

Michael G. DeGroot
School of Medicine
STUDENT GUIDE 2011

A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

An informative guide created by students, for students





■ Frequently asked questions

Do I need a car?

What textbooks should I buy?

What equipment do I need?

Do I need a laptop

and/or a PDA?

FAQ's

Helpful tips and contact info

Q: Do I need a car?

A: Students are expected to travel outside of their home campus area for mandatory teaching sessions, clinical placements and clerkship rotations. Students are responsible for their own transportation and associated costs. While it is not mandatory that you have a car, it is recommended. In first year, many students manage by car-pooling, but by clerkship, most students have a car.

Q: What textbooks should I buy?

A: Before coming at the end of August, there are no required readings to be completed or textbooks to be purchased. Students wait until classes have begun and they have had the opportunity to take books out from the library before making any purchases. Upper year students assist in this process, both by offering advice on books they found useful and by selling their used copies. However, with an accessible library system and a vast array of online resources, most students do not purchase a large number of textbooks.

Q: What equipment do I need?

A: You do not need to make any purchases before you arrive. There will be an equipment sale in September, which provides you with the opportunity to purchase a specific stethoscope (which is absolutely needed), and other, more optional equipment (blood pressure cuffs, reflex hammers, etc).

Q: Do I need a laptop and/or a PDA?

A: The MD Program delivers lectures and course materials online, and communicates with students and faculty between the three campuses through the use of email as well as various software programs. Thus, it is a requirement that each student own a PC or Apple laptop and a webcam while attending the program. PDAs are not necessary, particularly in first year. Some students do find them useful during clerkship for accessing clinical resources while in hospital, but few purchase one before this point.

■ Hamilton Campus

Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine
Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University
Michael G. DeGroot Centre for Learning and Discovery, Rm 3101
1200 Main Street West, Hamilton, ON Canada L8N 3Z5

■ Phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 22235

■ Web: www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog

■ Niagara Regional Campus

Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine
Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University
Niagara Regional Campus
142 Queenston Street, St. Catharines ON L2R 7C6

■ Phone: 905-397-1908 ext. 43875

■ Web: http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog/niagara_regional_campus.html

■ Waterloo Regional Campus

Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine
Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University
Waterloo Regional Campus
10 Victoria Street, Kitchener, ON Canada N2G 1C5

■ Phone: 519-885-5426 ext. 21104

■ Web: http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog/waterloo_regional_campus.html

Welcome

Congratulations on your offer of admission!

This brochure has been assembled for you, the incoming class of 2014, by two first year medical students. We have included information that was of interest to us when we were in your position. It is our hope that this brochure will be helpful in easing your transition into the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine program.

We have included information about:

■ Problem-Based Learning

You will have ample opportunities to learn in diverse settings. Students find this methodology promotes understanding and reinforces concept retention.

■ A week in the life

This depicts a typical work week. It also illustrates how students maintain a balance in their lives; having time for academic, sporting, social and family events.

■ Evaluations

With four main tools, McMaster evaluations facilitate the tracking of progress and the preparation for the final licensing examination.

■ Setting you up for the future

The medical program accelerates students into clinical settings, while providing the knowledge and tools to succeed. The results speak for themselves, with McMaster students exceeding the national average for residency match rates.

■ Current Medical Students

A profile of first, second and third-year students. They lend advice and provide tips on how to succeed and optimize your first-year experience.

■ Hamilton Campus

■ Niagara Regional Campus

■ Waterloo Regional Campus

We look forward to seeing you in August.

Sincerely,

Raj Modh and **Roselyn Wilson**

Admissions Committee Representatives
for the Class of 2013





■ Problem-Based Learning

McMaster divides its curriculum into five medical foundations along with professional competencies using: tutorials, large group sessions, clinical skills training, and anatomy sessions

Students learn in a variety of settings

Introduced in August 2005, the COMPASS curriculum teaches medical concepts in different contexts. By learning in a variety of settings, students can obtain a superior grasp and understanding of material. The class is exposed to a cross-section of medicine through lectures given by doctors, discussions with peers in tutorials, interactions with patients and explorations in the anatomy lab.

McMaster divides its pre-clerkship curriculum into five medical foundations (MFs), spanning a year and four months. Each MF covers several different systems in the body, but is unified by an overarching theme.

- **MF1:** Oxygen Supply and Demand (Respirology, Cardiovascular and Hematology)
- **MF2:** Energy and Metabolic Homeostasis (Nutrition, Gastrointestinal, Endocrine)
- **MF3:** Renal, Reproduction and Genetics
- **MF4:** Host Defense, Neoplasia and Cancer Genetics
- **MF5:** Musculoskeletal, Neurology and Psychiatry

For more information on the McMaster curriculum, visit www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/compass

PBL

Curriculum

Tutorials

- **Participation:** 6-8 students + 1 tutor (M.D. or Ph.D.)
- **Frequency:** Two sessions per week (3 hours each) (typically Monday & Thursday or Tuesday & Friday)
- **Structure of Tutorial:**
 - Monday/Tuesday Tutorial
 - A case is a written patient scenario pertaining to a certain disease, presenting the situation as it would be seen by a practicing physician.
 - The group reads the case and creates learning objectives for the next tutorial. For example, if the case is on osteoporosis, objectives may include:
 - 1) The process of bone formation and resorption;
 - 2) The mechanisms of calcium homeostasis;
 - 3) The causes and pathophysiology of osteoporosis;
 - 4) Diagnosis, prevention and treatment of low bone density;
 - 5) The signs and symptoms of hyper- and hypocalcemia
 - Between tutorials
 - Research is conducted to answer objectives, using both textbooks and case-specific online resources that have been provided by the Medical Foundation planners.
 - Thursday/Friday Tutorial
 - Objectives are taken up via group discussion of concepts and questions.
 - The tutor may clarify unanswered questions, ask questions of the group, or provide a clinical perspective.
 - Objectives are created for the next case (ex: thyroid disease), which will be taken up in Monday/Tuesday's tutorial.

Large Group Sessions (Lectures)

- **Participation:** Entire class
- **Frequency:** Every Monday and Friday morning (3 hours)
- **Purpose:** To supplement tutorial learning, with information that is relevant to tutorial cases presented by experts in the field.

