VIEW to the U transcribed
Season 6: Adventures in Podcasting; Episode #4
Professor David Samson
Department of Anthropology – U of T Mississauga

[intro music fades in and out]

David Samson (DS):

I climbed up, it was 13, 14 meters. This one I remember I had to really scale out on that branch. It was about, I would say, seven, eight feet out from the main trunk of the tree.

I am David Samson. I am an assistant professor in evolutionary anthropology in the anthropology department.

I was scaling that branch and as I got there, I noticed that the chimp nest looked different than what I was used to. I get there and I'm like, "Well, it took me an hour to get up here. I'm going to start measuring this thing," and as soon as I poke it with a measuring stick, fire ants just start clasping onto it. I mean, within 10 seconds, they were already crawling up my sleeves into my torso and I desperately was trying to get this data measured while getting bit by a score of fire ants.

[theme music fades in]

Carla DeMarco (CD): Settling in for a long winter's nap.

Hello and welcome to *VIEW to the U*: An eye on UTM research. I'm Carla DeMarco at U of T Mississauga. VIEW to the U is a monthly podcast that will feature UTM faculty members from a range of disciplines who will illuminate some of the inner workings of the science labs, and enlighten the social sciences and humanities hubs at UTM.

On this short day's journey into night – coming just in time for the winter solstice, I chat with Professor **David Samson** on this edition of *VIEW to the U*.

On this episode, David talks about his evolutionary biology research in UTM's Department of Anthropology and, along with his adventures in research for this season of the podcast, he shares his stories that vividly illustrate studies are not always conducted in a lab and that researchers are sometimes literally 'going out on a limb' for their findings!

He also lets us in on the details of the "candlelight challenge," as well as his top tips for a good night's sleep, based on his extensive research into understanding sleep, sleep disorders and the health implications of sleep deficiency.

He also has some great recommendations for reading, listening, and gaming for anyone looking for thoughtful diversions in the months to come.

[theme music fades out]

David Samson is an Assistant Professor at U of T Mississauga. His work has demonstrated human sleep has a unique evolutionary history distinct from other primates.

A true champion of science communication and public outreach, along with agreeing to take part in this podcast, David has been featured on a number of international podcasts, as well as on many media resources – on the radio, in newspapers, and on TV – including *CTV News*, *World News Radio*, CBC radio, *The New York Times*, *GQ Magazine*, and *TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin*.

He completed his undergraduate studies and PhD at Indiana University in Biological Anthropology.

Prior to joining the faculty at UofT, David was a Senior Research Scientist as well as a Postdoctoral Associate at Duke University, and a Visiting Professor of Anthropology at University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

He joined the faculty at UTM in 2017.

DS: The core of my research really is looking at human uniqueness and the evolution of human uniqueness. There are a variety of traits for which humans are exceptionally unique relative to other animals, especially when we look at them comparatively, particularly looking at other primates and humans within that context. The particular topic that I'm interested in is sleep and the evolution of human cognition. That's what I've been exploring for the past half-decade or so.

CD: As you mentioned, you focus on some of the intricacies of sleep for your research. Everyone's talking about sleep these days, but what can we do to create the most ideal conditions and get the best sleep when we're all grappling with the current pandemic situation and people are stressed? What would be your top tips?

DS: It's been timely because I am teaching my 400-level course on sleep and human evolution and performance and how to basically leverage our sleep physiology to improve our performance on a day-to-day basis. I think this is so critical today because we know that sleep, it underpins everything, including cognition, our ability to process information, but not only that, it also underpins our immune system, and that's, of course, a primary concern today, given the pandemic.

The challenge I have for my students in my 400-level course is something I call the "candlelight study" or the "candlelight challenge." What we do is we actually put Oura rings on them, they measure their sleep and circadian rhythms, as well as actigraphy watches to be able to measure sleep outside of the lab. I have the experimental group and the control group do completely different things. What the experimental group is doing in the candlelight challenge is basically completely renovating their sleep hygiene and their

light hygiene with the goal of amplifying their circadian rhythm and improving their sleep quality.

