

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Practicing Mindfulness**
- **Flexibility in your Every Day**

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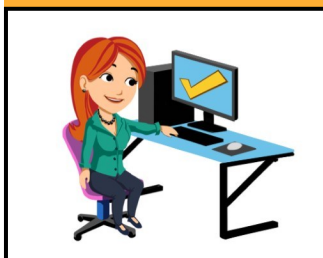
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ISSUE 9

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## Message from the Investigators

We hope you had a relaxing and enjoyable holiday season! In this edition of the newsletter we highlight Melissa Bird and Rebecca Urbat who joined the team in 2017. As well, we feature our 1200th participant to the study along with a few exercises to help increase flexibility and range of motion.



Calgary and Edmonton AMBER Team (L to R): Leanne Dickau, Melissa Bird, Terri Wood, Andria Morielli, Stephanie Voaklander, Diane Cook, Michaela Chadder & Rebecca Urbat.

Edmonton. To date, 841 participants have completed their Year 1 assessment, 358 participants have completed their Year 3 assessment and 30 participants have completed their Year 5 assessment.

As always, thank you again for your ongoing commitment to the study.

Currently the study has enrolled 80% of the 1,500 participants we hope to recruit. As of Dec 2017 we have enrolled 652 participants in Calgary and 552 in

We welcome any suggestions for future newsletters!

## Practicing Mindfulness

Studies have found that 45 – 65 % of cancer patients and survivors report distress. Distress can vary from feelings of vulnerability or sadness to episodes of major depression and anxiety disorders. Research has examined the use of mind body therapies such as yoga, hypnosis, relaxation and imagery to alleviate the physical and psychological symptoms related to distress.

A growing body of research has examined the use of mindfulness-based interventions (MBI) for patients with cancer. Mindfulness is defined as paying attention in the present



moment with non-judgmental acceptance of experience. The three main components are: (1) the intention of the person coming to the meditation practice; (2) focusing attention to the “here-and-now”; and (3) having an attitude of openness or non-judgment of what may come.

Research has shown that practicing mindfulness can help with managing the uncontrollable, unpredictable, and emotional life

stressors that can occur with a cancer diagnosis. Particularly, in breast cancer survivors, research has found meditation to have a positive effect in helping treat symptoms of depression, anxiety and improving quality of life.

For more information in regards to mindfulness classes offered through the Tom Baker Cancer Centre or Cross Cancer Institute contact:

Psychosocial and Spiritual Resources Dept:

Edmonton: (780) 643 - 4304

Calgary: (403) 355 - 3207

References Listed on page 4

# AMBER Study Exercise Specialists

Highlighting two of the newest exercise specialists that work on the AMBER Study!



## Melissa Bird - Edmonton

**1. If you could pack your bags right now and go anywhere in the world for a week, where would you go?**

I would go to Southern Italy. I love pasta, I love wine, and a town overlooking the ocean? Sign me up!

**2. If you could ban one food from existence, what would it be, and why?**

I would ban brussel sprouts because they are just the worst : (

**3. What is your favourite TV series?**

Grey's Anatomy 100%. Now it's on Netflix and I'm doomed to a life of rewatching episodes, though not complaining. : )

**4. What led you to become an exercise physiologist?**

After my student practicum at a Primary Care Network, I found that I enjoyed working with older adults in a clinical setting. I am especially grateful for the work that I do with the AMBER study, and love to connect with the participants and see them improve over time. : )

**5. Tell us about your pet**

I am a self-proclaimed crazy cat lady. I have one cat, her name is Cutie. She loves to beg, roll on the floor, and eat non-stop. I love her!

**6. Favourite place in Alberta?**

Ever since I was a kid I have loved Drumheller. I love the landscape, the hoodoos, and of course, the dinosaur museum. I still have such fond memories of camping there with family and friends. So that's my favourite place!

## Rebecca Urvat - Calgary

**1. What led you to become an exercise physiologist?**

My personal love for sports led me to take Kinesiology at the U of C. During my degree, I volunteered with some amazing programs and discovered that I enjoyed helping people regain aspects of their life through exercise. The CSEP-Certified Exercise Physiologist certification was a natural choice as it allows one to work with all populations.

**2. What is the most famous person you have ever met?**

While I was completing a practicum with Calgary Sport Institute I was lucky enough to help with the Calgary Flames team testing. It was definitely a memorable experience getting to meet the active team players along with all the prospects.

**3 What 5 items could you not function without?**

1. Cellular device – I confess... I am addicted to my phone and can't leave home without it

2. Sweater / Blanket – I am chronically cold though ironically winter is my favorite season.

3. Tea – Caffeine! Need I say more?

4. Horses – I am a crazy horse person and have ridden my entire life.

5. Maps – due to being very directionally challenged

**4. What is your favourite part of Alberta?**

The diversity of Alberta makes it an incredible place to live. One can head out to the mountains and enjoy breathtaking views, head east to see the badlands or in general explore the beautiful rolling prairies and foothills that contain small towns. There are many places to explore in both summer and winter.





