



The start of fall has been busy at CAMH. In this month's *BrainBuzz*, you'll see many new research highlights and successes, including recognitions for our researchers and recently announced grants. If you have any questions or feedback, please reach out at any time.

Bruce Pollock
VP Research, CAMH



Toronto Dementia Research Alliance finds new home and leadership at CAMH

The [Toronto Dementia Research Alliance \(TDRA\)](#) — a University of Toronto-led collaboration that includes four Toronto hospitals working together to better understand, prevent and treat dementia — has welcomed [Dr. Tarek Rajji](#) of CAMH as its new Executive Director, and moved its headquarters to CAMH.

"We are proud and excited to host the TDRA at CAMH," says Dr. Rajji, who is also Chief of the [Adult Neurodevelopment and Geriatric Psychiatry Division](#) at CAMH. "This closer relationship will advance research on the standardization of dementia assessments and care. We will also strengthen the ties with basic science, translational research, neuroinformatics, and drug development and brain stimulation innovations that are happening at CAMH and in the city."

Established in 2012, the TDRA is a collaboration between the University of Toronto, Baycrest, CAMH, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and University Health Network. Its mission is to embed research into care to improve the quality of life for people with dementia, promote prevention and early diagnosis, and advance the discovery of treatments for dementia across different ages and stages.

Dr. Rajji notes that through the TDRA, the neuroscience community continues to be a powerful partner towards dementia prevention, identification and care.

“An alliance like the TDRA is critical to bring diverse lines of research together for unexpected discoveries to tackle one of the biggest challenges of today’s society,” says Dr. Rajji.

Currently one of Canada’s preeminent dementia researchers, Dr. Rajji joined CAMH and the University of Toronto as a Research Fellow in Geriatric Psychiatry in 2006. He stayed at CAMH as a Clinician Scientist and has held several leadership roles, including Chief of Adult Neurodevelopment and Geriatric Psychiatry, and formerly Deputy Physician-in-Chief for Clinical Research. Dr. Rajji is actively involved in clinical dementia research, and is a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto.

Having started his tenure as TDRA Executive Director in early September during World Alzheimer’s Month, Dr. Rajji is looking forward to building on the TDRA’s previous work.

“Building on some great accomplishments over the past eight years, I am very excited to work closely with world-class dementia researchers in the city. Working together will unlock the power of collaboration among researchers, clinicians, patients, families and other partners,” says Dr. Rajji.

His appointment as Executive Director also means that the TDRA is now housed within CAMH Geriatric Psychiatry, a move that will strengthen dementia research and clinical care across Toronto.

CAMH scientist wins international prize for schizophrenia research

CAMH Clinician Scientist [Dr. Anne Bassett](#) is the 2020 winner of the [Lieber Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Schizophrenia Research](#) from the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation (BBRF) in the U.S. She is the second scientist in Canada to receive this recognition since the Lieber Prize was first awarded in 1987.

Dr. Bassett heads the Clinical Genetics Research Program and is a Clinician Scientist in the [Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute](#) at CAMH. She is also Senior Scientist at the Toronto General Hospital Research Institute, holds the Dalglish Chair at University Health Network, and is Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto.



Dr. Bassett will give a special presentation on October 30 as part of the BBRF's 2020 International Mental Health Research Virtual Symposium.

Transgender individuals more likely to have chronic health problems

Transgender individuals in Ontario are more likely to experience chronic health problems than the general population, according to a recent CAMH study [published in JAMA Network Open](#).

In the largest study of its kind ever conducted in Canada, 2,085 transgender individuals were identified using data from four outpatient clinics in three large Ontario cities, which were linked with administrative health data for the period between January 2012 and December 2016. [Dr. Alex Abramovich](#), Independent Scientist in [CAMH's Institute for Mental Health Policy Research](#), led the research.



Dr. Alex Abramovich speaking at the City of Toronto's ceremony marking the International Day Against

Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

Sociodemographic characteristics, health conditions and health service use, including physician visits, Emergency Department (ED) visits and hospitalizations, were examined and compared between transgender individuals and an age-matched cohort of the general population.

The study found that transgender individuals were more likely to have higher rates of a variety of health conditions, including asthma, COPD, diabetes and HIV, compared to the general population.

It found that the higher prevalence of these chronic health problems among transgender individuals existed despite the fact that they were more likely to see their primary care physician than the general population. Transgender individuals were also more likely to live in poorer neighbourhoods.

Of particular concern was the higher rates of ED visits and hospitalizations, primarily for mental health issues, including self-harm, even though all of the health clinics where the transgender patient data were collected specialized in transgender health.

"This study demonstrates the need to provide transgender competent and inclusive health care and the need to improve the capacity to identify transgender individuals in administrative health data, so that we can understand the factors underlying the high rates of disease burden," says Dr. Abramovich, who identifies as a transgender man.

The researchers also hope that this data will lead to a better understanding of how best to intervene to improve health outcomes among transgender individuals, who also face higher rates of mental health issues compared to the general population, as well as discrimination, stigma and violence.

Seven CAMH teams receive new CIHR grants

After delaying its major funding competition in the spring as a result of the pandemic, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) recently announced the awards in its Project Grant Spring 2020 competition. Seven CAMH initiatives received funding, nearly \$4.2 million in total.

Effectiveness of an integrated care pathway for adolescent depression: A pilot multi-site cluster randomized controlled trial

Principal Investigators (PIs): Dr. Darren Courtney

and Dr. Melanie Barwick (SickKids)
Amount: \$745,875, over 4 years

Identification of functional connectivity biomarkers of social cognition across schizophrenia and autism: A longitudinal and dimensional approach

PIs: Dr. Erin Dickie, Dr. Colin Hawco and Dr. Stephanie Ameis
Amount: \$566,101, over 4 years

Examining the effectiveness of a critical time intervention to stabilize trajectories out of homelessness for youth

PI: Dr. Sean Kidd
Amount: \$925,650, over 5 years

Targeting opioid neurotransmission in borderline personality disorder with self-harming behaviour: A [11C]NOP-1A positron emission tomography study

PI: Dr. Nathan Kolla
Amount: \$520,200, over 4 years

Understanding age at first autism health claim and acute health service use in girls and women relative to boys and men

PIs: Dr. Meng-Chuan Lai, Dr. Yona Lunskey and Dr. Hilary Brown (University of Toronto)
Amount: \$290,700, over 3 years

Alcohol consumption and change in blood pressure: Evidence synthesis of 24-hour trial data and modelling of intervention effects

PI: Dr. Michael Roerecke
Amount: \$120,000, over 2 years

Molecular imaging biomarkers of cognition in Parkinson's disease

PI: Dr. Antonio Strafella
Amount: \$1,013,626, over 5 years

Get In Touch!

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Our street name has changed!

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