DS: The beauty is that any of the listeners to this podcast can also take some easy steps to inch their way towards something like what they're doing in the candlelight study, but if you have the courage to do so, I encourage everyone to actually try a week or two of the candlelight challenge, where you're focusing on two things. For example, light hygiene is absolutely critical. This is particularly important because in the cultural West, in the global North, we live very buffered lives. You and I are speaking right now in a place that is light-regulated and temperature-regulated. It turns out these are the two circadian drivers for sleep-wake activity, light and temperature. If we were living the way our paleolithic ancestors lived, we would have a continuous exposure to changes in light and temperature. These things are obviously regulated and modulated by season, and so we would have this natural not only daily rhythm, but we'd also have a seasonal rhythm and an annual rhythm to all these things that are just intimately tied to our circadian physiology and our evolved physiology.

DS: With light hygiene, one way to get a little bit closer to the source to be able to cue in our ancestral evolved mechanisms is to get at least 30 minutes of light outside every day, even when it's cold or even when it's crappy, find a way to get out and get some exposure. I like to do this over lunch, so I'll usually eat my lunch outside in the sun if I can, but at the very least, what I'm doing is I'm queuing my body's, there's about eight different clocks besides the core clock in your brain, which is called the "SCN," the suprachiasmatic nucleus, but different organs in your body, your skin cells and particularly the organs linked to metabolism all have clocks, so getting outside is key.

I also wake up every morning and the very first thing I do is I go out barefoot. It doesn't matter if there's snow on the ground, I go out barefoot and actually just spend a minute out there just to cue my body to the fact that this is what it's like outside. Just engaging the outside, both temperature and light, is supercritical, notwithstanding the fact that vitamin D has been demonstrated empirically to be one of the most important protective agents against COVID or very serious long-term COVID symptoms, so vitamin D, absolutely critical. It turns out that if you're a population that doesn't get a lot of vitamin D, or particularly important for Canadians with higher melanin content, if your skin's darker, it's going to be harder to get vitamin D, so it's a really critical supplement because vitamin D is going to be one of the best defenses for your immune system. Again, light. I'm just hammering, hammering light. Get that light during the day.

Then as soon as the sun goes down, what you want to do is you want to avoid blue-wave light. We have set minefields of blue-wave light in our environments in the 21st century. We've got cell phones, we've got giant LCD screens just bombarding our retina with blue-wave light. The reason why this is bad is because blue-wave light actually inhibits the production of melatonin. Melatonin is the principal hormone that drives sleep-wake activity, so an hour before bed, certainly, I recommend that you put away your cell phone and this is easier said than done, but it will make a really big difference, put away your cell phone.

DS: When I go to sleep, I don't have my cell phone within reach. It's just having that deterrent of it being across the room is going to keep me from grabbing just to instinctually check my social media or check the news. It's so easy for us to do today because there's so much news-worthy events going on in the world, but that's why it's particularly important that we get it out of reach because many of the listeners probably know there are billion-dollar corporations trying to capture our attention in very clever ways that make us sort of addicted to the phone. That's particularly bad for your sleep, notwithstanding the fact that also, if you're continuously reading content that is stressful or engaging the emotional parts of your brain, you're entering a completely different axis of things that are going to interfere with your ability to sleep, not just melatonin, but also, you're going to be raising cortisol and your acetylcholine to motivate you to shift your behavior to activity is going to disrupt your ability to fall asleep, too, so again, light hygiene is so, so critical.

One really cool trick for this is to put on blue-wave-blocking glasses at night. I basically do this three hours before bed. When I'm really phase-advanced, where I'm trying to wake up pretty early, I'll do this as soon as it gets dark outside and I will navigate using only the core lights in my house that I have to have. I don't have every light on at all times. That's light hygiene. That's the core pillar and principles behind light hygiene.

Then, of course, the listeners may be more familiar with sleep hygiene. You want to have a sleeping environment that is really devoid of stimulus, if you can. 18 to 20 degrees Celsius has been shown to be the range and the mean that most people find optimally comfortable at night. You do not want to drink any caffeine after noon. Caffeine has a bizarrely long half-life, so even if you think "It's 2:00 PM. I'll drink it now, I'll be fine before I go to bed," that half-life is really long and there will still be stuff in your system as you're going to bed, which could interfere. Different people have different sensitivities, but the average half-life is pretty extreme.

