



To: St. Joseph's Board of Directors  
From: Dr. Gillian Kernaghan, President and CEO  
Date: May 23, 2018

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Representatives from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care visited St. Joseph's Hospital on April 27, 2018. I was joined by Vice President Karen Perkin and members of our Cardiac Rehabilitation and Secondary Prevention Program team to highlight: our new strategic plan and clinical priorities; opportunities for St. Joseph's to play a key role in innovation and evaluation of ambulatory and outreach care; innovations in cardiac rehabilitation and secondary prevention at St. Joseph's; and our goal to enhance regional support for this area of care. Those in attendance from the Ministry of Health were Melissa Farrell, Assistant Deputy Ministry, Health System Quality and Funding Division, and managers Hindy Ross and Mehul Mehta.

On May 2-4, I had the opportunity to attend the International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare, one of the world's largest conferences for health care professionals committed to improving patient care and safety. Held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, this year's forum focused on how we can overcome a tide of challenges, restrictions and bureaucracy that prevent us from being able to make meaningful change. The purpose was to examine and discover how we can reclaim quality in health care by making the best use of available resources, promoting innovation and working together to provide exceptional patient care. It was an excellent conference.

Then, on May 17, as Co-Chair of the Southwestern Academic Health Network (SWAHN) Secretariat, I led SWAHN's Network Contributors' Roundtable. This was a full day session exploring how we can work together to achieve our vision.

SWAHN brings together professionals, educators and researchers across all health disciplines to achieve extensive, sustainable and evidence-based health outcomes for communities and residents of Southwestern Ontario. SWAHN's mission is to improve the health of the region's population and to be a national leader in health care, education and research.

The purpose of the Network Contributors' Roundtable is to provide an opportunity for SWAHN contributors to network, engage in knowledge sharing, review the strategic plan and project progress, and set new project priorities.

## Strategic Plan 2018-2021

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### **Strategic Plan 2018-2021 – a communication update**

The rollout and visuals for the new Strategic Plan are planned for the end of May and early June. This will include the following:

- Leaders will be provided a toolkit in advance to help them engage their teams with the Strategic Plan.
- Internal and external audiences are being engaged through: CEO/vice president forums planned for the week of May 28; sessions with the internal Strategic Engagement Liaison Team, Lawson Health Research Institute and community partners who participated in the strategy hives; and presentations to the patient/resident/family councils.
- A micro website accessible via the intranet and the public website is being created and will launch May 23. Materials that can be downloaded from the website will include the full Strategic Plan, a brochure and a one-page summary.
- A social media campaign will launch May 23.
- Float mount boards will be installed at each site (replacing the previous Strategic Plan boards).
- ID badge cards featuring the key strategic priorities will be distributed to leaders on June 12, who will then distribute to staff and physicians.

## Reaching Out

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### **New interview room eases turmoil for victims of sexual assault**

Victims of sexual assault or human trafficking who choose to give a statement to police can now do so without leaving the supportive environment of the Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program (RSADVTP) at St. Joseph's Hospital. In an expanded partnership between St. Joseph's and the London Police Service, an interview room has been created within the comforting and calm setting of the RSADVTP that allows victims to provide a statement to police, if they choose to do so, without having to go to the station. London Police come to the individual rather than the individual to the police to reduce the trauma of sexual assault by limiting the number of times a victim has to recount their story.

Since March 2017, the RSADVTP team has been partnering with London Police's Human Trafficking Unit to provide initial examination, testing, and medical and psychological care for victims rescued by police. In this ongoing collaboration, the RSADVTP team is the first point of care for these individuals. The addition of the interview space further enhances support for those seeking care for sexual assault at the RSADVTP. Investigators from the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section or the Human Trafficking Unit can come to St. Joseph's, where the individual may be more comfortable, to conduct an on-camera interview with the victim.

The interview room was one of the features of the RSADVTP showcased at an open house at on May 10 to coincide with Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Read more on [St. Joseph's website](#).

### **Lawson Imaging attracts youth to medical research**

Donna Goldhawk, an imaging scientist at Lawson Health Research Institute, is providing a unique and valuable learning experience to senior high school students. Since 2009, she has accepted students to train in her hospital-based research laboratory at St. Joseph's Hospital in

partnership with secondary schools in the Thames Valley region. This unique academic co-op education program identifies high school students interested in health research and provides training in basic laboratory research, supporting these students in pursuing future placements in a health research environment. Youth learn that developing a scientific career is a process with many choices for fusing interests with a specific occupation. Read more on [Lawson's website](#).

### **DocTalks features Dr. Sandra Northcott**

As previously reported, DocTalks, hosted by St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation, is a series of community health discussions featuring leading physicians and researchers at St. Joseph's. The public is invited to learn from the experts how St. Joseph's is tackling the pressing health issues of our time and why it matters to them.

