



CEO Report to the Board

January 24, 2024



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Reaching Out to Our Community

Lower limb preservation program

A program to prevent amputations due to diabetes-related complications has launched at Atlohsa Family Health Services' Wiigiwaaminaan shelter at St. Joseph's Parkwood Institute. The program is dedicated to serving the First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals in the Middlesex-London region. It aims to address concerning rates of diabetes-related lower limb complications among Canada's Indigenous populations and a notably higher incidence of lower extremity amputations.

Led by Dr. Samantha Boshart, a family physician from the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the program advances culturally sensitive and accessible health care, providing a holistic approach focused on minimizing points of contact to meet the unique health needs of the Indigenous community. It targets individuals at risk of lower limb amputation, offering various care modes suited to individual preferences and needs, with the primary goal of establishing safe, trusting relationships to address lower limb health concerns openly. The Wiigiwaaminaan shelter at Parkwood Institute, meanwhile, offers a culturally safe environment.

The Lower Limb Preservation Project was created through an integrated services initiative led by the Middlesex London Ontario Health Team, working with numerous partner organizations, including St. Joseph's and London Health Sciences Centre.

A changemaker in reducing stigma

Biigajiiskaan: Indigenous Pathways to Mental Wellness co-delivered by St. Joseph's and Atlohsa Family Healing Services is featured in a guide aimed at reducing stigma embedded in the health care system that creates barriers to care for people living with mental health and/or substance use (MHSU) problems or illnesses. Created by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), the publication is titled [*Dismantling structural stigma in health care: An implementation guide to making real change for and with people living with mental health problems or illnesses and/or substance use concerns.*](#)

In August 2020, the MHCC issued a public call for expressions of interest to identify examples of innovative models of care, quality improvement initiatives, interventions, programs, policies, or practices related to reducing structural stigma. Specifically, it was looking for those that showed promise in improving access to and the quality of care for those living with MHSU problems or illnesses. Of 62 submissions received, Biigajiiskaan was one of six chosen to be highlighted in the guide. It is included in the "champions and changemakers" section of the toolkit and spotlighted throughout in examples of putting strategy into practice.

Warm jackets for cold winter months

At St. Joseph's, Security Services has acquired 12 used, warm jackets donated to the organization by Canada Post. This will allow the security guards to offer a jacket to any individual they encounter during their patrols who do not have a warm jacket to wear during the cold winter months. Environmental Services supported this initiative by laundering the jackets. This is a heart-warming collaboration by two St. Joseph's teams to help out the less fortunate in our community.

Improving access to geriatric care

St. Joseph's Regional Geriatric Program of Southwestern Ontario (RGPSWO) continues to advance strategies that improve access to geriatric care across our region. An exciting feasibility pilot began in July 2023 to trial a nurse practitioner (NP) care pathway for older adults in Oxford County. During the initial phase of the pilot, the NP worked alongside the existing geriatric resource nurse to provide consultative geriatric care within patients' homes in the community.

In collaboration with Alexandra Hospital Ingersoll (AHI), the pilot will expand beginning in mid-January with the opening of a designated ambulatory clinic space within AHI, creating more timely access to specialized geriatric care for older adults in Oxford County. The clinic will see patients who reside in the Oxford region and who have already been identified/referred as in need of geriatric services. Patients will be assessed in the most appropriate setting depending on individual need and reasons for referral, with the ultimate goal of offering services in the heart of Oxford County and minimizing the need for patients and families to travel to geriatric clinics in London. The pilot is expected to continue for approximately three months and will be evaluated for feasibility, benefits and challenges of the model.

Nourish Project – an update

As previously reported, St. Joseph's Nourish Project is continuing its groundbreaking work to address and find solutions around diverse issues related to health, food, community, and our impact on the environment. The initial two-year project was completed and the Nourish Project team is now one of five teams across Canada participating in a new, [two-year Nourish Anchor Cohort](#) that launched in September 2023. The following is an update on Nourish Project activities.