Then of course, if you can avoid having a TV in your room where you fall asleep, leave that for the social area, right? Have the TV be in a place that is already associated with activity. Don't put it in your room. You're just asking for disruption in your sleep. That's the basics to sleep hygiene: Have a good routine, a consistent routine, and consistency is king. You want to go to bed at the same time, you want to wake up around the same time. Particularly, for circadian amplification, this even involves the timing of your meals.

This is actually, this is one of the things that I've been really focusing on recently is realize that there's an emerging science on showing how critical circadian rhythms are to your metabolism, so the trick here is to do a simple calculation: n minus three hours before bed. You want to have that last bite of food and I'm talking the last calorie consumed, so that means a small piece of chocolate before bed is a no-go because you need actual quiescence of the metabolism for the timing to really sink in, so no calories consumed. That includes wine, beer, all that stuff that is calorically dense. No calories consumed three hours before bed. That's one of the most powerful hacks you can actually have. Also, if you're flying across time zones, if you want to be able to cue in your body, it's not just taking a melatonin and trying to stay up, it's also timing your food and your

food intake while you're traveling that is one of the best ways to make your body think that, "Okay, this is actually what's going on," so consistency is key there.

DS: Here's another cool one: vices. We all have them and for almost all of our vices, there's an optimal time during the 24-hour period where your body can just handle your vice better. This is almost always the case that it's during the day and during the midpoint of the day, where for example, if you're going to eat really sugary food, it's probably best to do it when you have peak insulin production, right, which is during the day, this is on a circadian rhythm.

Waking up in the middle of the night to get a sugary snack is literally the worst possible thing you can do. If you were to hook yourself up to something that would measure your heart rate or your heart rate variability, you would literally see that a beer before bed or sweets before bed will skyrocket your heart rate through the night. Then you wake up and you're like, "Ah, I just don't feel as rested." Well, I know why: Your body has been processing. Instead of doing all the restorative functions of what sleep does, it's processing the toxins that you put into it before bed, and it's hitting the window when it's least able to actually do anything about it, so what I coach people to do is any of their vices, booze, become a day drinker, right? Video games, don't play competitive online video games with your buddies at 4:00 in the morning. Video gamers are some of the worst sleeping cohorts in the world. In the modern global North, they have some of the shortest total sleep durations of all, which is not good. It's not going to be good for your ability to game either, right? You're going to be gaming pretty poorly if you're a competitive gamer.

That's the core of the candlelight challenge. That might sound like a lot of stuff, and it might sound overwhelming to a lot of the listeners, but you could just implement a couple of these steps and practice a few of these behaviors and make slow, steady improvements over time and just track how you begin to feel. During the day, track your cognition, track your mood, and I predict, and the science predicts, that you'll start feeling a lot better and a lot healthier because sleep underpins everything.

CD: I just wanted to pick up on two points that you mentioned, one of them being the caffeine one because I do find this interesting. I know there's a lot of studies that show how it can disrupt sleep, but I heard this really interesting interview with Michael Pollan, he's a well-known food guy, and he was working on his latest book and it was about coffee and caffeine and the history and all that stuff, but he said he gave up caffeine, I think it was for like a month, but he said he got the best sleep of his life. He did go back to the coffee at the end because he loves it. He loves it for the taste, and he loves it for the ritual and all that stuff, but he said he slept like he did when he was a teenager and when he thought back, he's like, "I didn't drink coffee when I was a teenager," but he said he got very restful sleep and better duration.

DS: Well, that's fascinating. Just two thoughts on that. First of all, we should always take a quarterly break, week-long break from caffeine, especially for addicts. Caffeine starts losing its efficacy because in that synaptic junction, you've got a lot of adenosine in there

and it takes a long time for it to really clear out, so if we want caffeine to have an effect, once every quarter, four times a year, we should take a week-long break from coffee period, just to clear out our synaptic space and remind ourselves what it's like to be not addicted to a substance. But I love caffeine for the exact same reason. I love coffee. I have an espresso maker and I have been getting into the whole barista game. It's almost like it's a hobby at this point. I really do love it, but now I know the science on this. I've restricted all coffee use to before noon and really between the hours of 8:00 and 10:00 or 11:00 and I've noticed a big difference.