On May 24, Dr. Sandra Northcott, a psychiatrist and Site Chief of St. Joseph's mental health care programs, will be the featured DocTalks speaker. Dr. Northcott will share the warning signs and symptoms of suicide ideation and offer strategies to help individuals navigate this difficult topic with loved ones, especially with young adults.

### **A partnership with vision**

Ivey Eye Institute was a key partner in the Vision Quest London symposium held on April 28, 2018, at the London Public Library. Terry Kaban, Coordinator of the Ivey Eye Institute and a member of the London Advisory Committee for the Visually Impaired, helped organize the event with the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Ophthalmologists Dr. Tom Sheidow and Dr. Yiannis Iordanous were among the presenters at the event – an educational program that helps families and individuals learn how to live with vision loss.

## **Connecting Care**

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### **Phone calls to surgery patients after discharge – an update**

As previously reported, post-discharge calls to patients are underway in the Surgical Day Care Unit at St. Joseph's Hospital. This pilot project began in June 2017. The calls, which are made by a registered nurse to surgery patients, allow us to close the loop on patient care. As the hospital stay is short and patients are sent home with a lot of information, the calls focus on four main areas related to the patient's post-operative care: pain; nausea and vomiting; activity; and discharge instructions. By focusing on these four areas we can evaluate the information provided to patients upon discharge, determine if additional information is required or if changes are needed to the information. The patients are also asked about the quality of the care they received and areas for improvement.

Between January 1 and March 31, 2018, 218 patients were contacted and 159 completed the telephone survey (a response rate of 73 per cent). Of the respondents, 96 per cent rated their overall care at St. Joseph's as excellent or very good. Opportunities for improvement were also identified, including physician communication with the patient post-operatively and pain management.

## Our Finances

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### Behavioural Supports Ontario

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has recently made two key funding announcements that will positively impact the system for seniors care related to Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO):

- **New BSO long-term care investment:** The Ministry of Health will provide up to \$11.6 million in the 2018-2019 funding year for specialized staffing resources in the long-term care (LTC) home sector. This includes \$10 million of new base funding for the 2018-2019 year for BSO in LTC. Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) have been allocated a proportional share of this total funding to hire additional LTC BSO staff to provide direct services and interventions to LTC home residents with, or at risk for, responsive behaviours associated with dementia, complex mental health, substance use, and/or other neurological conditions. Inclusive in this mandate are LTC residents with age-related neurocognitive conditions (such as early onset dementia) and support for family and professional care partners.

LHINs have flexibility to allocate the new 2018-2019 funding to LTC licensees according to local staffing target needs. As such, BSO specialized staffing resources can include, but are not limited to, recreational therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, personal support workers, and/or social workers. In addition, LHINs can allocate up to two per cent of the new funding for the stabilization and retention of existing ministry-funded BSO LTC staffing resources. LHINs can also allocate up to five per cent to support training and development programs and services of all direct care LTC staff that provide services for the BSO target population.

- **Ontario Dementia Strategy Team:** As part of the government's 2018-2019 investment in Ontario's Dementia Strategy, the ministry has allocated \$10.48 million towards BSO community supports. The purpose of this funding is to support the development of new community-based, full-time employees to complement BSO services for people living in the community sector and the continuation and delivery of BSO cross-sector resources via central coordination office staffing.

As the lead organization for BSO in the region, St. Joseph's will be working closely with the LHIN over the coming months to support the funding allocation to ensure continued development of a robust system and that enhanced capacity and resources are coordinated to deliver care to this population.

## Innovating Together

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### Keeping it FRESH

In the Western Counties Wing at Parkwood Institute, a new initiative, called the FRESH Project, aims at improving the overall feel and functionality of the various spaces on 3 Kent/Essex and 4 Bruce/Elgin. Funded through St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation, the project focuses on improving the dining rooms, lounges and resident bedrooms for veterans in the Veterans Care Program. The goal is to update furnishings/lighting etc. and enhance the overall ambiance, making the units more home-like and inviting.

To move the project along, three working groups been created that includes participation of veterans, unit staff, Food and Nutrition Services, and Facilities Management. Four veterans are currently active members of the work groups. They will help shape the plans, be involved as furniture, fixtures and other items are selected, and generally ensure the changes are meeting the needs of residents. They will also be a link to the engagement of other residents.

### **Purr-fectly comforting**

Cats – a mechanical kind – have been introduced in the Veterans Care Program at Parkwood Institute and in Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care as a source of comfort for residents.

