

Celebrating International Women's Day, March 8, 2025: #AccelerateAction



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Ruth Grunau, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UBC & BCCH

Dr. Ruth Grunau is a world-renowned expert in preterm infant pain and its developmental impact. During her

PhD research (UBC 1985), she developed the first validated infant pain measurement tool to quantify infant pain, which quickly became the 'gold standard' and has been incorporated into the scales used today. Her research has also contributed to establishing that preterm babies can perceive pain. This landmark discovery demonstrated that invasive procedures in very preterm infants are a significant contributing factor to poorer neurodevelopmental and behavioural outcomes and are related to anxiety and depressive symptoms later in life.

Dr. Grunau has a unique background which is grounded in developmental psychology (her undergraduate training had a strong emphasis on experimental animal research, which she credits with greatly influencing her clinical thinking). After earning a BA in Psychology from the University of Sydney, Australia in 1967, she began her postgraduate education at UBC. She received an MA in Developmental Psychology (1969), an EdD in Human Learning & Development in 1975, and a PhD in Pediatric Psychology in 1985. In addition to her work within the Division of Neonatology, she has a research and teaching position with the UBC Department of Psychology; BC Children's Hospital Research Institute (BCCHR); and the UBC Graduate Program in neuroscience.

With over 200 published papers, Dr. Grunau was in the top 1.5 percent of cited researchers in the world in 2020 for her work in developmental neuroscience. To this day, her research continues to have an immense clinical impact, while also affecting changes in health policy and clinical practice worldwide. For example, 13 of her publications are cited in a policy statement on Organizational Principles to Guide and Define the Child Health Care System and/or Improve the Health of all Children¹, and she is regularly invited as a plenary or keynote speaker at major conferences and clinical meetings internationally.

A highlight of her career has been her work with Dr. Steven Miller and Dr. Angela Devlin on how neonatal pain/stress exposure, together with targeted genetic variation, are related to poor cognition and visual motor problem solving and behaviour at school age.

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¹ COMMITTEE ON FETUS AND NEWBORN and SECTION ON ANESTHESIOLOGY AND PAIN MEDICINE (2016). Prevention and Management of Procedural Pain in the Neonate: An Update. *Pediatrics*, 137(2), e20154271. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-4271>

Their findings are highly novel and contribute to the growing body of evidence linking early life pain/stress to childhood outcomes.

Along with Dr. Grunau's outstanding research, she is committed to supporting the next generation of researchers and sharing her expertise. Over the years, she has mentored more than 100 research trainees and highly qualified personnel, while also mentoring graduate students and junior faculty in the department. Since 1995, she has actively participated in various committees within our department; BC Children's & Women's and in scholarly committees around the world.

Awards and Recognition (shortlist)

- Rovee-Collier Mentor Award from the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology (2018)
- Jeffrey Lawson Award for Advocacy in Children's Pain Relief from the American Pain Society (2018)
- Outstanding Pain Mentorship Award from the Canadian Pain Society (2019)
- Distinguished Career Award from the International Association for the Study of Pain SIG Pain in Childhood (2019)
- Aubrey J. Tingle Prize from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) (2021)

MORE:

Dr. Ruth Grunau

<https://www.bcchr.ca/rgrunau>

Interview with Dr. Ruth Grunau

https://healthresearchbc.ca/news_article/ruth-grunau-2021-aubrey-j-tingle-prize/

Profile of Dr. Ruth Grunau

<https://www.bcchr.ca/research/stories/career-dedicated-relieving-pain-tiniest-patients-dr-ruth-grunau-recognized>

Feature Story on Dr. Grunau's Current Research

<https://pathwaysmagazine.med.ubc.ca/feature-stories/rethinking-early-life-brain-injury/>

References

COMMITTEE ON FETUS AND NEWBORN and SECTION ON ANESTHESIOLOGY AND PAIN MEDICINE (2016). Prevention and Management of Procedural Pain in the Neonate: An Update. *Pediatrics*, 137(2), e20154271. [This Policy Statement was reaffirmed July 2020.]

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Rabia Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UBC & BCCH | Scientist, Centre for Health Education Scholarship, UBC

Dr. Rabia Khan has been with the department of Pediatrics since July 2024. She is a critical social scientist exploring humanism in the health professions. Using critical theory and qualitative methodologies, her work explores the relationship between power structures and how they affect

how people act, speak, and develop. Specifically, she wants to know what makes work 'work'.

Dr. Khan embraces her intersectional identities and is passionate about making the world more equitable, inclusive, and just. She wants to normalize embodiment through her research, teaching, and advocacy. Her post-structural research program examines the sociocultural and sociohistorical conditions that contribute to disillusionment for individuals in careers within the health professions. Broadly speaking, she is interested in addressing the epistemic injustice within healthcare research caused through the exclusion of intersectional marginalized groups, including people of color, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, the LGBTQ2I+ community, and neurodiverse individuals.

Dr. Khan earned her PhD from the University of Toronto's Institute of Medical Science, where her dissertation, *Dying to Stay Alive in Residency and Beyond: A Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Burnout'*, delved into the relationship between burnout and suicide in postgraduate medical education. She also holds a master's degree in Global and Indigenous Health from the University of British Columbia's School of Population and Public Health and completed a Collaborative Specialization in Global Health through the Global Scholar Program at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. She has also recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre for Health Education Scholarship, UBC where she examined the professional satisfaction of women-identifying leaders in Canada.