CD: Yeah. I was going to say, I mean, I'm also a big coffee drinker, but I really watched it yesterday. I don't know why, I was just like, I do usually switch to tea in the afternoon, anyway, but I made sure I didn't have any caffeinated tea. Then I left my phone off, I powered it off, because usually, my bad habit is, and you were talking about devices, but I sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and I'm not scrolling on my phone, but I'll put on a podcast just to... There's all these podcasts that have these soothing stories that will lull you back to sleep.

DS: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

CD: So, I'll use it in that way, but I know like you were saying about the light, it's probably not doing me any favors.

DS: Well, I mean, being read a story is way better than watching a stimulating movie before bed, for sure. I think that's really not bad. Also, while listening to stories or listening to podcasts, you can shut your eyes, which is also critical. There are now apps that block blue-wave light on your screen, if it's something that you truly enjoy and it does facilitate the routine of breaking down the day and listening to a podcast. I did this for a period of time when I got into Dan Carlin's Hardcore History and he has these sprawling epics that are like 10 hours long and they're really engaging, they're just also the perfect way to wind down a day and to fall asleep. It's like 10 minutes where I'm listening and then I really feel the urge to just shut it off and just pass out.

CD: Yeah, because you can put things on sleep timer, too, which is what I was thinking.

DS: Exactly.

CD: It's just like, 20 minutes, I know I'm going to go back to sleep. But the other thing I was going to ask you was I know on my phone, I can put, like you were mentioning, if you're avoiding the blue lights, though, if you've got that light on your phone that makes it go into night mode, then that's okay?

DS: That's much better. It is much better.

CD: Okay, that was the other thing I wanted to ask you about.

DS: The key rule of thumb here is you want warm tones. Anything that resembles firelight and you're pretty good. Red light, totally fine. In my sleep space, in our room, I actually have all the light bulbs that are the nightstand light bulbs, they're all very warm, like 2000 Kelvin. Very warm light and very low power, just enough to be able to see what you're doing, if you need to grab something or whatever.

CD: I mentioned that this season of the podcast is adventures in research. I guess when I was thinking about this, a lot of us are sidelined at home. Let's hear a story, and so I know you've done a lot of research around the world and you've been in Africa, all these places. I thought you probably have some interesting stories to tell, so...

DS: I have a couple. Yeah.

CD: What's your story?

DS: A story? Well, since we're talking about sleep, I can just give just a brief background of what really motivated me in graduate school to be interested in sleep in the first place and the evolution of sleep and then I can tell a story that is a direct result of that. In graduate school, my doctoral supervisor was Kevin Hunt at Indiana University. He's ran a wild chimpanzee site at the Toro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve in Uganda since the mid-'90s, and so for my dissertation work, I flew out there.

DS: What I was interested in looking at, and this was truly the gateway into my interest in the evolution of sleep, because I was not interested in sleep going into graduate school, but the gateway was realizing that when we look at a universal material culture of great apes, they build sleeping platforms. Essentially, they are arboreal tree beds. No other monkeys do this, even if they're big-bodied or big-brained. Even closely related gibbons that are lesser apes don't do this as well, so I was really curious about why apes, including humans, are really unique in that they like to build beds.

The one thing that apes do is, and particularly the chimps that Semliki, is they have a type of tree species that they really like to use to build these beds, and so I thought it was the perfect opportunity to really get into the mind of a chimpanzee and figure out why they were selecting this tree over others and thereby uncovering what the functional benefits of sleep are for apes. It was multi-layered and that justified me going out to Africa and climbing about, I think in all for my dissertation, I climbed about 72 Cynometra alexandri trees, sometimes up to 20 meters high, so we're talking like 60, 65, 70 feet. The tallest climb I did was 22 meters. It was a Cola gigantea tree. It was, I mean, literally going out on a limb to get a hard-wrought datum. I say "datum" in the singular. It was like an hour or two of being able to even get up there using clog-ascending gear. I had to learn prusik knots and all this climbing technique and strategy and I had never climbed before at all.