“Together, advancing health through learning and discovery”

Anatomy

- **Participation:** Attended in tutorial groups
- **Frequency:** Every third Wednesday (4 hours)
- **Structure of Anatomy Days** (three separate sessions):
 - Clinical skills (1.5 hours)
 - A doctor explains and demonstrates examination techniques for the system currently being studied (eg: a thyroid exam), after which students have the opportunity to practice skills on a standardized patient.
 - Anatomy Large Group Session (1 hour)
 - A lecture on the structure and function of the relevant anatomical structures.
 - Anatomy Lab (1.5 hours)
 - Preceptors assist students in working with prosected specimens.
 - Extra sessions
 - Half-day drop-in sessions are scheduled twice each week, and preceptors are always willing to book additional small-group sessions if requested by students.

Clinical Skills

- **Participation:** Attended in tutorial groups
- **Frequency:** Every week (2-3 hours)
- **Purpose:**
 - Students work with preceptors (physicians and residents) at one of the local teaching hospitals.
 - Students learn history taking and physical examination skills that are relevant to the current unit, and are provided with the opportunity to practice skills on the wards with real patients (under supervision by preceptor).

Professional Competencies

- **Participation:** 10 students + 2 facilitators (one M.D., one member of another allied health profession)
- **Frequency:** Every Tuesday morning (3 hours)
- **Purpose:**
 - Develop knowledge in the areas of evidence-based medicine, professionalism, health policy and medical ethics.
 - Refine communication skills through interviews with standardized patients.
 - Examine the social and community context of health care.



The following is an example of a McMaster student's schedule. Times for tutorial and clinical skills schedules vary according to the preceptor's availability.

Schedule

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| Monday | 8:30 – 11:30 1:00 – 4:00 | Large Group Session Tutorial |
| Tuesday | 9:00 – 12:00 1:30 – 3:30 | Professional Competencies Clinical Skills |
| Wednesday | 9:00 – 10:30 1:30 – 2:30 2:30 – 4:00 | Anatomy Clinical Skills Anatomy Large Group Session Anatomy Lab |
| Thursday | 1:00 – 4:00 | Tutorial |
| Friday | 8:00 – 11:30 | Large Group Session |

■ A week in the life

Do students still find time for a social life?

Yes! Although demanding, the beauty of this program is the amount of flexibility it allows for its students.

Q: How many hours does it take to prepare for tutorials?

A: Between tutorials, students typically spend a total of 8 to 12 hours performing the necessary research in order to complete their objectives. Time spent depends on the student's current knowledge.

Q: What are some other academic activities that students participate in between tutorials?

A: Although optional, many students participate in horizontal electives (explained in "Setting you up for the Future"). In the example above, a horizontal elective could be completed Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon with a cardiologist at local hospital. There are also lecture series that often take place in the evening. In the schedule above, a student could attend an Emergency Medicine lecture series Tuesday evenings from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Q: Are there clubs or organizations that students can be involved in?

A: There are countless opportunities for students to get involved at McMaster. From helping with the admissions process or orientation week, to being class representative or a member of student council, students find it easy to be actively involved. There are also many groups organized by students interested in specific specialties. For example, students can become involved in the rural medicine, surgery, or pediatric interest groups, to name a few. As well, the university has many student-run clubs and intramural sports teams that welcome new members.

Q: Do students still find time for a social life?

A: Yes! Although demanding, the beauty of this program is the amount of flexibility it allows for its students. Students can maintain what is important to them while at medical school. There still exists time for the gym, to spend with your family, or to relax with friends throughout the week. Various student committees also plan events throughout the year, including two formals, the SCOPE talent show, Karaoke night and many arranged dinners.

Student Life

Evaluations

Evaluations at McMaster are designed to provide students with constant feedback. This enables them to gauge their progress and the effectiveness of their learning methods. Evaluations are also geared to prepare students for the clinical situations they will encounter in clerkship as well as for their LMCC (licensing examination).

Tutor Feedback

- **Frequency:** Informal feedback after every tutorial; formal feedback halfway through a Medical Foundation and at the end of each Medical Foundation
- **Format:** Given verbally and in writing
- **Purpose:**
 - Allows student to gauge how they are contributing to group process.
 - Gives students the opportunity to refine how they are learning and improve over the course of the Medical Foundation.
 - The final written summary from the tutor comprising self, peer and tutor input is the sole contribution to the students' final transcript.

Concept Application Exercises (CAE)

- **Frequency:** Every few weeks throughout each MF
- **Format:** Short answer questions, in which students apply their knowledge to clinical scenarios
- **Purpose:** To provide students with the opportunity to synthesize concepts from the Medical Foundation and identify areas that may require additional study.

Personal Progress Index (PPI)

- **Frequency:** Three times a year, over all three years
- **Format:** 180 multiple choice questions.
- **Purpose:**
 - To show students how they are progressing individually, as well as relative to their peers in their year, and the medical students in other years.
 - To prepare students for the similar, clinically-based licensing examination, which is written at the end of the MD program (before graduation).

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

- **Frequency:** Once a year, over all three years
- **Format:** 10 stations where students read a scenario and complete necessary history and physical examination
- **Purpose:** To evaluate the students' clinical skills and to prepare the students for the clinical skills portion of the licensing examination completed after a year of residency.

Setting you up for the future

Horizontal Electives

These are optional placements, set up by students throughout their time at McMaster. Students may contact doctors in areas of interest, and work with them for the desired amount of time. For example, a student may set up an elective with an obstetrician for 3 hours every Thursday morning, for the months of November and December. Students work alongside physicians taking histories, performing physical exams, discussing possible diagnoses or assisting in operating rooms. The possibilities are endless, depending on individual students' comfort levels and supervisor preferences.

Block Electives

These are mandatory electives, completed for seven weeks during July and August of first year, and seventeen weeks throughout clerkship. This is one of the highest numbers of elective weeks of all Canadian schools. Block electives can be carried out anywhere in Canada or internationally that a student is able to arrange for a preceptor. A focus is often placed on completing electives in the specialty in which the student wishes to apply for residency. However, electives can also enable students to carry out additional learning in an area of weakness, or to explore an area of interest.

