

University of Victoria Retirees Association

UVRA Elder Academy Report to the 2017 AGM

Introduction

The format of a series of related presentations was followed again this past year. Generally, four presentations form a series, usually with one or more presenters doing each of the sessions. The format seems to work well, in that the participants are able to get some depth in each of the topics, but do not have to commit a long time. In addition, the cost is minimal (usually \$20 for the four presentations or \$6.00 for individual sessions) in order to make the series available to everyone. The program is promoted by the UVRA, the UVic Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health, the Yakimovich Wellness Centre, and by word of mouth. So far, the attendees are equally from all groups. The goal of the Elder Academy is to offer opportunities for ongoing learning experiences. From the attendance at the various presentations, it seems to be fulfilling a need. Some of the reasons for the success of the UVRA Elder Academy may be related to:

- Cost (especially in comparison to Continuing Studies).
- The fact there are four related presentations on a topic, and not the usual one-off lecture.
- The topics that are offered.
- Accessibility.
- The fact it has the UVic Brand (even if it is not directly supported by UVic).
- The quality of the presenters.
- The timing and length of the series suites the schedule and commitment for this demographic (four presentations).
- Although not everyone's preference, Saturday mornings proved to be popular with many of the participants as well as offering some flexibility in scheduling classes on campus as well as increasing the availability of parking.
- Other?

The UVRA Elder Academy offered the following series since the last AGM.

1. Technology for an Older Demographic (presented by eGurus).

We live in the midst of a digital revolution, but that doesn't mean it has to be scary..... The series showed how technology can assist us in continued engagement with family and friends. eGurus believes technology should enhance your life, not be a hindrance. The series covered the following topics:

- Going mobile with tablets and smart phones
- Staying safe online
- Photography in a digital world
- Travel in a digital world.

Participants: 31

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2. The Body Works? Function and Dysfunction. Part 2. (Presented by David Docherty, Michael Bassett, Chris Pengilly, and Helen Martendale).

This was the second series of “The Body Works?” and covered four new body systems in regard to how they work and things that can go wrong as we age. The intent of the series was provide information that will be helpful when communicating with medical practitioners as well as understanding what is happening to a person’s own body and how it works. The format of the series involved an overview of a particular anatomical system, followed by the medical conditions that may occur and possible ways of dealing with them.

- The Brain and Nervous System
- The Endocrine System
- The Respiratory System
- The Special Senses-Vision

Participants: 71

3. The Mini Med School. (Presented by Sergiy Shatenko and Samuel Harder, Second-year medical students in the Island Medical Program)

Medicine can seem mystifying at times. This series focused on explaining the basics of a variety of medical topics ranging from cardiac issues and mental health to preventative medicine and navigating Canada’s complex healthcare system. The topics included:

- (Un)healthy hearts
- An apple a day keeps the doctor away
- A beautiful mind
- The war on drugs
- How to pass the test
- The health care odyssey

The series also helped the students complete a research topic that examined the efficacy of this type of information on the health literacy of the participants.

The UVRA also promoted several other presentations put on by the Island Medical Program and the Let’s Talk Science Series which were well attended by the Elder Academy participants.

*A special thanks to **Jane Gair** who helped organize the series and mentored the students through the experience and research project.*

Participants: 66 (40 participated in the research project)

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4. Circuit training. Presented by Megan Frazier in the Department of Athletics and Recreation.

The course was offered in partnership with the Department of Athletics and Recreation. Two courses were originally to be offered, but only one received the necessary registration.

Participants: 12

5. *The German Lied: Big Emotions in Small Packages*". Presented by Harald and Sharon Krebs

The series introduced participants to one of the important genres of 19th-century music—the German Lied. A Lied (song in the German language) usually involves only two performers—a singer and a pianist—and usually lasts only a few minutes. But within this small frame, one finds the most profound emotions and ideas. The series traced the history of the genre and presented a wealth of examples thanks to the talents and insight of Harald and Sharon Krebs, internationally known performers and academics.

*A special thanks to **Harald and Sharon Krebs** who gave so generously of their time and talents to present this series for the UVRA Elder Academy.*

Participants: 22

6. *Planetary Systems and the Search for Extraterrestrial Life*". Presented by J.J. 'Kavelaars, Jon Willis, Helen Kirk and James Di Francesco.

All presenters are internationally acclaimed astronomers who shared their insights into "beyond earthly things". The series explored everything from new regions of our solar system, how stars are born, the new ALMA observatory, as well as the search for alien life!

*The series was put together by **Colin Scarfe** to whom we owe huge thanks. He was able to convince four of the leading scientists in their fields of study to come and share their insights and research as part of the Elder Academy series. There is no doubt this series would not have happened without Colin's efforts and commitment.*

Participants: 65

7. *Genetics: Can we really blame it on our genes?* Presented by Dr. Jane Gair.

We were once again able to recruit the services of Jane Gair to repeat the series she did last year on "Genetics: Can we really blame it on our genes". This series explained

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the basics of genetics and how the human genome project has enhanced our understanding of disease and disorders. In addition, an understanding of genetics can have profound implications on how treatment and medications are individualized for optimal effects.

The series was offered at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre, within the Hillside Seniors' Health Centre, in conjunction with the program that is offered at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre by Coordinator, Liz McCarter, and Island Health.

Participants: 58

The Elder Academy Program Committee would like to acknowledge and thank **Lou Schmidt** for all her help with registration and promoting the various series. She has made a huge difference in keeping detailed records, as well as being there on the days of the presentations to make sure all the attendees have registered. She is usually assisted on the days of presentations by her husband, **George**, who has also been a great help. Their efforts are most appreciated.

2017-2018: Work is now under way in planning the next UVRA Elder Academy mini courses starting in Fall, 2017. **If anyone has ideas and contacts for a possible series, please let me or a member of the program committee know.**

- Climate change that could include “Crisis in our Oceans/Healthy Oceans/Unhealthy Oceans”.
- Nutrition.
- a series related to “isms”.
- a series offered by Ed Ishiguro on a topic of his choosing, but probably a repeat of the “Immunology” series.
- Native plant.
- Religions.
- Arts (Drama, Dance, Visual Arts, or Music?).
- another Mini Med School.
- a series by four visual artists on “Their Art and What It Means to Them”:
- Alternative Medicine:
- a series by Trevor Hancock on topics TBD.
- “How to Listen” or “Extracting the Truth from the Alternative Truth!”
- Security-Physical, Emotional, Financial, Social.
- “Guided Autobiography”.
- The Body Works (Part 3).

Submitted by the UVRA Elder Academy Program Committee

David Docherty (Chair), Ed Ishiguro, Liz McCarter, Juliana Saxton, Janice Wallace, Lois Holizki, and Lou Schmidt and Peter Liddell.