

Recognizing a Health Researcher who is Changing the Face of New Brunswick

Dr. Christopher Gray

Dr. Gray joined UNB in 2007 and is currently an Associate Professor in the Departments of Chemistry and Biology, (Faculty of Science, Applied Science and Engineering) on the Saint John campus, and an Adjunct Professor of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Université de Moncton. He graduated from the University of Wales (UK; B.Sc.) and Rhodes University (M.Sc. & Ph.D.) and was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Rhodes (South Africa) and then the University of British Columbia (2+3 years). His areas of research include natural products research and drug discovery.

Dr. Gray is a member of the UNB Natural Products Research Group, a research group that includes other faculty members from UNB and several collaborators from the Saint John Regional Hospital, the Université de Moncton and the Atlantic Cancer Research Institute. Since 2007, this group has mentored 9 graduate, 25 Honours and 18 undergraduate research students. Dr. Gray has attracted over half-a-million dollars in research funding to UNB. He has authored a total of 27 scientific papers, twelve of which have been published since he joined UNB and he and his research students have given presentations at both national and international conferences. In 2011, Dr. Gray hosted the "Maritime Natural Products Research Conference" at UNB Saint John, attended by academic and corporate scientists from Atlantic Canada.



Dr. Gray's current research is focused on the isolation and identification of biologically active natural products from plants, algae and microorganisms. Natural products chemistry has uncovered a vast number of biologically active organic compounds with genuine potential to become or inspire new therapeutics, health products, agrochemicals and antifoulants. In many cases these biologically active molecules are structurally complex, and elucidating their structures represents a considerable challenge. The Natural Product Research Group is using ethnopharmacology and ethnobotany to direct their drug discovery efforts and research is concentrated on plants that have documented uses as traditional remedies and therapeutics. Not only are these medicinal plants the source of new molecules, they also contain many fungi that inhabit their tissues. These plant-associated fungi are isolated from their hosts and can be cultured in the laboratory to provide a renewable source of bioactive metabolites.

By recruiting talented researchers like Dr. Gray to New Brunswick, we are contributing to research and innovation by extracting biologically active molecules from our natural resources. Plants such as cow parsnip, sweet flag, wild sarsaparilla, juniper and skunk cabbage that have been used for medicinal purposes in the past have the potential



to contribute to the development of novel modern drugs. We are also creating a robust interdisciplinary research environment and building collaborations that is enabling us to train our students to become the talented health researchers of tomorrow.

Please join us in saluting Dr. Christopher Gray for his efforts towards training and mentoring young minds and for his research that may lead to innovative new treatments being developed from our natural ecosystems.

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New Brunswick
Health Research
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