Royal City Men's Club
General Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 28th, 2026
Ron East – Secretary

Meeting opened at 9:50 AM, Warren Gregg, President, presiding.

Number of members present: 63

Questions will be organized by the Chair of the meeting.

Activities Committee – Chair Ken Marchant

AGM will take place on June 11th, starting at 9:30 AM

Coming up: Tour of Airport, a Play, Tour de Guelph

Membership Committee Chair Martin Alderwick

Guest: Godfrey ?

Introduction of our Speaker – Richard Rivkin – Vice-President

Speaker: Dr. Emma Allen-Vercoe

Bio: Emma obtained her BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry from the University of London, and her PhD in Molecular Microbiology through an industrial partnership with Public Health England. Emma started her faculty career at the University of Calgary in 2005, with a Fellow-to-Faculty transition award through CAG/AstraZeneca and CIHR, to study the normal microbes of the human gut. In particular, she was among the few that focused on trying to culture these 'unculturable' microbes in order to better understand their biology. To do this, she developed a model gut system to emulate the conditions of the human gut and allow communities of microbes to grow together, as they do naturally. Emma moved her lab to the University of Guelph in late 2007, where she is currently in the second term of her Tier 1 Canada Research Chair on the study of human gut microbes. She is the beneficiary of multiple awards from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the latest of these has allowed her to set up a specialist microbiome culture centre that is now accessed as a research facility by scientists from across the world, despite only being set up in mid 2025. Emma's research covers many areas that all encompass the microbes that populate the bodies of humans and animals (including insects), through the lens of understanding why these microbes are threatened, and what we can do about it. Emma lives in Guelph with her husband, younger not-quite-fledged-yet daughter, 2 spoiled cats and many trillions of microbes.

Presentation: Missing Gut Microbes from the Amazon Jungle

The human gut microbiome is a microbial ecosystem that teems with life and

serves as the foundation for our health. We have long recognised that the more microbial diversity that you have in your gut, the more likely it is that you will be healthy; in contrast, a poorly diverse gut microbiota is associated with many chronic disease states including cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, depression and anxiety, Parkinson's disease, dementia and many others. With this in mind, it is concerning that our lifestyles in the industrialised world have been steadily eroding our gut microbial diversity for decades. While we can't go back in time to look at our microbiomes before the advent of industrialisation, we can study the few remaining populations in the world that continue to live a traditional, subsistence lifestyle. These people, such as the Hadza of Tanzania and the Yanomami of the Amazon have been shown to have remarkably diverse gut microbiomes, along with remarkably low incidences of chronic diseases. In this talk I will share with you our work to characterise the gut microbiome of the Yanomami people of Venezuela, to find our 'missing' gut microbes.

30 trillion human cells, 39 trillion bacterial cells in human body.

Microbial cells – establish a microbe equilibrium – delicate.

Archaea – ancient bacteria

Viruses – in the gut

Ecosystem biodiversity: high diversity in aboriginal groups, low diversity in industrialized groups – being eroded?

Hypothesis: loss of compounds over generations – being exacerbated by diet, environment – are we losing faster than we are gaining?

Microbes come from contact with our environment and from other people

Antibiotics kill much more than toxic microbes – collateral damage extensive.

Indigenous groups have a very high gut microbial diversity – this has been degraded by urbanization

Non-industrial societies have a high incidence of infectious diseases and low metabolic, cardiovascular incidence of chronic diseases (i.e. diabetes, heart disease, cancers)

Industialized World – high incidence of metabolic, cardiovascular diseases

Difficult to study – so many variables – analyzing DNA.

Dr. David Good – book "Mother Indigenous" – started Yanomami Foundation

Do missing microbes contribute to poorer health? Effect of stressors on health?

Creating a microbiome atlas (A.I.)

Is diet a principle driver?

Some microbes go 'extinct' – a window into our ancestry

Dietary changes have a major effect

Taking probiotics has very little effect

Questions

Meeting adjourned at 11:05AM