In February 2024, Dr. Khan was a recipient of the first-ever Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Research Excellence, Diversity, and Independence (REDI) Early Career Transition Award.

MORE:

Dr. Rabia Khan

<https://ches.med.ubc.ca/rabia-khan/>

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:
Dr. Alejandra Wiedeman,
Research Associate (Devlin
Lab), Department of
Pediatrics, UBC & BCCH

Originally from Chile, Dr. Wiedeman earned a BSc in Nutrition and Dietetics from the Universidad de Valparaíso and became a registered dietitian in 2006. She gained professional

experience working clinically as a dietitian and serving as a university lecturer before pursuing an MSc in Nutrition from the Instituto de Nutrición y Tecnología de los Alimentos, at the Universidad de Chile, which she completed in 2011. Seeking to advance her education further, she relocated to Vancouver to complete a PhD in Human Nutrition at UBC under the supervision of Dr. Sheila Innis, graduating in 2018. Her doctoral research focused on the nutritional assessment of choline and culminated in a paper published in the *Journal of Nutrition* in 2023.¹

In 2019, Dr. Wiedeman continued her academic journey at UBC as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Pediatrics. Her work was supported by a Bertram Hoffmeister Postdoctoral Fellowship from the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute (BCCHR) and a postdoctoral fellowship from the Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica. Under the guidance of Dr. Angela Devlin, she focused her research on investigating cardiometabolic complications in high-risk pediatric populations.

Over the years, her research has consistently garnered support, including a 'Society to Cell' Clyde Hertzman Memorial Fellowship from UBC's Social Exposome Cluster; a grant from UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) in 2021; operating funding from the Egg Farmers of Canada (2021); a Healthy Starts Catalyst Grant from BCCHR in 2022; and she just recently received a CIHR project grant.

Dr. Wiedeman has played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Precision Diabetes Study, a longitudinal study aimed at understanding the pathophysiology of diabetes in children.

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¹ Wiedeman, A. M., Dhillon, A. K., Wu, B. T., Innis, S. M., Elango, R., & Devlin, A. M. (2023). Children Aged 5–6 Years in Vancouver, Canada Meet Dietary Recommendations for Folate and Vitamin B12 but not Choline. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 153(1), 197-207.

To date, she has disseminated her findings through 17 published manuscripts and 19 conference abstracts. Dr. Wiedeman's current research centers on investigating vascular complications in children with type 1 diabetes.

Beyond her research, she is deeply committed to mentoring, to help foster a collaborative and supportive work environment in the lab. In June 2025, Dr. Wiedeman will begin her new role as an Assistant Professor at the Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile.

Thank you for your contributions and good luck in your new role!

“Alejandra’s kindness and thoughtfulness foster a culture where everyone feels valued and respected. She never misses an opportunity to celebrate others, remembering birthdays, milestones, and small moments that make a meaningful change. Her unwavering support cultivates a true sense of belonging in our team.”

– Ladan Kalani, Lab Manager, Devlin Lab

Awards and Recognition

- Presentation and Travel Award from the Canadian Society for Atherosclerosis Thrombosis and Vascular Biology (2019)
- Award for Nutrition Translation from the Canadian Nutrition Society and the Journal of Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism (2020)
- Travel Award from the Healthy Starts theme group, BCCHR (2020)
- Emerging Leaders in Nutrition Science and Nutrition Translation Award Finalist from the American Society for Nutrition (2021)
- Travel Award from the Social Exposome Cluster (2021)
- Early Career Travel Grant from the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (2022)

MORE:

Dr. Alejandra Wiedeman’s study on choline nutrition in North American toddlers

<https://bcchr.ca/research/stories/we-have-lot-learn-about-choline-study-shows-toddlers-may-not-be-getting-enough>

References

Wiedeman, A. M., Dhillon, A. K., Wu, B. T., Innis, S. M., Elango, R., & Devlin, A. M. (2023). Children Aged 5–6 Years in Vancouver, Canada Meet Dietary Recommendations for Folate and Vitamin B12 but not Choline. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 153(1), 197-207.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Sylvia Wu, Senior Manager, Education, Department of Pediatrics, UBC & BCCH

Ms. Sylvia Wu has been with the Department of Pediatrics since 2006. She is well-known for her exceptional leadership, empathy

and business acumen. As a leader, she prioritizes professional development, mentorship and learning activities for her staff; she has been instrumental in shaping educational policies; and she has been instrumental in expanding both our undergraduate and postgraduate programs across 19 highly diversified medical training programs.

Exemplifying unwavering dedication to her team, Ms. Wu champions the professional growth of our administrative staff so that her team can reach their best potential. She is known by her peers for creating a supportive environment for her team to thrive by providing invaluable mentorship and support. Her caring and generosity also extends to the trainees in our residency program. Her commitment to nurturing their growth has positively contributed to the education of the next generation of skilled healthcare professionals, which in turn has positively impacted patient care in our department and beyond.

Ms. Wu has also long been involved in various committees within the UBC Faculty of Medicine and nationally. Her guidance and experience have influenced educational policies, initiatives, and medical education standards nation-wide and ultimately elevating our trainees' experience and improving the healthcare standards for children in Canada.

Outside of work, Ms. Wu takes great pride in her many roles as a mother, wife, mentor, epicure and student. She is currently enrolled in the Executive MBA, Business Administration and Management program at the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University. We wish her all the best in completing the program and we celebrate her accomplishments for International Women's Day!