- **Refining goals and projects:** Based on the Nourish Project team's goals and focus for the next two years, the team developed the first iteration of its problem statement: "*There is a gap in resources to support access to sustainable, local, cultural and affordable food options for patients and the community. This disconnect between food and health creates pressures on health care, community and the planet.*" This will be used to refine goals and projects for the 2023-2025 cohort.
- **Nourish Inspiration Grant:** St. Joseph's Nourish team has received \$14,360 from Nourish Leadership to support making connections between food, health, social and ecological systems, understand the gaps, and develop relationships to help address those gaps. To start this work, next steps for the team include:
 - Deepening their understanding of food processing (including production, plant-forward menus and using local foods) by touring other health care settings. To date, this has included a tour of food services at Halton Healthcare in Oakville.
 - Connecting with local farmers who responded to St. Joseph's Request for Information to learn more about their operations and work on building possible partnerships. Three farm tours have been conducted and a menu special was trialed serving local mixed greens to gauge the operational considerations and patient/resident satisfaction.
 - Reaching out to partner organizations to engage in land-based learning. Team members recently toured the Oneida Nations' BUB'Z Dropin & Soup Kitchen to learn more about the Indigenous culture and community support.

Leading in Research and Innovation

St. Joseph's appoints Vice President, Research and Scientific Director

Dr. Lisa Porter is St. Joseph's new Vice President, Research and Scientific Director, effective February 20, 2024.

As the founding director of WE-SPARK Health Institute and a distinguished professor in biomedical sciences at the University of Windsor (U Windsor), Dr. Porter is highly regarded for her pioneering collaborations to unite academic and clinical research communities and grow and support multidisciplinary research. She has championed the establishment of a regional seed grant program, led advocacy efforts to support the growth and expansion of research infrastructure and implemented a foundational strategy for equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization. Passionate about engaging learners and the community in health research, Dr. Porter believes that making true progress against complex diseases requires unique collaborations and strong diversity of ideas and approaches.

Dr. Porter is a specialist in cancer biology and cell/molecular biology, with a research focus on unique mechanisms that cancer cells use to override cell cycle checkpoints. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Pharmacology, and a PhD in Medical Sciences from McMaster University. Having started her career as a Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) New Investigator, Dr. Porter has consistently held one or multiple CIHR grants over her 19-year career. In addition, she has been U Windsor's CIHR University Delegate (UD) for the past five years, is currently a member of the CIHR UD Advisory Committee and is on the Board of Directors for Research Canada.

As Vice President, Research and Scientific Director at St. Joseph's, Dr. Porter will build on the organization's robust and long-standing legacy of discovery and innovation and lead the organization's evolution and vision for research.

Microbiome linked to kidney stones

A new study from Lawson Health Research Institute and Western University published in the journal [Microbiome](#) has found changes in the microbiome in multiple locations in the body are linked to the formation of kidney stones. The research team examined the gut, urinary and salivary microbiomes in 83 patients who had kidney stones and compared them to 30 healthy controls. They found changes in all three microbiomes were linked to kidney stone formation.

While previous research has shown a connection between the gut microbiome and kidney stones in those who have taken antibiotics, the team wanted to explore the connection to other microbiomes to advance understanding and potential treatments. Study participants included patients who had formed kidney stones, had not had antibiotic exposure in the last 90 days and were having the stones removed surgically at St. Joseph's.

Kidney stones are most commonly formed from calcium oxalate, which is a waste product produced by the body. Historically, it was thought people with specific gut microbes, such as one bacterium called *Oxalobacter formigenes* that breaks down oxalate, were less likely to form kidney stones. The study, led by Dr. Jeremy Burton, Lawson scientist and Research Chair of Human Microbiome and Probiotics at St. Joseph's, suggests there are other factors. The team found those with kidney stones are not producing the same vitamins and useful metabolites, not only in the gut but also in the urinary tract and oral cavity. There was also evidence that those with kidney stones had been exposed to more antimicrobials as they had more antibiotic-resistant genes. Read more on [Lawson's website](#).

Leveraging technology

Next-generation 3D imaging guides surgeons' hands – a Canadian first

On December 22, 2023, Dr. George Athwal at St. Joseph's introduced the revolutionary next step in mixed reality technology that can track surgical instruments in real time and precisely point the way for surgeons. St. Joseph's is the first in Canada and one of two centres in the world to debut the technology. The other is the Mayo Clinic in the U.S.