Before I went to my very first field season in Africa, what I ended up doing was calling a local arborist in Bloomington, Indiana. The guy went out, 45 minutes, gave me some pointers, and taught me how to tie a prusik knot which would save my life in the event of a fall, that kind of thing. 45 minutes of training. Then I took all this gear I had basically

no exposure with no training with and experience and I flew out to Africa and I started this protocol, which was obviously, in hindsight, was really dumb. You have to be a pretty desperate graduate student to do this kind of work.

DS: I still remember the very first time I was out in the field. Kevin was there and three Ugandan Rangers, AK-47s on their back and everything out there because they legally have to be out there. It's pretty dangerous for a multitude of reasons beyond the scope of this particular anecdote. I have these things called "throw bags" that you line the thin rope that you're going to use to scale up the larger rope that's going to keep your body ascending in the tree. I had two or three of these throw bags that I brought with me. I still remember what the very first chimpanzee nest that I climbed looked like. It was a Cynometra alexandri about 12 meters high. You throw the throw bag into the tree because you got to get the line over the crotch of the tree so that you're anchored in and literally, the first half dozen throws, all my throw bags got caught in the tree. It was a downward spiral of psychological stability as I lost each bag. By the time I got the last bag, I was thinking, "If I lose this one, I flew halfway across the world for no reason and you're going to find out day one in the field." I threw that last bag and it gets caught and I'm like, "What am I going to do now?"

As I'm just contemplating the existential crisis, Felix, who was the name of one of the Rangers, he throws off his gumboots and he literally scales the tree like you or I are walking down the sidewalk, like it was with that much ease. He got up there and he gets all the throw bags and he throws them down and then he comes down, big smile on his face, and everyone just starts laughing. He was like, "This crazy Mzungu is out here with like hundreds of dollars worth of equipment and you can just climb the tree, by the way," so at that point I was resolved to basically learn how to climb like a local. For any tree that was under 10 meters, I actually did that and it doubled my sample size because I could get the data much quicker. Now, safer, probably not so much, but at the very least, I was getting it quicker. Then anytime it was a pretty dangerous climb, I would use the clog-ascending gear, but that actually...

Speaking of danger, I'll just follow this one anecdote with another one. You never know what you're going to find up there, so I'd always scope it out with a pair of binoculars because there were really dangerous snakes out there, green Jameson mambas, one of the top poisonous venoms in the world in terms of snakes. Oftentimes, they would find a home in these old, abandoned chimp nests because they were kind of like these beautiful little places where organisms could hang out after the chimp no longer needed it, and so oftentimes, though, you would see something from the ground, it looks clear, but you wouldn't see what's really going on on the surface until you get up there.

One of my really tall climbs, I climbed up and this is when I was getting pretty experienced, so this was a point in my favor, otherwise, this would have probably ended up much worse. But I climbed up, it was 13, 14 meters. This one I remember, I had to really scale out on that branch. It was about, I would say seven, eight feet out from the main trunk of the tree. I was scaling that branch and as I got there, I noticed that the chimp nest looked a little bit odd. It looked different than what I was used to. It just

looked like there was a lot going on inside the nest. I get there and I'm like, "Well, it took me an hour to get up here. I'm going to start measuring this thing." As soon as I poke it with a measuring stick, fire ants just start clasping onto it and crawling. I mean, within 10 seconds, they were already crawling up my sleeves into my torso and I desperately was trying to get this data measured while getting bit by a score of fire ants.

DS: It was one of the rare nests I abandoned halfway through. I couldn't even take it anymore. It was just really dangerous because I was losing balance and I ended up basically just swinging back into the trunk of the tree and rappelling down super fast. My ranger was laughing a lot as I totally ripped clothes off and became indecent for a while. Those are some nest-related stories, anyway, from my chimp days.

CD: I assume the type of research, then, you're doing, I don't know if this is maybe by choice in that, you have to be really physically fit, then, to do this kind of work.

DS: Yeah, I would recommend being physically fit if you're going to climb a bunch of trees.

CD: At the beginning, when you said the way that the local was able to scale up the tree, no problem-

DS: Yeah. Unbelievable, yeah.

CD: ... maybe this is just a learned skill, but it's just like, I think you have to be so strong to be able to...