The life-like robot cats purr, breathe, interact with the environment, will reach out a paw etc. They have been shown to have a significant positive effect on the residents' mood and in reducing responsive behaviours. Residents can hug and hold the cat, brush its fur and otherwise interact with the mechanical feline – part of a calming and soothing non-pharmacological strategy in managing responsive behaviours with dementia. The cats are particularly helpful for residents who had cats as pets.

The Veterans Care Program has about five of the interactive cats purchased through the Care and Comfort Fund of St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation. With support pledged by the Royal Canadian Legion, the plan is to purchase more of the cats. Veterans Arts has made special collars with the feline's name and patient initials so staff know which cat belongs to which resident.

At Mount Hope, there are three cats living on the Special Care unit, where they are used for nurture therapy – a strategy to engage residents with behaviours such as wandering, restlessness and inability to connect with others. Humans have the instinct to nurture, which is not lost with a diagnosis of dementia. Nurture therapy is a successful non-pharmaceutical approach giving the resident a sense of purpose and comfort. The Mount Hope residents are enjoying many pleasurable interactions with the cats, which is making a noticeable difference in behaviour.

The Mount Hope cats were acquired through a foundation grant for nurture therapy.

### **A trial transition for youth**

Within the Parkwood Institute Mental Health Care Building, a rehabilitative apartment is available for inpatients to help them practice and engage in daily routines and activities required for safe and successful independent living. The apartment is also used to assess, in a safe environment, an individual's ability to return to an independent living setting and/or with caregiver support.

Recently, the apartment was used with an adolescent patient and family as part of transition planning to community discharge. The apartment was an opportunity for the young patient to engage in rehabilitative support with parents over a period from Friday afternoon through the weekend as a first step in the discharge plan and a bridge to introducing community-based leave of absence. Staff were available to check in on the patient and family and provide daily support.

It was the first time the apartment was used in this way. The home-like apartment allowed the family to spend quality time together, function autonomously with mental health support in the building if required, re-engage with their youth in a safe and supportive environment, and set the stage for the transition home. It was also an opportunity for the patient and family to practice the

skills of home management – tasks, routines and limit setting to maintain a healthy and safe living environment. As well, it provided an opportunity for the assessment/ monitoring of mental health needs within an environment that was home-like.

With the successful use of the apartment with this patient and family, the Adolescent Unit team plans to use it for other young patients and families. Additionally, the apartment can be used for transitional age youth whose discharge plan may include discharge to an independent living situation for the first time.

### **Planetary health through food and microbes**

On May 4, Lawson Health Research Institute and Western University hosted the 2018 Canada Gairdner Global Health Lecture and symposium, which focused on planetary health through food and microbes. Organized by Lawson scientist and renowned probiotics researcher Gregor Reid, the symposium covered dynamic areas of research that are collectively impacting society and human wellbeing. These include pollination, bioremediation, fermented foods, nutrition, and how microbes and their metabolites can confer a range of health benefits.

The Gairdner Global Health Lecture, “Food for 9.7 billion people,” was delivered by Rob Vos, Director of Markets, Trade and Institutions, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC. This lecture highlighted the key challenges facing today’s food systems and the implications of failing to address these challenges on the global burden of disease. The event concluded with an open forum and a reception featuring local fermented foods.

### **Researchers find gut microbiome plays an important role in atherosclerosis**

Researchers at Western University and Lawson Health Research Institute have shown a novel relationship between the intestinal microbiome and atherosclerosis, one of the major causes of heart attack and stroke. This was measured as the burden of plaque in the carotid arteries.

To understand the role that bacteria in the gut may play in atherosclerosis, the researchers examined blood levels of metabolic products of the intestinal microbiome. They studied a total of 316 people from three distinct groups of patients: those with about as much plaque as predicted by traditional risk factors; those who seem to be protected from atherosclerosis because they have high levels of traditional risk factors but normal arteries; and those with unexplained atherosclerosis who don’t have any traditional risk factors but still have high levels of plaque burden. They found that patients with unexplained atherosclerosis had significantly higher blood levels of these toxic metabolites that are produced by the intestinal bacteria.

The study, published in the journal *Atherosclerosis*, noted that these differences could not be explained by diet or kidney function, pointing to a difference in the make-up of their intestinal bacteria. The findings, and studies performed since, indicate an opportunity to use probiotics to counter the compounds in the gut and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Lawson scientist Gregor Reid, Director of the Canadian Research and Development Centre for Probiotics at St. Joseph’s Hospital, contributed to the study. Read more on [Lawson’s website](#).

## Leveraging Technology

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### **A first for London's hospitals**

St. Joseph's and London Health Sciences Centre recently became the first Cerner hospitals in Canada to implement a continuous upgrade of the electronic health record system during which there was no downtime for clinical users. The continuous upgrade eliminated potentially a six to eight-hour window of downtime.