Match Rates*

McMaster students have done very well when matching for residency programs. In 2010, 94.8% of McMaster students matched with their first choice of discipline (i.e. first choice of specialty, regardless of location) with the national average being 90.9%. 75% of McMaster graduates matched to their first choice discipline and location (National average 64.6%). McMaster students are given many opportunities to get involved and show the initiative that residency programs desire. Through horizontal electives, lecture series and interest groups, and with much upper year support, students are working towards their desired specialty very early on. Furthermore, a learning environment geared towards hospital situations prepares students well for clerkship and residency programs.

*At the time of printing, results for 2011 match were not yet available



Hamilton Downtown

Photo: Mark Zelinski



Baranga's at the Beach

Photo: John Overmeyer



Tiger-Cats Football

Photo: Daniel Banko

For more info on Hamilton attractions visit:

■ www.myhamilton.ca

■ www.tourismhamilton.com

Hamilton, the city

■ **Staying Active** – Cootes Paradise, Pier 4 & Bayfront Parks

The attractive university campus in west Hamilton backs onto a wildlife sanctuary and coastal marsh, Cootes Paradise. Surrounded by the Niagara Escarpment, Cootes Paradise is a picturesque area in which to walk, run, rollerblade or bike. If you live closer to downtown, Pier 4 and Bayfront parks are similar waterfront areas.

■ **Night Life** – Hess Village

This unique feature of Hamilton is a cobblestone street completely lined with restaurants, pubs and bars. Although a huge attraction throughout the year, in summer these establishments open their patios, filling the streets with sights and sounds until the early hours of the morning.

■ **Eating at home** – The Hamilton Farmer's Market

Open year-round, the market is frequented by many students. The market is a large indoor complex where vendors sell various foodstuffs, ranging from fresh produce to cooked meals. Students find the prices both affordable, and often negotiable. Hamilton also has many ethnic food stores scattered throughout the city.

■ **Cultural Activities**

The Hamilton Philharmonic and Opera Hamilton both have busy seasons featuring internationally known artists. Theatre Aquarius puts on a wide range of successful plays. The University also has a number of music groups and artists-in-residence who perform regularly on campus. The Art Gallery of Hamilton, located near Hamilton Place, is the third largest gallery in Ontario and has a prestigious collection of works by national and international artists. The McMaster Art Gallery, located in the Mills Library, is one of the most extensive university art collections in Canada. Nearby Brantford is the location of the Six Nations Reserve, where one can visit several museums and displays of native art and culture.

■ **Sports Activities**

Hamilton is the home of the Hamilton Tiger Cats football club. The Copps Coliseum is a modern sporting and entertainment complex which hosts hockey games, popular concerts, and sports competitions.

Hamilton, the campus

The first four months of training (Medical Foundation One) will take place for all students at the Hamilton campus, providing students with the opportunity to get to know their entire class. The curriculum is identical at all three campuses and McMaster takes full advantage of videoconferencing technology to ensure parallel experiences at each campus.

McMaster's Hamilton campus, which is restricted to pedestrian traffic, is adjacent to the Royal Botanical Gardens at the western end of Lake Ontario. The campus is minutes from downtown Hamilton and the activities that a major city has to offer.

Clinical placements are conducted in local hospitals and outpatient clinics as well as community physician's offices in the surrounding areas including Guelph, Oakville, Burlington, Brantford, Dundas, Ancaster, Stoney Creek, Newmarket and Mississauga.

Hamilton Campus



Laurie Sellings

1st Year

Undergrad: Microbiology and Immunology, McGill University, PhD Pharmacology and Therapeutics, McGill University

Hometown: Winnipeg MB

Activities at Mac: Interview host, 2011

Interests Outside Mac: painting, cycling and spending time with my family

Q. Describe your adjustment from your previous education/experiences to Mac med.

A: Having been out of school for four years, there was a significant adjustment period for me over the first few weeks. Being nearly ten years older than the mean age of the class was intimidating at first, but I have been pleasantly surprised at how much common ground I have been able to find with so many of my classmates. I have had to adjust to having significantly more demands on my time, since I commute to Hamilton from just east of downtown Toronto. My previous line of work required only a 30-minute commute, so the increased time I spend commuting combined with the time demand of learning the material from the program has made it challenging to find enough time to spend with my two-year-old daughter. I have learned to increase the quality of this time while accepting that the quantity is, by necessity, reduced.

Q. What do you like best about being in Hamilton?

A: This may seem silly, but I appreciate that in our large group sessions (lectures, for those of you not yet initiated in Mac lingo), we get the real, live lecturer in front of us, whereas the lecture is telecast to the regional campuses. Being in a large centre, we have access to so many specialists to do horizontal electives which is fantastic.

Q. What was your greatest fear coming into medical school and how has it been overcome?

A: I had two competing fears, the first of which is that I wouldn't measure up. I have since realized that pretty much everyone has that fear when starting med school, and it simply hasn't ended up being true. The second was that I wouldn't be able to manage school and having a young child at home with such a long daily commute. Although I haven't been able to participate in extracurricular life at Mac to the extent that I would like, or to spend the time that I would like with my family, everything that I need to get done is getting done, and having such real constraints on my time has, ironically, helped me find some life balance.



Gail Robson

2nd Year

Undergrad: Bachelor of Science in Nursing, University of British Columbia

Hometown: Vancouver, BC

Activities at Mac: CFMS Global Health Liaison, McMaster Global Health Committee, International Women's and Children's Health Conference Photo Auction Co-ordinator, Emergency Medicine Interest Group

Interests outside of Mac: Global health, travel, photography, yoga, scuba diving.

Q: How have you integrated your interests into your medical education?

A: I was lucky to be able to take both my work as a nurse in HIV and addictions, and my work overseas and feel that I was continuing to develop this through work within global health at McMaster. I was also able to travel during my summer electives. And as far as my photography, I was able to combine global health, medicine, and photography through the IWCH photo auction, as well as display my art at galleries in Hamilton and at the upcoming CCME conference. McMaster's schedule really allows you to determine how your time is spent.

