

***The Canadian Aortopathy and Connective Tissue Disorders Registry (CAN-ACT)
&
The Canadian Congenital and Pediatric Cardiology Research Network (CCPCRN)
are proud to present:***

Connective Tissue Disorders and Aortopathy

September 25th, 2026

Patient & Family Day

Remai Modern

*102 Spadina Crescent E, Saskatoon, SK
Riverview Conference Room (2nd Floor)*

8:00-9:00 am	Breakfast & Registration	
9:00-9:30 am	Welcome and Introduction to Connective Tissue Disorders including Marfan syndrome, Loeys-Dietz syndrome and related conditions	Dr. Tim Bradley, Pediatric Cardiologist
9:30 -10:00 am	Genetic Testing in Connective Tissue Disorders and Aortopathy	Lacey Benoit, Genetic Counsellor
10:00-10:30 am	3D Facial Imaging and Connective Tissue Disorders	Dr. Benedikt Hallgrimsson, Biological Anthropologist and Evolutionary Biologist
10:30-11:00 am	Tea and Coffee Break	
11:00-11:30 am	Cardiac Concerns for Adults with Connective Tissue Disorders and Aortopathy	Dr. Stephen Pylpchuk, Adult Cardiologist
11:30-12:00 pm	Orthopedic Concerns with Connective Tissue Disorders	Dr. Trevor Blanchard, Orthopedic Surgeon
12:00 -12:30 pm	Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation of Canada	Lindsay Parsons, Maria Bizri
12:30-2:00 pm	Lunch	
12:30-2:00 pm	Patient's Testimonials / "Tell your Story" (over lunch)	

Adjourn

Sponsored by Jim Patterson Children Hospital Foundation and Loeys Dietz Syndrome Foundation of Canada

FACULTY/SPEAKER:

Connective Tissue Disorders and Aortopathy



Lacey Benoit, BSc, CGC
Genetic Counsellor

Lacey holds a BSc in Molecular Genetics from the University of Alberta and a Master of Genetic Counseling from the University of Minnesota. She is certified as a genetic counsellor in both Canada and the United States. Lacey has worked at the Saskatchewan Health Authority for more than 20 years and has served as Lead Cardiovascular Genetic Counsellor for the past nine years. She is an active volunteer with the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors, currently serving on the Communications Committee and supporting student mentorship. Lacey also coordinates clinical placements and supervises genetic counselling students. Her research has focused on compassion fatigue, social media use in genetic counselling, and genetic case reports. Current interests include postmortem genetic testing following sudden death and the interpretation of variants of uncertain significance in cardiac genes.



Dr. Trevor Blanchard, MD, FRCSC
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Dr. Trevor Blanchard is an Orthopaedic Surgeon in Saskatoon specializing in pediatric orthopaedic surgery, with a particular interest in spine, neuromuscular conditions and complex hip reconstruction. Originally from Sudbury, Ontario, he completed his undergraduate degree in Kinesiology and a Master's in Human Kinetics at Laurentian University before attending the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. He subsequently completed his Orthopaedic Surgery residency at Western University and a fellowship in Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgery at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. His clinical and academic interests focus on improving the care of children with complex musculoskeletal conditions, with ongoing research in spine, cerebral palsy, gait analysis, hip displacement, and guided growth.



Maria Bizri
Knowledge and Community Mobilization Officer, Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada

Maria is a public health practitioner currently serving as the Knowledge and Community Mobilization Officer at Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada, where she supports awareness, education, and patient-centered advocacy for individuals and families affected by connective tissue disorders. She is passionate about strengthening health systems and amplifying patient voices in rare disease care.



Dr. Tim Bradley, MBChB, DCH, FRACP
Pediatric Cardiologist

Dr. Bradley completed medical school at the University of Otago, New Zealand and his Pediatric and Pediatric Cardiology RACP Fellowship training in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. He is a Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Saskatchewan and a Pediatric Cardiologist at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon. His clinical interests include echocardiography, fetal echocardiography, and aortopathy. His research is focused on early detection of congenital heart disease by fetal echocardiography, assessment of increased arterial stiffness in at-risk pediatric disease populations and management of hereditary thoracic aortic disease in Marfan syndrome, Loeys-Dietz syndrome and related conditions. He is the Co-Principal Investigator for the Canadian Aortic and Connective Tissue Disorders (CAN-ACT) Registry.

FACULTY/SPEAKER:

Connective Tissue Disorders and Aortopathy



Dr. Benedikt Hallgrímsson, PhD

Biological Anthropologist and Evolutionary Biologist

Dr. Benedikt Hallgrímsson is an internationally recognized biological anthropologist and evolutionary biologist, and Professor and Head of the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy at the University of Calgary. His research combines developmental genetics, evolutionary biology, and advanced 3D imaging to understand how genetic and environmental factors shape anatomical variation and contribute to birth defects and genetic disorders. Dr. Hallgrímsson also serves as Deputy Director of the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute and is a Fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.



Dr. Anjani Koneru, DMD, MSc, FRCD(C)

Pediatric Dentist

Dr. Koneru graduated from the University of Saskatchewan College of Dentistry in 2001. She completed a GPR at Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon in 2003. She obtained her Master of Science degree specializing in Pediatric Dentistry from the University of Toronto and Sick Kids Hospital in 2008. Dr. Koneru is the pediatric dentist on the Central and Northern Saskatchewan Cleft Lip and Palate Program. She is also a full-time clinician practicing in Saskatoon providing dental care for children and adults with special needs. She previously served 8 years on the Scientific Committee of the Canadian Dental Association. Her research focus centers around access to dental care for individuals with developmental disabilities.



Lindsay Parsons

Research & Patient Support Officer, Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada

Lindsay is a patient advocate currently serving as the Research & Patient Support Officer at Loeys-Dietz Syndrome Foundation Canada, where she develops and manages research and patient support programs for individuals and families affected by Loeys-Dietz syndrome & related disorders. Drawing on her lived experience as an LDS family member and her background in kinesiology, she is passionate about advancing patient-centered research, strengthening support systems, and improving outcomes for those affected by Heritable Thoracic Aortic Disorders.



Dr. Stephen Pylypchuk MD, FRCPC

Adult Congenital Cardiologist

Dr. Stephen Pylypchuk is an Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan and an Adult Cardiologist at the Royal University Hospital. He completed undergraduate studies, medical school, internal medicine residency, and general cardiology training at the University of Saskatchewan. Following this, Dr. Pylypchuk completed an advanced fellowship in both adult congenital heart disease and echocardiography at the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute at the University of Alberta.



Esther Nkrumah, MSc, CGC

Genetic Counsellor

Esther is an ABGC-certified Genetic Counsellor at Royal University Hospital and Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. She holds an MSc in Genetic Counselling from Sarah Lawrence College, an MSc in Agrobiotechnology from Justus Liebig University Giessen, a Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology, and a bachelor's degree in Crop Biotechnology from the University of Ghana. Her research focuses on genomic diversity, equitable representation in genomic research, reproductive genetics, cardiovascular genetics, connective tissue disorders, and the genetic causes of sudden death. She has published on population-based carrier screening and population-specific genomic data in leading genetics journals. Esther is committed to education and mentorship, supporting genetic counselling students, medical students, and residents, and collaborates with communities to advance equitable genomic healthcare and research.