Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium visits university
Cumming School of Medicine, Ward of the 21st Century host delegation

A visit by royalty

The University of Calgary was honoured to host royalty on Oct. 29 in the Cumming School of Medicine and its Ward of the 21st Century (W21C). Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium and more than 30 delegates were welcomed to the W21C by Board of Governors Chair Bonnie DuPont, Provost Dru Marshall, and Dean Jon Meddings.

Princess Astrid led a trade mission touring western Canada with stops in Calgary and Vancouver, hoping to grow economic ties between the European country and Alberta. She has a special interest in the active fight against epidemics and pandemics, including malaria and the Ebola virus.

W21C presented one of their recent research initiatives, A Human Factors Evaluation of Simulated Ebola Patient Scenarios. In partnership with Alberta Health Services, researchers identified numerous opportunities for reducing health-care workers’ risk of contracting Ebola while caring for Ebola virus disease patients. Since the recent outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa was the largest and most complex outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976, this research was timely. This work — which could potentially be generalized to other regions or non-airborne infectious diseases — provided the local health authority with timely, directly applicable quality improvement feedback.

Dr. John Conly, medical director, Jill de Grood, director, and Greg Hallihan, Human Factors Program manager, all from the W21C, presented the research and demonstrated how this research could affect system design not just in Alberta, but also in other health-care sites across the globe, in order to manage these potential risk factors in the future.

“Collaboration is the backbone of the research that takes place at W21C,” says Dean Meddings, Cumming School of Medicine. “We succeed and create better health care because of amazing partnerships between the university, Alberta Health Services, the province, and people in the Calgary community that together support world-class research. It is all of these parts working together that make the University of Calgary a global leader in applied health research.”

“It was an honour to welcome Her Royal Highness, Princess Astrid of Belgium and her special delegation to the University of Calgary and the Cumming School of Medicine,” says DuPont. “The exciting examples of health research and innovation showcased during the visit to the W21C helped demonstrate some of the great achievements accomplished by the talented members of our university community.”