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AUG. 17, 2021 | 082-21

Laurier's Inspiring Conversations lecture will explore COVID-19 variants, treatments and research

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University is hosting the next lecture in its [Inspiring Conversations](#) series, “**A Year of Research on COVID-19: Where do we go from here?**,” on Aug. 24. The lecture will focus on the COVID-19 research taking place in Ontario, treatments and therapies, community transmission and other topics related to COVID-19.

The lecture, moderated by **Dr. Elan Tsarfati** (BA '04), a fellow of the Royal College of Pathology in London, UK and a clinical medical microbiologist at Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert, Scotland, will feature speakers [Stephanie DeWitte-Orr](#), an associate professor of Health Sciences and Biology at Laurier, and **Ryan Hiebert** (BSc '17), a graduate student in the department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology at the University of Toronto.

As another school year approaches, students and parents are preparing for an increase in in-person classes at all educational levels, including post-secondary institutions. This is taking place in the shadow of an accelerated fourth wave and loosening public health restrictions, which DeWitte-Orr says leaves many questions that need to be answered.

“Why do we think kids aren't as susceptible to COVID-19 as adults? What is long COVID? What is herd immunity? These are all questions that have a significant impact on people's lives right now,” said DeWitte-Orr, who recently [discovered a new cell line](#) to use as a model for studying coronaviruses.

DeWitte-Orr will also be speaking about which vaccines are available in Canada and whether vaccine boosters will be needed.

Hiebert is currently working at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre as a member of the Sunnybrook Translational Research Group for Emerging and Respiratory Viruses. His research focuses on pathogen diagnostics and viral transmission and prevention. Hiebert says the delta variant has created even more uncertainty as we attempt to move forward.

“It's important to have a perspective on the current state of viral transmission and how to best protect yourself and your family,” said Hiebert. “The school year is fast approaching and this seminar will aim to enhance the community's understanding of the current environment.”

“A Year of Research on COVID-19: Where do we go from here?” will take place on Aug. 24 at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. The event is free and open to the public. [Registration is required.](#)

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