DS: Their technique was absolutely critical, but also, being in really decent physical health, I think, to be able to do it day in day out for, because it's a marathon. Day in, day out for half a year, field stints for several months, and it would be six days on, one day off, and even that one day off, I'd be working, I'd be doing data entry, or just basic things that you disregard during the week that you need to do to survive, like thatching above your tent and things like that, so 13 to 15 kilometers of hiking a day through an escarpment that's, if you think about it from the perspective of a chimpanzee, they can walk through the canopy. Say there's this massive valley, right? To get from one point of one side of the valley to the other, they just walk a straight line through the canopy. For us bipeds, we have to go down into the valley and then come up and for a semi-habituated chimp site, it was that all the time. It was, "Eh, you're kind of annoying. I am going to go to a different place." That place take them five minutes, but us an hour to get to, so it was a marathon of endurance.

CD: Well, and I'm thinking there's no having to plan for working out because your daily existence is the workout.

DS: No, some people when they go in for a month or two, they'll still keep up like the running or something in their off time. If you're there, though, in a prolonged field stint, every calorie is precious.

CD: Well, this is a silly question, but to me, this fire ant story sounds like it's very scary, but would you say that's when you were the most scared on one of your climbs or, I don't know, was there ever a time where you were just like, "Oh, this is just," you were scared?

DS: The confidence you gain after doing it a certain number of times, I'd say really, the first 10 I did, actually, were the scariest because I knew how ignorant I was and how little experience I had and somehow, through sheer luck, I survived the first 10 climbs and kind of got my bearings and then felt like I had some level of confidence in what the physics of it were all about, and so by the time... That's why I'm saying, it's lucky that it was one of the end times that I came into this fire-ant scenario because I was much more confident in quickly repelling down. If it had happened my third or fourth climb, that would have been serious. I could have fallen out of the tree limb and then hit my head on the side of the trunk and you're half a days ride to the closest "hospital," so I mean, it really was sketchy. It was dangerous, but yeah, I was lucky at the beginning, and then I had the experience to deal with any other times where it was riskier.

CD: Yeah. The other question I wanted to ask you, and I think that to an extent, some of the work you do, you're doing in a lab, but I've been asking people how they've been impacted by some of the shutdown. I imagine you're not traveling anytime soon, but how has some of the COVID and pandemic impacted your work?

DS: I would say significantly because a lot of my research project is related to the global analysis of sleep in small-scale societies, and so there are extra layers of concern. For example, I work with multiple indigenous groups and these are vulnerable populations and so there are extra considerations we have to take with respect to how we think through thoughtfully on how to continue research in the future. This is definitely the thing I'm still wrestling with because part of the coolness of this research is being able to go out into the field and meet new people in really awesome contexts, really awesome environments, and so we're having to shift gears a little bit for the near term to think about how to do a lot of this work remotely.

Fortunately, the bread and butter of my research methodologically as it pertains to field research is actigraphy-based, and so it's simply putting on a wristwatch, which we can make precautions to make sure that they're sterilized and clean and also send them into fields where research assistants who are already embedded in the community may facilitate the research. This might be good, for example, with the group we're working with in Alaska, the Yup'ik, because of COVID, the economy has been really hard-hit, and so with this grant money, it's also a good way to funnel resources into the community and not pose any risk to them by coming in personally. But it's still, there are things that need to be thought through in a level of detail that certainly is novel, so that's a big concern.

CD: My last question to you is, I know we're all busy with work, but what are some of the diversions when you need a break from work? Are there any books or podcasts or movies or shows or, I know you're a gamer, things that you're enjoying while we've been spending more time at home?

DS: Oh, I think I couldn't recommend Nicholas Christakis' *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society* any more than I can. I think it's a must-read for every homo sapien. I loved it. He runs the Human Nature Lab at Yale, I believe. His work is just, it's so bleeding edge, and it shows the arc of human goodness and prosociality exists. We need to be reminded that at our core, some of the things that are unique about our species are our level of prosociality and what are the universals behind that and how do we create a society that uplifts those few social instincts, right, as opposed to play to the worst of our capacity, which can be very great as well.

I think the answers to profound questions, like "How do you make a good society?" or "How do you reduce aggression and violence and war in our species?" the answers to that are evolutionary answers. If we don't understand what the hardware and how the hardware was made, we have no tools to be able to tackle these profound questions in the 21st century, so evolution is at the very core of where we're going to find the answers. This is a great book. I waxed a little bit long on that one, but it's a great book.

