

\$5-million donation powers UBC plan

Construction on Phase 1 of sports medicine building scheduled to start in December

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The University of B.C. will go ahead with plans to build a new \$19-million sports medicine building thanks to a \$5-million donation from Dr. Chan Gunn, a Vancouver physician who pioneered a way to alleviate pain from nerve damage.

UBC says Gunn's gift will help construct Phase 1 of the building, which is budgeted to cost just over \$7 million. The rest of the funding will come from the university and smaller donations. The centre will be devoted to sports medicine teaching and patient care. UBC is in the process of reviewing designs from several architectural firms and construction is scheduled to begin in December.

Phase 2 will add more space for labs and research and is estimated to cost around \$12 million, although there is no timeline for construction since it will be contingent on raising further funds.

The 13,480-square-foot Phase 1 building will be named the Chan Gunn Pavilion and will replace the current Allan McGavin Sports Medicine Clinic at a different location on campus, next to the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre on Wesbrook Mall, said Michael Koehle, a physician and professor of sports medicine at UBC.

Mould and a crumbling roof plague the aging clinic, Koehle said. It has been located in the middle of UBC's athletic fields for the past 35 years. It was started by pioneers in sports medicine Jack Taunton and Doug Clement (also founders of The Vancouver Sun Run) and was the first academic sports medicine clinic in Canada. It will be torn down this summer to make way for the National Soccer Development Centre.

"It originally started in Richmond in the late 1970s and then



JENELLE SCHNEIDER/PNG
Dr. Chan Gunn, right, describes his IMS technique, which is used to treat pain, with physiotherapist Andrea Weir on Wednesday. Gunn has donated \$5 million to the University of British Columbia, which will go toward the construction of a new sports medicine building.

they moved to a trailer on campus," Koehle said.

He said the majority of patients treated at the centre are dealing with common ailments from exercising such as sore knees and hips.

"We have less of a high-performance focus (than Fortius Sport and Health) and more kind of exercise and health promotion," he said.

Gunn and his wife Peggy made the gift in recognition of UBC's efforts to study intramuscular stimulation. IMS is a non-surgical non-pharmaceutical technique developed by Gunn for alleviating pain resulting from

nerve damage.

UBC describes IMS as a blend of acupuncture and western medicine that involves inserting a needle deep into muscle, causing it to relax and relieve pressure on pain-causing nerves.

"Having a connection to UBC is very important for teaching and research into IMS," Gunn said, in a statement Wednesday. "IMS will have a permanent home to grow."

Koehle said physiotherapists at Allan McGavin have been using IMS for the past decade, and they co-ordinate the teaching of the method to clinics around the world.

Gunn and his wife immigrated to Canada from Malaysia in 1966. He worked as a staff physician at the Workers' Compensation Board in Vancouver, where he began to study chronic non-injury pain. He then founded ISTOP — the Institute for the Study and Treatment of Pain — which is a non-profit organization in Vancouver dedicated to research, treatment, training and education in chronic pain.

This is the second large donation from the Gunn family. In 2011, they donated \$1 million to UBC to create an IMS training program, an IMS research fund for graduate and undergraduate

students, and an annual lecture focusing on IMS and pain caused by nerve damage.

Gunn says IMS can help people with pain in their back, neck, arms and legs, or those suffering from headaches or neuralgia, which includes extreme skin sensitivity. Most patients need just a few treatments.

According to UBC, there are about 160 physiotherapists and physicians practicing IMS in B.C.

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