Q: What did you do during your first summer elective block?

A: I spent time in Rwanda in pediatrics and obstetrics, then back to Vancouver for perinatal addictions, and then wilderness medicine. I got to reconnect with family and friends both in Rwanda and in Vancouver and felt like I was on a camping trip for the last two weeks while at the same time learning a lot.

Q: How did you find the transition to clerkship?

A: Students do clinical work in the first year and this opportunity at McMaster makes the transition smoother so I didn't find the transition difficult. I think clerkship is incredible. I love the medicine, being on different teams, the long hours, the chance to meet new people, and most importantly the privilege of working with patients everyday who generously allow us to learn through them.



Emily Aaronson

3rd year

Undergrad: George Washington University

Hometown: Toronto ON

Activities at Mac: O-Week Committee, PC Committee, Internal Medicine Interest Group, Emergency Medicine Interest Group

Interests Outside of Mac: Yoga, Vedanta (look it up – it will change your life), Travel, Art, Shenanigans

Q: Looking back, what are you glad that you did?

A: I spent (a handful) of weekends in the Hammer. I know it gets bleak. I know you're close to Toronto, but the best memories I have of school are based on the friendships made outside of tutorial – not talking about medicine, with my classmates. I'm also glad I took advantage of the summer to GO AWAY. It's the last time (in a little while... most likely) that you will have the time, an excuse, and a line of credit to go somewhere awesome and meet interesting folks. I went to New York, Chicago, New Orleans and India throughout my electives (as well as a couple of Canadian spots) – they were all amazing experiences that served me well during residency interviews. People LOVED hearing about them. I also studied for the USMLEs (a US licensing exam that is taken after second year of med school). It was daunting but as an arts student am SO glad I took it.

Q: What would you do differently?

A: I would have taken more of the advice I got from second year students. Get to know them, have coffee with them, go for a drink, and listen to their advice. Advice like, 'enjoy the MFs.' No joke. They're amazing if you don't take them too seriously.

Q: What advice would you give to incoming students?

A: Spend time in Hamilton on weekends. The people you are in class with are SO impressive. Rock stars. All of them (almost). Get to know them. They will enrich your experience – allow you to think more creatively about your own future, what you could actually make of yourself, and how to make that happen. They're great. BUT if you don't get to know them, none of that magic will happen. So make the effort. Three years is quick.



Niagara Falls



Niagara, the region

- **Niagara Falls** – Drench your senses with the breathtaking majesty of Niagara Falls.
- **St. Catharines** – If you're visiting Niagara, you've probably discovered that all roads lead to St. Catharines – the Garden City. Our region is known for its waterfalls and wineries, but as you'll discover there's a whole world of vibrant culture awaiting you in St. Catharines.
- **Niagara on the Lake** – Niagara-on-the-Lake's many attractions include historic sites - Fort George and the Historical Society Museum, the Shaw Festival, and Niagara wineries.
- **Port Colborne** – The City of Port Colborne has found the perfect balance that extends to you what you expect life to offer: successful industrial and business sectors, beautiful and scenic residential areas, and a thriving festival and entertainment scene.
- **Welland** – The City of Welland is a truly historic canal city situated in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula.
- **Fort Erie** – Located in the Niagara Peninsula's south western corner where Lake Erie enters the Niagara River, Fort Erie offers the best of both worlds blending small-city living with the convenience of nearby large metropolitan areas, Toronto and Buffalo.
- **Grimsby** is the personification of a small town. It's quiet, tree-lined avenues, its rural area, the natural Niagara Escarpment which winds through the town's centre, the beaches on the shores of Lake Ontario, and its many parks define "home" to the town's 19,000 people.
- **Beamsville** is a friendly and inviting town between the shores of Lake Ontario and the cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment, well known for its tender fruit production.
- **Smithville** is a small village in the township of West Lincoln between Hamilton and Niagara Falls. It is largely an agricultural community.
- **West Lincoln** – Scenic back roads with vast farmlands and meandering rivers, canoeing on Twenty Mile Creek or the Welland River, cycling, country fairs and quaint bed & breakfasts.

Niagara, the campus

The first four months of your training – Medical Foundation One – will take place at the Hamilton Campus providing you with the opportunity to get to know the entire class. You will complete the remainder of your training in the Niagara Region. With state of the art technology and videoconferencing sessions at the three campuses, friendships and alliances will remain intact and interactive teaching experiences will be completely analogous. The curriculum delivered in the Niagara Regional Campus is identical to the curriculum delivered in the Hamilton and Waterloo Regional campuses.

The Niagara Regional Campus is integrated with the hospital system, which includes eight sites throughout the region. This environment encourages interaction with a variety of healthcare professionals who care for patients in the hospital setting.

Most academic components of the program at the Niagara Regional Campus will take place in a newly renovated wing of the St. Catharines General Hospital. Anatomy teaching will occur at the Greater Niagara General site in Niagara Falls. Our future distributed, multi-site campus will include many sites in Niagara Region.

Clinical placements are available in outpatient clinics, private offices in various specialties, our Public Health Unit, and in all Niagara hospitals: St. Catharines General Hospital; Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre (St. Catharines); Greater Niagara General Hospital (Niagara Falls); Welland Hospital; Niagara on the Lake Hospital; Douglas Memorial Hospital (Fort Erie); Port Colborne Hospital; West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (Grimsby).

For more info on Niagara attractions visit:

- www.niagararegion.ca/home.aspx
- www.tourismniagara.com
- www.niagarafallstourism.com

Niagara Regional Campus



Nick Wang

1st year

Undergrad: McGill University

Hometown: Ottawa ON

Interests at Mac: Studying!
Involved in global health,

MF1 rep. volleyball and dodgeball intramurals

Interests outside of Mac: piano, foreign languages, literature

Q. Describe your adjustment from your previous education/experience to Mac med.

A. Within my first few weeks at Mac, I realized that it had been years since I had so few external stressors in my life. Mac doesn't teach you via marathon lectures, rote learning and stress-inducing exams; it encourages you to identify your learning needs yourself and equips you with the resources and skills to fill those needs. Although it may be a significant change from an intense, stress-heavy undergrad, a program that places emphasis on the motivation and responsibility of the learners is truly liberating and enjoyable.