# Flexibility in Your Every Day

Flexibility is an important component of health related fitness. Due to age and inactivity our muscles weaken and the joints become less stable and mobile. This leads to stiffness and loss of flexibility.

By incorporating stretching into our daily routine we can increase the range of motion in our joints. This in turn helps us to perform many activities in our daily lives such as bending over to pick up items off the floor.

It is recommended that individuals perform stretching exercises at least 2x per week.



## Neck Stretch

This exercise can be performed standing or sitting.

1. Drop your left ear towards your left shoulder. Gently stretch your right arm down and use your left hand to gently pull the head further to the side
2. Hold for 10 to 30 s and then switch sides. Complete exercise 2x on each side.
3. For additional stretches, in the same position, rotate your head down as if you are looking over your shoulder or rotate your head up towards the ceiling.



Talk to your doctor or other healthcare professional before starting any new exercises, particularly if you are less than 6 weeks post surgery.

Stretches listed below are referenced from:

*Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology - Physical Activity Training For Health (2013)*

*Heyward & Gibson (2014) Advanced Fitness Assessment and Exercise Prescription.*

## Side Bends

When completing stretching exercises, a few guidelines to follow are:

- Breathe deeply and often as you complete the exercise
- Do the exercise until you feel a gentle stretch, not pain
- Do not bounce or make any quick, jerky movements while stretching

1. Sitting or standing, clasp your hands together.
2. Slowly lift your arms over your head and bend elbows slightly. Once your arms are above your head, bend at the waist and move your body to the right.
3. Use your right hand to gently pull your left arm a little further to the right.
4. Hold for 10 to 30 s.
5. Return to center and repeat on the opposite side.

## Knee-To-Chest Stretch

1. Lie on your back with legs extended. If this causes discomfort, bend one knee with your foot flat on the ground.
2. Gently pull extended leg up to your chest with hands under the knee. Bring knee as close to the chest as comfortably possible.
3. Hold for 10 to 30 s and then switch sides. Complete exercise 2x on each side
4. For an advanced stretch, bring both knees up to your chest hugging your knees with both hands.



# AMBER'S 1200th Participant!



**Carol B. from Edmonton is the 1200th AMBER participant!**

## 1. Why did you decide to take part in the AMBER study?

As a rehabilitation researcher, I understand the importance of participant-generated data and what it can tell us about treatment and outcomes. As a breast cancer patient, I am anxious to contribute anything I can that will lead to more effective cancer treatments, better outcomes and improvements in quality of life.

## 2. Have you made any lifestyle changes after receiving the results of your AMBER study testing?

I haven't really changed my lifestyle as a result of AMBER. What I have done is made a commitment to not "loose ground" during the course of the next five years ahead. It would be easy to say "no exercise today because I am not up to it" but instead I find myself saying "at least a little exercise today even though I don't feel up to it." I think the baseline testing and coaching from the AMBER staff has played a role in my thinking.

## 3. What motivates you to be physically active?

Motivators are directly related to overall health benefits from physical activity and the way I feel after finishing an activity. I NEVER feel bad after going to yoga, the gym, cross-country skiing or taking a walk in the river valley. Physical activity is crucial to my mental health, physical confidence and happiness.

## 4. Is there someone you would

## like to thank who has helped you during your treatment/recovery?

My husband, Paul, is my biggest fan and supporter. I can't imagine going through any of this without his love and nurturance. I am the luckiest woman on earth!

## 5. What is your favorite thing about living in Edmonton?

My favorite thing about Edmonton is that there is ALWAYS something to do and most activities are either free or cost very little. We are so lucky to have such vibrancy and diversity in our city. Even in the cold and dark of winter, there is a general uplifting spirit that defines the community of Edmonton. I only wish we were closer to the mountains!

## 6. What advice would you give to other ladies who are thinking about joining the study?

I would highly recommend the AMBER study. It requires very little commitment and the information received through participation is extremely beneficial.

## What's New in AMBER?

This past November a poster presentation was made at the 2017 Canadian Cancer Research Conference in Vancouver, BC. The poster reported on the feasibility of recruitment, baseline measurement completion and representativeness of the first 1090 participants recruited between July 2012 and June 2017.

To read and view the full poster, check out our website at: [www.amberstudy.com/publications](http://www.amberstudy.com/publications)

*References (Front Page): Carlson, L. E. et al. (2017). Mind-Body Therapies in Cancer: What is the Latest Evidence? Current Oncology Report, 19: 67.  
Carlson, L.E. (2017). Distress Management Through Mind-Body Therapies in Oncology. Journal of the National Cancer Institute. Monographs, 52.*

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