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Laurier student researchers receive prestigious honours for work on Parkinson's disease

WATERLOO – As Parkinson's Awareness Month is celebrated around the world, three researchers at Laurier's Sun Life Financial Movement Disorders Research and Rehabilitation Centre (MDRC) have earned notable honours for their work on Parkinson's Disease.

Kaylena Ehgoetz Martens, a PhD candidate and instructor at Laurier, was recently named among the top three recipients of the prestigious Brain Star Award, which is presented annually to a maximum of just 15 researchers from across Canada by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. As one of the top three recipients, Ehgoetz Martens has been invited to speak at the upcoming meeting of the Canadian Association of Neuroscience, held May 25-28 in Montreal. She also has the chance to win the Marlene Reimer Brain Star of the Year award, which recognizes the top Canadian researcher in neurosciences, mental health and addiction.

"It is a tremendous honour to be selected as one of the recipients for this award. This level of achievement is largely due to the dedication of the patients and the MDRC research team," said Ehgoetz Martens, the first MDRC researcher to win a Brain Star Award. "I am incredibly fortunate to work at such a world-class centre like the MDRC, which encourages pursuit of new and exciting research questions using state-of-the-art equipment."

In addition to Ehgoetz Martens' achievement, Laurier Master of Science student Shannon Lefavre recently received the International Research Fellowship Award from the Parkinson's Disease Foundation and undergraduate student Eric Beck earned an Ontario Graduate Studies scholarship to begin a master's degree at Laurier in the fall.

Lefavre has been leading rehabilitation classes for people with Parkinson's disease at the MDRC for the past year; the fellowship will help her continue her work studying improving balance control in Parkinson's patients, which has the potential to help many people dealing with symptoms of the disease. Beck meanwhile, has already won awards for his work studying Parkinson's disease, earning an Undergraduate Research Assistantship and the Laurier Faculty of Science Students' Association Research Assistant Scholarship.

"I can't imagine a better way of celebrating 10 years of serving the Parkinson's community, as well as Parkinson's Awareness Month," said Quincy Almeida, founder and director of the MDRC and an assistant professor of Kinesiology and Physical Education at Laurier. "The student researchers at the MDRC are certainly earning top national and international recognition for their commitment to Parkinson's."

Faculty members from across Laurier and other Canadian and international institutions, as well as graduate and undergraduate students, allow the MDRC to conduct collaborative research into movement disorders, predominately those found in individuals with Parkinson's disease, which affects more than 100,000 Canadians. Laurier was the first university in Canada to establish such a centre, which integrates scientific research and rehabilitation with a focus on movement disorders. For more information on the MDRC, [click here](#).