

Calgary FSHD 360 Conference Speaker Bios



Beth Johnston is Chief Community Engagement Officer with the FSHD Society. Beth joined the FSHD Society staff in August of 2016. Her long history with the Society began as a volunteer shortly after her husband was diagnosed with FSHD. She continues her commitment to raising awareness of the disease and building an "army of activists" that will help us achieve our mission of treatments and a cure. Beth has also worked in information technology, project management, high-technology & telecommunications consulting, and real estate.



Lawrence Korngut, MD, is a neuromuscular neurologist at the Calgary Neuromuscular Program where he diagnoses and treats neuromuscular conditions including FSHD. He is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board at SOLVE-FSHD. He is an Associate Professor at the University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine and has led the University of Calgary Neuromuscular Clinical Trial Program since 2009 having conducted over 80 clinical trials of new therapies. He led the formation of the Canadian Neuromuscular Disease Registry (CNDR), which has resulted in over 230 data releases supporting clinical trial recruitment and advocacy for improved access to emerging therapies.



Gerald Pfeffer, MD PhD, is a clinician-scientist in the Department of Clinical Neurosciences and Hotchkiss Brain Institute. He completed medical school at McGill University, neurology residency at University of British Columbia, and PhD training at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom. He supervises a research team focused on biomarkers and genetics in neuromuscular diseases including myopathy and motor neuron diseases.



Stephanie Plamondon, MD, is a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) specialist at the South Health Campus Neuromuscular Rehabilitation and ALS Clinics serving persons with neuromuscular disorders, including FSHD. She received EMG certification from the Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiologists in 2003, performing EMG/NCS testing x 10 years. Dr. Plamondon and team were honored to be recognized for Excellence in Clinical Healthcare Delivery by the Muscular Dystrophy Association as provincial recipients of the award in 2017-2018.



Monic Brunet, OT, has been working with the neuromuscular clinic at the SHC for the past 12 years. As an occupational therapist, her role is to assess how clients can perform their daily occupations, to assess the need for adaptive equipment, to assess hand function and to provide strategies to improve client's independence with the performance of daily activities.



Mikhaila Fitzsimmons, MScPT, is a Physiotherapist that has been working with the Neuromuscular Clinic since 2020. As a Physiotherapist she helps clients with their walking, balance, movement, and lifestyle adjustments.



Kim Walker, SLP, has been a speech-language pathologist for more than 20 years. She has worked in a variety of settings including acute care, outpatient dysphagia services, head and neck cancer, and is currently with the outpatient neurology / neuromuscular services. She has worked in Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton, and now has called Calgary home for the last 13 years.



Tess Meyer, is a Registered Dietitian who works in outpatient neurosciences. She works with clients to help improve their health and symptoms through nutrition.



Leon Mitchell is a Clinical Social Worker who has worked with the Neuromuscular clinic at SHC since its inception. His role is to work with clients and their families to cope with illness adjustment, stress management and navigating and accessing different programs and community resources that they might need.



Katie Henley is a research Project Coordinator with the Canadian Neuromuscular Disease Registry (CNDR), based out of the University of Calgary. Katie has a background in psychology and neuroscience and has been working in neuromuscular research for two years. The CNDR has recruited over 6000 neuromuscular patients including people with FSHD across 48 Canadian clinics. For any questions regarding the CNDR and/or participating in the registry, please reach out to Katie at: katie.henley@uclagary.ca



Toshifumi Yokota, PhD, is Professor and the Friends of Garrett Cumming Research & Muscular Dystrophy Canada Endowed Research Chair at the University of Alberta. He specializes in genetic medicine for neuromuscular disorders. His research team has developed an approach using synthetic DNA-like molecules called gapmers as a potential treatment for FSHD. He has been recognized as a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (FCAHS), one of the highest honours for researchers in Canada.



Jean Mah, MD, is a pediatric neurologist and the physician leader of the Pediatric Neuromuscular Program at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary. She is a Professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Neurosciences at the Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, and the Medical Director of the Cooperative International Neuromuscular Research Group (CINRG). Dr. Mah has been involved in multicenter clinical research studies related to pediatric neuromuscular diseases, including the early onset FSHD study.



Mel Hayes joined Fulcrum in September 2021 and currently serves as Executive Vice President, Patient Experience. Mel is responsible for developing an external facing integrated enterprise model that leverages the intersection of Patient Affairs, Advocacy, Access, Policy, and Communication to support the pipeline in both Sickle Cell Disease and FSHD. Prior to Fulcrum, Mel served as Global Head Commercial, Vice President, Rare Blood Disorders at Sanofi-Genzyme



Dillon Chen, MD PhD, is the medical monitor for neurology and neuromuscular-related programs at Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals and leads the Phase 1/2a clinical trial on ARO-DUX4 in patients with FSHD1. Before joining Arrowhead, Dillon was an assistant professor and attending physician in the department of neurosciences, and division of child neurology at the University of California, San Diego. As a board-certified child neurologist, he cared for children with neuromuscular issues, including pediatric FSHD.



Neil Camarta is the co-founder of the FSHD Canada Foundation and spearheaded the Project Mercury global initiative to accelerate drug development and patient access to treatments for FSHD. Neil has held senior leadership positions with Shell, Petro-Canada, and Suncor. He is currently leading two new start-up companies working on cheaper and cleaner technologies for the energy industry. Neil holds a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Alberta.



Karen Camarta is co-director with her sister Jennifer Camarta of the Alberta Chapter. Karen is passionate about volunteering, camping, travelling, and keeping her 5-year-old daughter busy. She is an electrical engineer, currently pursuing her own business venture while also leading a major initiative for her community. She has been happily married for 11 years, and functions just fine on 7 hours of sleep.



Jennifer Camarta is co-director with her sister Karen Camarta of the Alberta Chapter. Jennifer loves hiking, backpacking, travelling, jigsaw puzzles, and any animal missing a body part. She works as a registered nurse for Veterans Affairs Canada, has been married for almost 18 years (and yet she looks so young!), and requires at least 9 hours of sleep a night.