CD: Okay. You don't need to be an evolutionary biologist to be able ...? It's accessible to the average-

DS: It is accessible. Yeah, no it is a general science. I mean, it's intelligently written. It is accessible to everybody, for sure.

CD: ... Okay, okay. Good.

DS: Then I love Dr. Rhonda Patrick's podcast [FoundMyFitness]. She is a clinician, but she is like the Carl Sagan of health science. She communicates the latest. She distills what's going on in the clinical world in a way that so awesomely communicates the core of what we are discovering on how best to increase our wellbeing and health. She does it really, really well, so I couldn't recommend her podcast anymore.

CD: What's the name of it? Is it just Rhonda?

DS: Yeah, just look up "Dr. Rhonda Patrick" and then "podcast." I think she might have a name for it, but I just, yeah.

CD: Okay, okay, because whenever people mention these resources, I always make sure I put a link to them, want you to follow-up, yeah.

DS: For sure. If there's any topic on like diet or supplements or anything like this that comes up, COVID, she was on the Joe Rogan podcast recently because she had just released a podcast on COVID and that's where I've gotten most of my information about vitamin D and how critical it is, so I highly recommend her work.

In terms of video games, I've been on a Red Dead Redemption kick. I love the Wild West. Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry is one of my favorite books and Red Dead Redemption, it came out last year, but I'm always late to the game. I have a lot to do, so I

can't get the game as soon as it comes out, so maybe just some of my students are like, "Yeah, whatever, prof, I beat that game last year," but for us less on the pulse of the latest video game, Red Dead's awesome and it's fun to revisit, anyways.

CD: Nice. I'm going to follow-up on a couple of them. I'm not a gamer, so...

DS: Yep.

CD: Well, I just wanted to thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me. I know it's a busy time for everybody and I've wanted to get you on the podcast for a while, but this is finally the time and I'm so completely grateful.

DS: It was the right time, I think.

CD: Yeah. I'm very grateful.

DS: Oh, no. Thank you so much.

[theme music fades in]

CD: [outro]

I would like to thank everyone for listening to today's show.

I would especially like to thank my guest Professor David Samson from the Department of Anthropology at UTM, for being so generous with his time to tell me about his work and research adventures, and for his top tips for a better night's sleep. I know I am going to try some of them!

David works just down the hall from me in the Health Sciences Complex on the Mississauga campus, and so it's been a while since we've all been in our offices, but it was great to have the opportunity to chat again. His book, podcast and gaming recommendations will be on our website as well as the SoundCloud page.

I would like to thank the Office of the Vice-Principal, Research for their support. And a special welcome to our new Associate Vice-Principal Research, Professor Elpeth Brown in the Department of Historical Studies to the OVPR portfolio and for her words of encouragement.

For any UTM researchers who have a story to tell and would like to be featured on the podcast, please get in touch with me. I would love to hear your story.

Also, if you can take the time to rate the podcast in iTunes, it helps others find the show and hear more from our great UTM researchers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank a couple of people for recent developments.

First to Holly Zink, my mentor in the Society of Research Administrators International author fellowship program and her feedback about the article I have written all about podcasting in research that I have submitted to the Journal of Research Administration. Holly has been a beacon of optimism and guidance over the past ten months.

And recently I found out I was a recipient of UTM's Principal's Service Award for Excellence. I am truly honoured and humbled to receive this recognition, which I share with Lucy Gaspini in the Dean's office, and I sincerely thank my primary nominator and mensch Professor Andrea Olive, along with all those who supported, including Devin Kreuger, Ryan Cerrudo, Rong Wu, Maeve Doyle, Tara Fader, Nikki Robichaud, Donna Heslin, Ron Buliung, Tenley Conway, Yuhong He, Vincent Kuuire, and Kathi Wilson. I am so lucky to work with you all and so fortunate to work at UTM with researchers and colleagues who inspire me every day.

With this being the last VIEW to the U episode of 2020, I wish everyone out there the best for the holidays and new year, and following along with David's advice, a good night's sleep to us all and sweet dreams.

Lastly, and as always, thank you to Timmy Lane for his tracks and support.

Thank you!

[theme music fades out]