Q. What do you like best so far about being at the Niagara campus?

A. The closeness with peers, staff and faculty. We're a family – and it's actually true! With a smaller class, it's easy to organize frequent activities as a class – on any given week we'd have group dance classes, intramural sports, and multiple get-togethers. This level of peer support extends as well to the campus admin, with whom we have very frequent contact and interaction. I've also found it very easy to set up electives with local doctors, who are very excited to teach. And let's not forget the wineries and the proximity to the Falls.

Q. What was your greatest fear coming into medical school and how has it been overcome?

A. We all know how competitive it is to get into med school, so one of my big fears was whether I'd be inadequate, ill-prepared or inexperienced compared to my surely gifted and brilliant classmates. As gifted and brilliant as they are, I've been struck by the sense of camaraderie that's developed among my classmates, over all three campuses. Getting over this fear was simply a matter of relaxing, realizing that I'm not a doctor yet and enjoying the process of becoming one with my great colleagues around me.



Danya Al-Baldawi

2nd year

Undergrad: Biochemistry,
University of Ottawa

Hometown: Ottawa ON

Activities at Mac: Student

Affairs representative, regional Sun and Skin program coordinator, Internal Medicine Committee representative, Teaching Awards Committee representative.

Interests outside of Mac: Spending time with family and friends

Q. How has your clerkship experience been thus far, particularly as a regional campus student?

A. At the Niagara campus, we spend less time in the classroom and more time in clinics. There are a lot of new things to see and learn about, and although it might get very stressful and demanding at times, medicine is very rewarding and enjoyable once you start to interact with patients.

Q. What opportunities have you had to explore various areas of medicine that are of interest to you?

A. The Niagara students took the initiative to create an electives database of exceptional preceptors. This made it very easy to contact different physicians and set up electives. Also, we have many great family doctors who do anaesthesia, obstetrics and gynecology, palliative care and sports medicine in addition to general practice. It's like hitting two birds with one stone!

Q. What have you enjoyed most about McMaster Medicine so far?

A. By far, the most enjoyable part of McMaster Medicine has been the many opportunities for leadership roles. The Niagara campus is only three years old, and there are many programs that need to be developed in the region and lots of opportunities to make changes to the pre-clerkship and clerkship programs delivery.



Pamela Kapend

3rd year

Undergrad: Bachelor
of Health Sciences in
Nursing, University of
Ottawa

Hometown: Ottawa ON

Activities at Mac: class of 2011 Student Affairs representative NRC, Internal Medicine Clerkship committee, Niagara Interest group, Wellness committee member, Niagara research group member.

Interests outside of Mac: Ultimate Frisbee, Rollerblading, Running, Music, community involvement, Yoga, spending time with family and friends

Q. Looking back, what are you glad you did?

A. I am proud of my efforts to sustain a functioning life outside of medicine. In doing so, I have not only had the opportunity to maintain physical activity and lower stress levels but I have also made friends/acquaintances outside of my wonderful group of classmates.

Q. What would you do different?

A. Being part of the Inaugural class came with great advantages but also some disadvantages. I would have appreciated the input of residents or the guidance of upper year students especially through clerkship. Although I had the opportunity to meet the class of 2010 (in my case) while in Hamilton, it became quite difficult to maintain close friendships as the years progressed. Since you will be fortunate to have both the class of 2012 and 2013 present, take advantage of that and inquire as much as you can about learning opportunities and get their elective advice.

Q. What advice would you give to incoming Niagara students?

A. I would reiterate the important notion of balance in medicine. I encourage you to keep a hobby or interest that is as far removed as possible from your current educational goals (or at least try!). Also, I can only speak highly of the cohesiveness of my class in Niagara. Hence I believe that investing in your classmates will only facilitate your life and experience in the Niagara Campus.



The new Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine site in Kitchener will be part of the University of Waterloo's Health Sciences campus, shown in an artist's concept model from the architectural firm ROBBIE/YOUNG + WRIGHT ARCHITECTS HARIRI PONARINI ARCHITECTS.



River Run Centre, Guelph



Churchill Park, Cambridge



For more info on Waterloo attractions visit:

■ www.kitchenerkiosk.com

■ www.city.waterloo.on.ca

Waterloo, the region

■ Kitchener-Waterloo

The twin cities of Kitchener-Waterloo, known locally simply as K-W, have large city amenities with a small town flavour. The area is steeped in Mennonite culture with one of the best farmers' markets in all of the province. A culturally diverse community, K-W has world-renowned educational and research institutes, and a booming technology sector.

■ Guelph

Also known as The Royal City, Guelph is a vibrant community with rich architectural heritage, a lively downtown, a thriving art scene, good shopping and a dynamic cultural core.

■ Cambridge

An amalgamation of Galt, Preston and Hespeler, Cambridge is a unique community with three downtown areas. It's a growing community where there's always something going on.

■ Surrounding Rural Communities

A number of communities in the surrounding Waterloo-Wellington area provide clinical placements. These communities exemplify small town Ontario and welcome students with small town friendliness. Fergus is a quaint, historic town comfortably nestled on the banks of the Grand River. It's full of rich heritage, and charming Scottish atmosphere. Nearby Elora is well known for the spectacularly picturesque Elora Gorge on the Grand River. Mount Forest, Palmerston and Wellesley are all in the heart of Mennonite country.

Waterloo, the campus

The first of your five Medical Foundation units, which takes four months to complete, takes place in Hamilton. This provides you with the opportunity to get to know your class. The remainder of your program takes place in the Waterloo-Wellington area.

The curriculum is identical to that delivered in Hamilton and takes full advantage of videoconferencing technology to ensure parallel experiences at each of our campuses.

Academic components of the program are centralized at the Waterloo Regional campus. The campus is located in downtown Kitchener within the new University of Waterloo Health Sciences Campus. This new campus includes the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine Waterloo Regional campus, the new University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy, and a primary care teaching clinic which will integrate clinical care and teaching in medicine, pharmacy, optometry and social work.