As previously reported, Dr. Athwal, a surgeon with St. Joseph's Roth McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre, became a global pioneer in developing and using digital 3D imaging technologies as tools in shoulder replacement surgery three years ago when he performed Canada's first – and the world's second – shoulder replacement using Stryker's Blueprint® Digital Platform. The first generation of the futuristic system, which pairs stereotaxic (3D) technology with pre-operative planning software, allows a surgeon, wearing a special headset, to visualize and manipulate a digital rendering of the patient's anatomy and the shoulder implant to plan the surgery pre-operatively. The surgeon can park this 3D map in space as an interactive reference in the operating room. It appears similar to a floating hologram.

The newest version of the technology is the Stryker Blueprint® MR Guidance solution. Using the same digital headset with specialized instrumentation, Dr. Athwal can now overlay and match the 3D representation onto the patient's physical anatomy. Through a front-facing camera on the headset, the position and orientation of surgical instrumentation are tracked in the physical environment so imaging and guidance widgets can be displayed on the patient and in the surgeon's line of sight without disrupting the surgeon's normal workflow. The feedback in the heads-up display informs Dr. Athwal of where to position and orient his surgical instruments. The technology has been shown to enable surgical plan execution within two millimetres and two degrees of a preoperative plan. Read more on [St. Joseph's website](#).

Empowering people

Well-being initiatives embraced by staff

The following are updates – and uptake – on St. Joseph's enhanced commitment to staff, physician and volunteer well-being:

- **Healthy Living Series:** As previously reported, the Healthy Living Series was launched in November 2023 to provide staff, physicians, learners and volunteers with 30-minute interactive sessions covering various well-being topics. Subsequent to the initial presentation on Nutrition Basics, two additional sessions were recently held with approximately 100 people in attendance or viewing each session virtually. A session titled 'Ergo Strategies – Finding the Balance at Work' was presented in December 2023 by occupational therapist Susan Vuylsteke, and 'Exercise - the best way to get started' was presented in January by physiotherapist Jaro Pospiech. Both are members of the Occupational Health, Infection Safety and Employee Wellbeing team.
- **Visiting pets:** In partnership with Volunteer Services, pet visitation has been introduced giving staff, physicians, learners and volunteers the opportunity to experience the joy of spending time with a furry friend, accompanied by their dog handler. The session at St. Joseph's Hospital garnered much interest with more than 200 people coming out during the one-hour visit with two canine friends. There was a similar response for the session held at the Finch Family Mental Health Building with more than 90 people coming out to visit the two adorable dogs.
- **Onsite massage:** In partnership with Fanshawe College, St. Joseph's is offering onsite massage sessions. These drop-in sessions are approximately 10 minutes in length and free of charge. In addition to supporting the well-being of staff, physicians, learners and

volunteers, this partnership with Fanshawe supports St. Joseph's academic mandate, providing the students with valuable experience in their chosen field of practice. Students will be attending 12 rotating sessions across all sites between January and April 2024. To date, four sessions have been held and all available appointments were filled with 80 people receiving massages in the most recent session.

- **Enhancing the food and dining experience:** In upcoming, one-hour focus groups, staff, physicians and volunteers will be asked for their input on various food and nutrition topics including their food service preferences at St. Joseph's, overall dining experience and any potential food or dining changes they would like to see at the organization. This feedback will be used to determine possible changes and improvements of services offered to support healthy eating for people who work at or visit St. Joseph's.

Fostering enthusiasm for research

To highlight excellence in research underway by the nursing community in London and foster enthusiasm for research among St. Joseph's nurses, St. Joseph's Nursing Council hosted a new event – An Afternoon of Research. Held January 16, this empowering event brought together more than 50 nurses to connect, explore research opportunities and discuss the latest in health care research findings.

