

## Professor Heather Boon Receives 2015 Dr. Rogers Prize for Excellence in Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Heather Boon, PhD, was named the 2015 recipient of the prestigious Dr. Rogers Prize for Excellence in Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Dr. Boon, professor and dean of the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto, received the prize on September 25, at a special gala event in Vancouver. The Dr. Rogers Prize “recognizes those who embody the same level of vision, leadership, and integrity as that of the late Dr. Roger Hayward Rogers ... [and] highlights the important contributions of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to health care.”<sup>1</sup>

Graduating as a pharmacist in 1991, Dr. Boon’s interest in CAM was prompted by the relative lack of research in the field at that time. In 1996, she completed her doctorate, investigating the socialization of the naturopathic medicine practice in Canada. Throughout a career spanning almost 25 years, she has received funding for numerous research projects, supervised and taught many students, and authored more than 150 academic publications, many of which were focused on herbal medicine.

Established in 2007, the Dr. Rogers Prize is awarded every two years. It is named in honor of the late Roger Hayward Rogers, MD, one of Canada’s pioneers of complementary and alternative medicine. The \$250,000 prize is funded by the Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation. As one of its priorities, the foundation supports work and research in CAM and has been instrumental in the development of a robust, respectful, and collaborative CAM research community in Canada.

Dr. Boon’s professional approach has emphasized the importance of collaboration and respect. It has also been centered on conducting research of the highest quality, and on building bridges and fostering dialogue between the complementary and conventional health care communities. Furthermore, she has helped advance core competencies for practicing pharmacists and students through the develop-



Heather Boon, PhD. Photo courtesy of University of Toronto.

ment of pharmacy program curricula and the delivery of continuing education courses.

In 2004, Dr. Boon, working with her colleague Marja Verhoef, PhD, from the University of Calgary, obtained funding from the Government of Canada to create the Canadian Interdisciplinary Network for CAM Research (IN-CAM). Building on her work with IN-CAM and recognizing the importance of establishing an international community, Dr. Boon was a founding member of the International Society for Complementary Medicine Research (ISCMR), serving as president from 2013 to 2015. Dr. Boon also is one of the primary forces behind the development of the new Centre for Integrative Medicine, a joint venture between the

University of Toronto Faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy and the Scarborough Hospital in Scarborough, Ontario.

Dr. Boon was appointed to Health Canada’s Expert Advisory Committee for Natural Health Products in 2003 and served as chair from 2006 to 2009. During this time, she played an important role in the development of Canada’s *Natural Health Products Regulations*. Dr. Boon continues to play a key role in Canadian policy and regulation with her research evaluating the impact of the *Natural Health Products Regulations*, as well as the effects of CAM regulations on practitioners.

Herbal medicine has always played an important part in

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Dr. Boon's work. In addition to co-authoring one of the first evidence-based books on herbal medicine, *The Botanical Pharmacy*\* (Quarry Press, 1999), which was updated in 2009, many of her academic publications center on the use and safety of herbal medicines.

Working with Sunita Vohra, MD, from the University of Alberta, Dr. Boon also is involved in research on adverse events related to herbal medicines. One project, the "Study of Natural Health Product Adverse Events" (SONAR), explored how active intervention by community pharmacists could help identify potential interactions between pharmaceutical drugs and herbal medicines.<sup>2</sup> This project was a collaboration among government, researchers, and practitioners. In addition, Dr. Boon was part of the team that developed an herbal medicine/drug interaction grid for health care professionals to help them provide accurate information to their patients.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, as randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of herbal medicines became more prevalent, investigators began to question whether the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) Statement was adequate and appropriate for herbal products. Recognizing that RCTs of herbal medicines faced subject-specific challenges, Dr. Boon was part of the team that developed additional checklist items specific to botanical products.

\* The author of this article is a co-author of *The Botanical Pharmacy*.

These supplementary items require descriptions of the plant part used and details on the methods of authentication, extraction, and identification. This important work, titled "Reporting randomized, controlled trials of herbal interventions: an elaborated CONSORT statement," was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in 2006.<sup>3</sup> HG

—Michael Smith, BPharm (Hons), ND

### References

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