This progressive, innovative new campus has been built with the direct intent of providing a milieu of professionals working collaboratively.

Clinical placements may be conducted within physicians offices or within local hospitals (Cambridge Memorial Hospital, Groves Community Memorial Hospital in Fergus, Guelph General Hospital, Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, St. Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener, Louise Marshall Hospital in Mount Forest, and North Wellington Hospital in Palmerston).

Waterloo Regional Campus



Lindsay Fleming

1st Year

Undergrad: Bachelor of Health Science, McMaster University

Hometown: Waterloo, ON

Activities at Mac: Intramural

dodgeball and Volleyball, WRC Wellness Rep
Interests outside of Mac: Sports, horseback riding, various student interest groups

Q. Describe the adjustment from your previous education/experience to Mac med.

A. Coming from the BHSc Program at McMaster, I had previous exposure to problem-based learning (PBL), however, I do find that medical school is more self directed than my undergrad. Instead of having lectures from 9-5, I am able to tailor my time to fit my learning needs. PBL recognizes that not everyone learns in the same way, so students are able to use the resources that best allow them to learn. Having flexibility in my daily schedule allows me to balance other things like gaining clinical exposure through horizontal electives, and making time for physical activity and student social events.

Q. What do you like best so far about being at the Waterloo regional campus?

A. I absolutely love being in a smaller community! Doctors are excited to have students in the area, and are very enthusiastic and eager to teach. It has been easy for me to set up electives in a variety of specialties. Not only has the clinical experience been fantastic, but being a smaller class, our campus feels very much like home. The staff and administration are amazing, and are very receptive to student feedback. WRC students can directly influence the types of educational activities on campus. Being at a smaller campus has been the perfect fit for my medical school experience!

Q. What was your greatest fear coming into medical school and how has it been overcome?

A. Originally, I was very intimidated coming into medical school knowing that I would be surrounded by a class of very smart students. I was nervous that I wouldn't be on par with my peers and that it would be difficult to find people I could relate to. I was also worried that being at a satellite campus with only 28 students would be too small and not have the same social aspects as the larger Hamilton campus. I now realize that I couldn't have been more wrong! The students at Mac are awesome and very outgoing!



Mohamad Hussain

2nd year

Undergrad: Bachelor of Science, University of Western

Hometown: Mississauga ON

Activities at Mac: Admissions interviewer, host and WRC video, Medical Students for Secondary School at Waterloo, Altitude Healthcare Mentoring Waterloo Coordinator
Interests outside of Mac: Family/Friends, Sports, Video Games, Politics, Religion

Q. How have you integrated your interests into your medical education?

A. Given the flexibility McMaster's program allows for its students, I was able to balance school life with personal interests very comfortably. I was able to spend time with family and friends, continue to stay involved with sports and explore my career interests via horizontal electives while in school. Joining medical student-run projects like MedSS and Altitude Healthcare Mentoring also allowed me to stay involved with my interests in teaching/mentoring at the Waterloo campus.

Q. What did you do during your first summer elective block?

A. I spent the first four weeks in Waterloo doing electives in General Surgery and Anesthesiology. This was followed by four weeks of international electives in Lahore, Pakistan in Cardiology and Internal Medicine. In addition to helping me solidify my MF knowledge, this experience gave me the privilege of understanding medicine from a global perspective. I had also gained insight into the challenges faced by healthcare professionals and populations in underprivileged areas.

Q. How did you find the transition to clerkship?

A. Although intimidating at first, I have found the transition to clerkship very rewarding. My pre-clerkship tutorial and clinical skills learning gave me a practical insight into patient care that proved invaluable during my time in the hospital. The cases during my clerkship are highly challenging and highly rewarding with the perfect mix of supervisor direction and independent learning. Best of all, being at the Waterloo Regional Campus, I have the opportunity work very closely with my supervisors while still having the autonomy to develop my own skill set.



Paul Jones

3rd year

Undergrad: Bachelor of Science, Biology Trent University

Hometown: Peterborough ON

Activities at Mac:

McMaster Medical Student Council, Family Medicine Interest Group, Rural Medicine Interest Group, Geriatric Interest Group, Global Health Committee, Placebo, Docs on Ice, MedGames, Intramural Volleyball, Wilderness Medicine Elective
Interests outside of Mac: Reading, Hiking, Camping, Travel, Humanitarianism

Q. What did you value most about your time spent at Mac?

A. I think what I enjoyed most was the independent self-directed learning and the supportive small group experience. At McMaster you are treated like an adult – you are expected to take responsibility for your own education. I found this approach both enriching and engaging. It really allowed me to tailor my education to suit my interests. It also challenged me to be more self-reflective and take direct responsibility for my own learning and personal growth, self-identifying areas of weakness in need of further attention.

Q. Looking back, what would you do differently?

A. I would have gotten into the Operating Room sooner, first because it was a lot of fun and second because it is a really interesting way to learn anatomy. In clerkship I would have tried more electives outside the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine system, just to be exposed to other ways doing things and styles of learning.

Q. What would be your advice for newly accepted regional campus students?

A. Get involved and engaged in the local community as soon as possible. It will really enrich your time in Kitchener-Waterloo. The area has a lot to offer, from Multicultural Festivals in Victoria Park to the St. Jacobs Market on Saturday mornings, the nearby Elora Gorge, local Grand River trails, and a multitude of great restaurants. If you're into sports, join or form a sports team with other local students, residents or doctors. Take part in free events hosted by University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University, Centre for International Governance Innovation or the Perimeter Institute. Most of all have fun and be adventurous.



■ Where to live

Should I rent or lease?

Should I move or commute?