The afternoon featured presenters from Western University and St. Joseph's, who shared insights into various research topics, their personal journeys and highlighted the importance of nurses leading and participating in research. Research topics ranged from mental health, homelessness, health equity and nurse redeployment during the pandemic. Presenters included: Cheryl Forchuk (PhD), Interim Scientific Director of Parkwood Institute Research and Assistant Director of Lawson Health Research Institute; Victoria Smye (PhD), Director of the Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing at Western; and Amanda Thibeault, Director of the Complex Care Program at St. Joseph's.

The event was organized based on feedback from nurses across the organization expressing interest in research initiatives and how they can contribute and conduct nursing research at St. Joseph's.

2.0 Operational Updates

Ongoing COVID-19 and influenza monitoring

The Occupational Health and Infection Safety teams at St. Joseph's continue to support the clinical programs in monitoring cases and exposures of COVID-19, influenza and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) for physicians, staff, learners, and residents/patients. There were three declared COVID-19 outbreaks and one enteric outbreak in December 2023. There were no declared RSV or influenza outbreaks.

3.0 Recognition

St. Joseph's ranks 53rd among Canada's top employers

Forbes has once again recognized St. Joseph's as a leading Canadian employer, ranking the organization 53rd in its annual list of Canada's top 300 employers. This is a hefty jump from last year's ranking of 99th.

Among health care and social service organizations, St. Joseph's placed an impressive third, alongside Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

The Forbes list is based on a survey of Canadian companies and institutions with at least 500 employees. This year, more than 40,000 people were asked to rate their employer based on several criteria including salary, gender pay equity, work flexibility, opportunities for career growth and on-the-job training.

While this recognition shines a spotlight on St. Joseph's as an employer, it also reflects on St. Joseph's legacy of care and the commitment of our staff, physicians and volunteers to the patients and residents we serve.

A gift of dignity

Staff and leadership at St. Joseph's Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program (RSADVTP) are touched by and grateful for a meaningful donation from Joe Fresh to support those facing the turmoil of sexual assault. Numerous items of clothing donated by Joe Fresh means individuals who choose the option of forensic evidence collection by the RSADVTP team can leave St. Joseph's Hospital in new, appropriate clothing rather than a hospital gown or scrubs. The donation included clothing for women, men and children of all sizes.

In the collection of forensic evidence at the RSADVTP, clothing is often an important piece of the evidence. The wide variety of sizes and types of clothing donated will be a significant source of support for individuals seen within the RSADVTP, the only program in the region offering forensic evidence collection for victims of sexual assault.

The Joe Fresh gift comes at an opportune time. After the December-January holiday season, the RSADVTP traditionally sees a significant increase in people seeking care. Read more on [St. Joseph's website](#).

4.0 CEO Activity

Budget advocacy

Budget advocacy has become an essential task of hospital CEOs across the province. I have been engaged in such advocacy with London area Members of Parliament (MPP) to provide the Ontario Government with a local perspective on health system pressures, help amplify the pre-budget recommendations of the Ontario Hospital Association, and to discuss financial pressures for St. Joseph's specifically. Most recently – on January 19 – I, along with other members of the Senior Leadership Team, met with Terence Kernaghan, MPP, London North Centre, with meetings booked in the coming weeks with Robert Flack, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London, and Peggy Sattler, MPP, London West.

Board retreat – St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation

I was pleased to take part in St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation's Board of Directors retreat held January 12-13. The retreat focused on the fundamentals of governance and the board's goals – and readiness – for 2024.

The foundation Board of Directors is the separate governing board of St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation whose mission is to inspire community investment in health care excellence at St. Joseph's.

Canadian Club presentation

On January 24, I will join a panel of health care leaders in London in a presentation at the Canadian Club focused on health care in our region and the complex health care systems, organizations and teams that support our community. The other panelists are Dr. Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health at the Middlesex-London Health Unit, and Dr. Kevin Chan, Acting President and CEO, London Health Sciences Centre. The discussion will focus on what's new and exciting in health care today, where health care is headed, the importance of being involved in community initiatives, and the challenges we are facing as health care providers.

