being serviced. This one has a 33 foot (10 meter) mirror. The TMT will be three times larger.

Driving up and down the steep roads between telescopes presents interesting views of the other structures and out across the surrounding Pacific Ocean. And then it's time to descend, and that is done carefully in lower gears to avoid brakes overheating on the steep roads, something that can happen even in the cold temperatures. In less than half-an-hour, you're back at the Onizuka Center for a quick stop and then back down to civilization.

In all, this visit is a tremendous experience for anyone interested in astronomy. In a few years, the TMT will be in operation, with a full visitors gallery that will allow people to view the world's largest telescope in operation...motivation for a return trip! In the words of Arnold Schwarzenegger, I'll be back!



An artist's concept of the TMT that will rise soon on Mauna Kea

DE prescribing – a primer

BY Gabriel Yam

What is deprescribing?

According to the Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN), it is a planned and supervised process of reducing or stopping medications that may no longer be of benefit or may be causing harm. The goal is to reduce medication burden and harm, while maintaining or improving quality of life

The writer of this article has limited experience with prescription medication, having only taken antibiotics following a tooth extraction, or an occasional over the counter remedy. As a member of the BCITRA Board, one of his duties is to represent the Association at monthly COSCO meetings (Council of Senior Organizations of B.C.). in doing so he had the opportunity to attend the **2019 BC Summit for Older Adults on Safe Medication Use**, held in Vancouver on May 17, 2019.

The **Summit** is organized by CaDeN <https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca/> and COSCO <http://www.coscobc.org/> . One of the objectives of the **Summit is to raise awareness of safe medical use.**

While taking medications may be necessary for health, improving symptoms or prolonging life, we should be aware that medications may affect us differently as we age. Medications that may have been safer at a younger age, may not be the best choice as we get older.

According to CaDeN

- Only 7% of Canadians 65 or older have heard the word “deprescribing” before,
- 2 out of 3 Canadians age 65 and older take at least 5 prescription medications,
- 1 out of 4 Canadians age 65 and older takes at least 10 prescription medications.

Regardless of the number of medications we are taking right now, we can start to educate ourselves. By spreading the word we can help our parents, relatives and friends. We can and should review our medications with our doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Let's start to educate ourselves by going to the CaDeN websites.

https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca/useful-resources_.

Health Insurance Expenses after Retirement – a brief note in 2019

By Gabriel Yam

When we were working full-time with BCIT, health insurance expenses were the least of our worries, as they were automatically deducted from our bi-weekly paycheck.

However, our employer no longer pays for our health insurances upon retirement. You are lucky if you retire in 2020, when BC residents no longer have to pay the MSP premium that was \$150 per month (pre 2017) for a two-person family. Among the retirees, because of their past employment prior to BCIT, some would have their retired health insurances being covered.

For the majority of the retirees, be prepared to decide on your Extended Health Care (EHC) and Dental Plan expenses. The dollar amounts given in the following table are taken from the College Pension Plan contracts with Green Shield Canada (GSC). There are other bargaining units within the BCIT Community, and each of them may have a different Health Plan provider, which supplies different benefits and charges different premium rates. Therefore, please consult your plan provider.

GSC premium per month effective February 1, 2019			
People	EHC	Dental-Essential	Dental -Enhanced
Single	\$64.21	\$26.18	\$50.69
Couple Family	\$128.41	\$49.73	\$96.32
Family	\$250.41	\$70.66	\$136.89

Surely, there are other considerations like coverage and deductibles; your spouse may also have coverage from his/her employer, etc.

And very often, we overlook the amount of MSP coverage. Are we aware of the Fair PharmaCare Assistance Levels in the BC Medical Services Plan? https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/who-we-cover_.

Every BC resident should register for Fair PharmaCare (Register at <https://pharmacare.moh.hnet.bc.ca/>)

Its 'assistance' applies to all MSP members and you can see when "assistance" will kick in at https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Fair_PharmaCare_Changes_Tables_.pdf

The Federal Government is working on a National Pharmacare Plan and its Interim Report from the Advisory Council can be found on this link <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/public-engagement/external-advisory-bodies/implementation-national-pharmacare/interim-report.html>

Before we can get "help" from our Provincial and Federal Governments, the Pharmaceutical Companies are ready to help! Just google for "Canada Drugs saving Cards" and you will find the Organizations that will offer these drug discount cards. As we all know, there is no free lunch: -please weigh the pros and cons.

If you're looking at **Cataract Surgery**, the foldable, monofocal lens (the most common type of replacement lens) is **free** to patients covered through the Medical Services Plan. But very often ophthalmologists will suggest special lenses if you're a "special case" that may cost you **hundreds if not thousands of dollars. This is the time you have to be an "EXCEPTIONALLY" intelligent consumer.** Cataract Surgery could be your first-ever major medical "treatment" that you are "offered" with a variety of options; please do your own research. Just note: money and effect does not necessary enhance proportionally.

Of course, staying healthy and keeping fit is the best way to minimize our medical expenses.

I hope this brief note will "increase" your awareness about health expenses, which we can conveniently ignore while we are fully employed.



NEED TRAVEL MEDICAL, HOME, PET INSURANCE?

BCITRA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
JOHNSON/ MEDOC TRAVEL INSURANCE
can provide this kind of coverage.

BCITRA receives a percentage of the premiums paid.

These premiums provide funds that go in to the
ENDOWMENT FUND

Contact: Johnson / Medoc Travel Insurance

1 - 866 - 606 - 3362

Or

Johnson.ca/MEDOC



Our partnership with MEDOC has resulted in hundreds of
dollars being directed to BCITRA

BCITRA thanks the members that insure through MEDOC