For more info on living in **Hamilton**:

- www.myhamilton.ca
- <http://hamilton.kijiji.ca/f-housing-apartments-for-rent-W0QQCatIdZ37>
- <http://www.macoffcampus.mcmaster.ca/classifieds/index.php>

For More information on living in **Niagara**:

- <http://stcatharines.ontariotenants.ca>
- <http://stcatharines.kijiji.ca/f-housing-apartments-for-rent-W0QQCatIdZ37>

For more information on living in **Waterloo**:

- <http://www.waterlooffcampushousing.com>
- <http://peanut.uwaterloo.ca/ochousing2>
- <http://kitchener.kijiji.ca/f-housing-short-term-rentals-W0QQCatIdZ42>

Hamilton campus

■ Todd McDonald

■ **Location:** I live with my wife, son, and two dogs in a quiet residential neighborhood in Dundas on Park Street.
■ **Distance to Campus:** 5 km from MDCL.
■ **Rent:** \$1350 plus utilities for 3 bedroom house with yard.

Advantages:

- More house for your money being in Dundas which was necessary to accommodate a family
- Quiet at night when you need to study or sleep
- Downtown Dundas has a couple of great pubs/ restaurants. The Thirsty Cactus has live music weekly
- Bus route is easy and fairly direct to campus

Disadvantages:

- 5 km walk takes about 35 min. This is long in the winter or before an 8 a.m. “test”, so having a car or a friend with a car is handy
- Med Students don’t have a bus pass included in our fees so it’s \$2.55 per trip unless you buy a pass

■ Anna Dul

■ **Location:** I live with my parents in Mississauga, near Square One.
■ **Distance to Campus:** 50 Km.
■ **Getting to campus:** Very traffic dependent – I can get here in 20 min or it can be close to 1.5 hours in bad traffic.

Rent: None.

Advantages:

- Save lots of money on rent and groceries
- Nice to have the constant social support of your family

Disadvantages:

- The variable travel time makes it difficult for me to predict when I’ll get to school, so I have to give myself a buffer and leave early, which means waking up early
- More difficult to attend evening extra curriculars and lectures
- Living with your family is distracting
- Cost of commuting is high with parking, gas and car repairs
- Difficult to be spontaneous with friends in Hamilton

Living accommodations

■ Curtis Hadden

■ **Location:** Main St. W, Hamilton, in a 4-bedroom apartment with 3 roommates who are in the Faculty of Health Sciences
Distance to campus: 10-15 minute walk
Rent: \$600 (utilities and biweekly cleaning service included).

Advantages:

- Walking distance to campus
- Gym facilities in the building (cardio and weight rooms)
- Biweekly cleaning service for common areas (washrooms, kitchen, living room)
- Lots of medical students in the building
- It is a student-only building so there are study rooms available
- Green building design makes it an environmentally friendly place to live (for example, solar panels located on roof)
- Directly between Fortino's and Metro makes it easy to grab groceries

Disadvantages:

- Underground parking limited. May need to park on the other side of Main Street in outdoor lot
- Need to drive to other Hamilton hospitals
- Need to sign your guests into the building, however, there is no limit on the number of guests you can sign in

Niagara Regional campus

■ Victoria Archer

■ **Location:** Geneva St. & Welland Avenue.
Distance to Campus: 1.6 km
Getting to Campus: 15 minute walk or less than 5 minute drive.
Rent: \$1000 all inclusive for 2 bedroom apt (\$500 ea.), includes utilities, cable and internet.

Advantages:

- Quiet, well-maintained building with newly renovated apartments
- Very close to campus
- 2 minute drive to Fairview mall, grocery stores, restaurants (Starbucks!), etc.
- Close to QEW and 406

Disadvantages:

- No other students in the building, or within walking distance
- Laundry is extra (but is on-site) for \$2/load

■ Alexandre Tran

■ **Location:** Cline Avenue, Westdale area in Hamilton.
Distance to Campus: 1 km from Hamilton Campus, 72 km from the Niagara Regional Campus (NRC).

Getting to Campus: 5 minute walk to Hamilton Campus, 45 minute drive to the NRC
Rent: \$450 + utilities, student housing with 3 housemates, 3 washrooms, patio, 3 parking spaces.

Advantages:

- 2 minutes away from the QEW, convenient for commuting
- Able to attend large group sessions in Hamilton on Mondays and Fridays
- Westdale area is filled with great shops, stores and restaurants
- Able to see friends and participate in extra-curricular activities at both campuses
- No mid-year relocation necessary for transition to MF 2

Disadvantages:

- Early morning commutes for mandatory sessions (i.e. CAE's) are tiring
- Living expenses (i.e. rent) in Hamilton are generally higher, in addition to added fuel expenses
- Potential need for relocation during clerkship

■ Miriam Harris

■ **Location:** Margery Ave, West End of St. Catharines.
Distance to Campus: 2.5 km
Getting to Campus: 6-min. drive to campus
Rent: \$600 all-inclusive for two bedroom apartment. It is the first floor of a house. It includes a very spacious kitchen, dining and living room, storage space, dishwasher, and laundry facilities on site.

Advantages:

- Family friendly area with grocery stores and the Fairview shopping mall about five minutes away
- Also only five minutes away from the St. Catharines YMCA, which is a brand new building with great facilities
- There are several other students from NRC living in houses in this neighborhood
- The driveway is big enough for two cars, and there is free parking at all times of the day on the street
- Minutes away from the 403 and the 406

Disadvantages:

- There are no close parks or areas that are nice to go for a walk or run.

Waterloo Regional campus

■ Stacey Speer

■ **Location:** London, ON, with husband and 2 children. I commute to Kitchener every day.
Distance to Campus: about 75 kms.
Getting to Campus: 1 hour and 15 minute drive.

Advantages:

- Able to live at home with my husband and two children ages 5 and 7
- I don't have to sacrifice large amounts of time away from my family
- I save money living at home

Disadvantages:

- I miss out on a lot of evening events with my classmates
- Snowstorms make driving difficult and stressful at times
- My days are long
- Will likely need to arrange accommodations in Kitchener once clerkship starts
- The price of gas is expensive

■ Marissa Vance

■ **Location:** York St. & Union St. 1, 2, & 3 bedroom apartments in Kitchener.
Distance to Campus: 1.8 km.
Getting to Campus: 4 minute drive.
Rent: \$470/person (for 3 bedroom, utilities included) + cable/internet + undergrad parking (\$40/person).

