



Centre for  
**Heart Lung Innovation**  
UBC and St. Paul's Hospital

Room 166, Burrard Building  
St. Paul's Hospital  
1081 Burrard Street  
Vancouver, BC Canada V6Z  
1Y6

[www.hli.ubc.ca](http://www.hli.ubc.ca)  
[info@hli.ubc.ca](mailto:info@hli.ubc.ca)

Dear Colleagues;

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a nice and restful Christmas break.

2020 was a challenging year for all of us. We faced the largest worldwide pandemic since the Spanish Flu of 1918, which took the lives of 50,000 Canadians. COVID19, though less severe than the Spanish Flu, has caused severe havoc in our communities. Many have already succumbed to this disease (over 16,000 Canadians). Some have lost their jobs, their businesses and indeed their life-savings; others are still mourning the loss of their loved ones from this devastating virus.

We are still under the spell of COVID19. The number of new cases continue to climb (and is now nearly 10,000 cases per day). Although British Columbia (BC) has fared better than most other large Provinces, to date, nearly 1,000 of our citizens have lost their lives and 55,000 have been affected by the disease. Locally, the hospital has experienced several (small) outbreaks of COVID19 and a general increase in hospitalization rates. We are nonetheless grateful that we have not experienced a huge "surge" in COVID19 cases as had been previously predicted, thanks to the public health measures implemented by the Province, which have been followed by BC residents, businesses and local Health Authorities.

There is hope in the horizon. Unprecedented investment in research has led to the development of several highly effective vaccines for COVID19 in a record-breaking time (~9 months from conception to completion of Phase 3 trials). To date, approximately 50,000 British Columbians (mostly front-line workers and nursing home residents) have been vaccinated. This number is expected to exponentially increase over the next few weeks and months. By March of this year, BC is expected to receive 792,000 doses of the COVID vaccine, which will be enough to vaccinate (with at least one dose) 550,000 British Columbians.

I am thankful and proud of our HLI family, who have responded to meet the challenges of this pandemic. To date, there have been no outbreaks of COVID19 at HLI (thanks to everyone's cooperation and adherence to guidelines). PIs, staff and trainees have modified their work schedule to fight the pandemic. For many, this has meant working from home, or coming to HLI at off-hours and on strange schedules, mask wearing and social distancing on site, and making Zoom a daily ritual. Fiscally, HLI is in good shape (and we have been able to recruit new PIs, trainees and staff during this pandemic). The educational and research programs including the Friday seminars and RIP have been well implemented remotely (thank you Ivan, Chun and others who have been instrumental in enabling this). Our core platforms have been fully operational without any significant impediments or delays (thank you to all our core managers and staff) and our IT support has been exceptional despite the added requests and challenges

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Heart Centre at St. Paul's Hospital

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imposed by the pandemic (thank you to Joe and his exceptional team). Thank you also to the grants team and administrative staff, who have enabled us to take advantage of new funding opportunities for COVID19 research and ensured our finances, HR and operational issues have been addressed in a timely fashion.

2021 will be a better year. By late summer/early fall, it is expected that all eligible BC residents will be vaccinated and with a 95% efficacy rate, the pandemic will be suppressed. We are hopeful that by fall of 2021, we will be able to meet face-to-face and the labs will be fully re-opened. Until then, the priorities of HLI will be to:

1. Ensure that HLI is fully operational during the pandemic
2. Accommodate and integrate New Faculty Members to HLI
3. Develop (update) our Strategic Plan
4. Fully engage in the development of the New St. Paul's Campus of Care
5. Recruit and retain our talented PIs, staff and trainees

I am hopeful that I will have a chance to speak with you face to face in the upcoming year and get your thoughts and advice on how to move HLI forward. If you want to share your ideas before then, please do not hesitate in reaching me [don.sin@hli.ubc.ca](mailto:don.sin@hli.ubc.ca)

Thank you and all the best for 2021! The best is yet to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Sin'.

Don D. Sin, MD, FRCPC

Director & the De Lazzari Family Chair, Centre for Heart Lung Innovation, St. Paul's Hospital, PHC, Canada Research Chair in COPD

UBC Professor of Medicine