5.0 Federal/Provincial Updates

Ontario launches new Long-Term Care Home Investigations Unit

The Ontario government has created a [new Long-Term Care Investigations Unit](#) when escalated enforcement is needed to address the most serious forms of non-compliance. Supported by an investment of \$72.3 million, the new 10-person unit aims at improving compliance and accountability within the long-term care sector and ensuring resident safety. The new unit, which is now active, complements the existing inspection and enforcement program and will investigate allegations such as:

- failing to protect a resident from abuse or neglect
- repeated and ongoing non-compliance
- failing to comply with ministry inspectors' orders
- suppressing and/or falsifying mandatory reports
- negligence of corporate directors

The new unit's investigators are designated as Provincial Offences Officers under the Provincial Offences Act and will investigate allegations of offenses under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act. While inspectors identify and address non-compliance under the Act, investigators determine if there are grounds that an offence under the Act has been committed, which, if prosecuted, could result in fines and/or imprisonment.

Guidance released on spring COVID-19 boosters

On January 12, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization released [updated guidelines on the COVID-19 boosters for spring 2024](#). Starting in the spring, individuals who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may receive an additional dose of XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine, including: adults 65 years of age and older; adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors; and individuals six months of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. The XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccines continue to be the recommended products for unvaccinated and previously vaccinated individuals.

Enhanced oversight for community surgical and diagnostic centres

The Ontario government is proposing regulatory changes that would name [Accreditation Canada as the inspection body](#) responsible for ensuring the highest quality standards and strong oversight of more than 900 current and all future community surgical and diagnostic centres, effective April 1, 2024. Given its national leadership role in this type of work for more than 65 years, Accreditation Canada has been chosen to develop an enhanced oversight and quality assurance program for current and future community surgical and diagnostic centres that will have the same strong requirements as public hospitals. Over the coming weeks, the province will consult with health care sector partners, regulatory colleges representing providers, and patients and families on the development of the new oversight and quality assurance program.

Beginning in spring 2024, the government will also take the next step in expanding the number of community surgical and diagnostic centres licensed in the province to deliver additional OHIP insured services to people closer to home, including more MRI/CT scans, gastrointestinal endoscopies, and orthopedic surgeries.

6.0 St. Joseph's in the News

['I always buy, never expecting to win the grand prize': Mississauga couple wins Dream Lottery top prize](#), CTV London, December 20, 2023

[Winners of life-changing Dream Lottery speak out: 'It's kind of crazy'](#), London Free Press, December 20, 2023

[Lower limb preservation initiative for Indigenous people in London and Middlesex](#), Atlohsa Family Healing Services, December 22, 2023

[St. Joseph's medical breakthrough like 'laser-guided GPS' for surgery](#), London Free Press, January 10, 2024

[Meet the London police sergeant who helped open an advocacy centre for young crime victims](#), CBC London, January 11, 2024

[Rediscovering Life's Pleasures](#), Health System News (Ontario Hospital Association), January 2024

[Self-testing HIV kits available at Western University to help remove screening barriers](#), CBC London, January 12, 2024

7.0 Environmental Scan

[MAID expansion coming? 5 questions Canada's justice minister needs to consider](#), Global News, December 27, 2023

[Cancer society, gynecologists hope for national shift in cervical cancer screening](#), CTV News, January 10, 2024

[Most hospitals in financial distress, OHA warns: Some forced to take out high-interest bank loans, others tapping into reserves](#), Ottawa Citizen, January 12, 2024

[Federal government to provide funding to speed up credentialing of 6,600 internationally educated health professionals](#), CTV News, January 15, 2024

[Ontario's doctors want solutions for the health-care system in the next provincial budget](#), Ontario Medical Association, January 16, 2024

[Ontario moves ahead with expansion of private clinics to address surgical backlogs](#), Globe and Mail, January 17, 2024

[Number of dementia patients in Ontario has risen 48% since 2010, new data released by OMA shows](#), CBC News, January 18, 2024

[For millions of Canadians with long COVID, getting treatment is still a struggle](#), CBC News, January 19, 2024

[London Alzheimer's Society tries to keep up with rising dementia rates](#), CBC London, January 22, 2024

[Canadian study finds COVID measures were effective in reducing cases, hospitalizations, mortality rate](#), Global News, January 21, 2024