Advantages:

- Walking distance to Grand River Hospital (don't have to pay for hospital parking!)
- Gym facilities
- Outdoor pool
- Underground parking!
- Plenty of visitor parking

Disadvantages:

- 25 minute walk to school
- Have to drive to most places (grocery store, mall, etc.)

■ Graham Cummins

■ **Location:** Scott St. and Weber St., downtown Kitchener, 3-storey house with 2 classmates.
Distance to Campus: 1.7 km
Getting to Campus: 5min bike, less than 20min walk
Rent: \$480 + utilities (\$550/winter, \$500/summer)

Advantages:

- Big house, lots of rooms and backyard with deck
- Right downtown, so it's close to everything!
- Beautiful house and neighborhood

Disadvantages:

- Minimal (legal) guest parking
- Old house heating issues (can get pricey)

McMaster Catholic Students Association (MACSA) • African Caribbean Association • Ahmadiyya Muslim Student Association • Amnesty International • Social Issues Club • Answering The Call • Asian Federation Of Charitable Students (F.O.C.U.S.) • Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union • Bangladeshi Students' Association • BEAMS (Bioengineering at McMaster Society) • Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences • Biology Society • Buddha's Light Community • Campus Crusade for Chris • Chemical Engineering Club • Chinese Students and Scholars Association • Chinese Students' Association (CSA) • Christians for Israel at MAC • Comedy for a Cure • COMPASS • Creative Writing at Mac • DeGroot Accounting Association • DeGroot Entrepreneur Association • DeGroot Finance Association • DeGroot Human Resources Association • Divine Youth Association • DREAMS@MAC • Dutch Club • Engineering & Society Students' Association • Engineers Without Borders • Free the Children @ Mac • Giovine Italia • Habitat for Humanity • Hamilton Chinese Christian Fellowship • Health Studies Society • Insaaniyat • InterVarsity Christian Fellowship • Life Is Beautiful • Life Is Beautiful (LIB) • Mac Astro Group • MAC Dance Club • Mac Roots and Shoots • MacDebate Society • MacHack Footbag Club • MACSS (McMaster Association of Communication Studies Students) • MCES, McMaster Civil Engineering Society • McKSA(McMaster Korean Student Association) • McMaster Afghan Students Association • McMaster African Students Association • McMaster Arab Students Association (MASA) • McMaster Arts for Children • McMaster Association of Serbian Students • McMaster Badminton Club • McMaster Best Buddies • McMaster Campus Choice • McMaster Canadian Club • McMaster Carrom & Checkers • McMaster Catholic Students Association (MACSA) • McMaster Chinese Broadcasting Channel • McMaster Chinese Catholic Community • McMaster Chinese Commerce Association • McMaster Chinese Debate Society • McMaster Chinese Engineering Society • McMaster Classics Club • McMaster Climbing Club • McMaster Comparative Literature Society • McMaster Cricket Club • McMaster Croatian Society • McMaster Dragon Boat • McMaster Figure Skating Club • McMaster Floorball Association • McMaster Gerontology Association (MGA) • McMaster Gospel Choir • McMaster Hindu Student's Association • McMaster History Society • McMaster Ice Hockey Club • McMaster Indian Society • McMaster Investment Club • McMaster Ismaili Student Association (MISA) • McMaster Italian Association • McMaster Jane Austen Society • McMaster Jazz Band • McMaster Jewish Student Association • McMaster Juggling Association • McMaster Kabadi Club • McMaster Knitting Club • McMaster Korean Christian Fellowship • McMaster LifeLine • McMaster Linguistics Association • McMaster Malayalee Students Association • McMaster Mathematics and Statistics Society (MASS) • McMaster Medicine and Health Society • McMaster Multimedia Student Society (MMSS) • McMaster Musical Theatre • McMaster Muslims for Peace and Justice • McMaster Navigator • McMaster NDP Club • McMaster Pre Law Society • McMaster Punjabi Association • McMaster Queer Studies Society • McMaster Quiz Bowl • McMaster Racing Club • McMaster Red Cross Youth Council • McMaster Socialist Movement • McMaster Society for Theatre & Film and the Performing Arts • McMaster Sociology Society • McMaster Sports Association • McMaster Sports Society • McMaster Sri Lankan Association • McMaster Student's Book Club • McMaster Student's Women's Studies Society • McMaster Students for Literacy • McMaster Students Humanity & Justice Society • McMaster Tae Kwon Do Club • McMaster Taiwanese Student Association • McMaster Talmud Torah club • McMaster Tamil Students' Association • McMaster Thespian Club • McMaster Trampoline and Power Trumbling Club • McMaster Turkish Students' Association • McMaster Ukrainian Students' Association • McMaster Undergraduate Chemistry Society • McMaster Undergraduate Nursing Science Society (MUNSS) • McMaster Undergraduate Physics Society • McMaster University Choir • McMaster University Concert Band • McMaster University Undergraduate Psychology Society • McMaster Vietnamese Student Association • McMaster Vocal Ensemble • McMaster Wish Foundation • Meal Exchange – McMaster University Chapter • Mechanical Engineering Club • Medical Radiation Science Student Society • Millennium Scholars of McMaster • MISA (McMaster Iranian Students Association) • MSU Rhodes Society • MSU Snowboard Club • Muslim Students Association • Open Circle • Orthodox Christian Fellowship at McMaster • Pakistani Students Association • Peace and Conflict Studies Society • Pre Vet Society • Relay for Life McMaster • Russian Club • Sikh Student Association • Smiling Over Sickness • Society of Off Campus Students • Sociology Society • Software Engineering Club • Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) • South Asian Womens Association • Student International Health Initiatives (SIHI) • Students Promoting Organ Donation Awareness • Student World Assembly McMaster Chapter • Students Promoting Organ Donation Awareness • The BioPsych Society • The Gujarati Students Association • The International Business Network • The Mac Roundtables • The McMaster Anthropology Society • The McMaster Brass Musician's Club • The McMaster Educator • The Researcher • The Student Volunteer Program – McMaster Chapter • UNICEF Mac • University Bible Fellowship at McMaster • Visual Culture Society • WarChild@MAC • West Indian Students United • Women in Engineering Society • World University Service of Canada • Zionists at McMaster