Downtime places considerable stress on clinical users and clinical work flow is impacted. With a continuous upgrade, no additional clinical staff are required to support the continuous upgrade – always a pressure for clinical areas – and there are no workflow delays for patients as all systems to communicate patient results and orders function normally.

Overall, the upgrade went very smoothly and positive feedback has been received from clinicians and leaders at London's hospitals and the regional sites.

## Empowering People

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### **Keeping a green perspective**

St. Joseph's, in collaboration with our vendor Waste Management, has launched a new initiative to minimize the organization's impact on the environment. In a first-ever organics program, staff in St. Joseph's kitchens now separate organic waste, which is sent to Waste Management's processing facility where it's converted to garden compost. The anaerobic digestion technology used in the process also collects the methane gas and creates renewable energy that's sent to the power grid.

The organics program, which has been rolled out at Parkwood Institute and Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care, has diverted about 12 tonnes of organic waste from landfill since the beginning of the year. The program will come to St. Joseph's Hospital and Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care later this year.

In addition to organics, St. Joseph's also recycles plastics, metal and cardboard, diverting an average of about 25 per cent of the organization's waste from landfills. The goal is to increase waste diversion to between 30 and 35 per cent at all facilities. Southwest Centre is ahead of the curve, already recycling more than 30 per cent of its waste thanks to a high level of patient and staff engagement. Environmental Services is looking to achieve the same level of passion and involvement at all sites.

### **Hospital Challenge blood drive underway**

St. Joseph's is once again participating in the Hospital Challenge blood drive, which takes place during May and June. During this annual Canadian Blood Services' competition, hospitals across Ontario go head-to-head to donate the most units of blood per capita (hospital employee population). Last year, St. Joseph's finished in the top two for the third year in a row and will attempt to do so again. In 2016, St. Joseph's won the challenge. All staff, physicians, volunteers, friends and family members are encouraged to give blood during this high-need time for donations and have it count towards St. Joseph's tally by registering for Partners for Life.

### **Celebrating our nurses**

Every day, nurses at St. Joseph's practice compassionate care across a variety of programs. During National Nursing Week May 7-11, St. Joseph's celebrated the important contributions that nursing makes to our organization and daily to patient care. This year's Nursing Week theme was #YesthisNursing, which speaks to the expanding traditional and non-traditional roles, settings and sectors nurses work in, as well as the unique opportunities for the nursing profession presented by social media and emerging tech trends.

During the week, selfie stations were set up across the organization where nurses posed and snapped pictures of themselves to share using the hash tag. Everyone was encouraged to re-share on social media, wear their customized Nursing Week T Shirt, join nurses in wearing the colours of the day, and participate in other activities taking place at all sites.

At St. Joseph's staff libraries, staff could pick up a thank-you postcard and send it to their favourite nurses while checking out resources on all aspects of nursing. A series of thank-you cards was created by library assistants Rebecca Due at St. Joseph's Hospital and Allison Fairbairn at Parkwood Institute Mental Health Care Building.

### **Enhancing care for seniors**

Since October 2017, nearly 800 staff have been trained in senior friendly care as part of St. Joseph's Frail Seniors Strategy. The purpose of the training is to help all staff ensure care and service is provided in a way that is free from ageism and respects the unique needs of patients and caregivers. The goal is to train all employees across the organization.

In total, 49 sessions have been held to date led by staff trained to lead the program. Provided to hospitals across the South West LHIN, the training program was adapted for St. Joseph's by Specialized Geriatric Services and Organizational Development and Learning Services. Included in the training is hands-on simulation exercises that allow staff to experience life as a frail senior.

Feedback from participants has been excellent with 97 per cent indicating they felt confident they would apply principles of person-centered care in their practice.

St. Joseph's training experience to date was presented at the Annual Geriatric Refresher Day on May 2.

## **Advocacy and Collaborations**

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### **Breakfast of Champions**

On May 8, Clint Malarchuk shared his extraordinary life experience with mental illness and addiction before a sold out crowd of more than 1,200 people at this year's Breakfast of Champions, an annual event hosted by St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation and Canadian Mental Health Association, Middlesex. The former NHL goaltender and coach spoke with honesty about his lifelong battle with anxiety, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, as well as the gruesome 1989 on-ice trauma that resulted in post-traumatic stress.

The event also honoured local individuals and organizations making significant contributions to advance mental wellness in the community. Winners of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Middlesex's Champion of Mental Health Awards are:

- Kristin Legault-Donkers, a psychology student at King’s University College and a mental health advocate, blogger and writer who has had her own struggles with mental health.
- Lubrico Warranty, a London-based company that specializes in providing used car warranties. Employees at Lubrico Warranty have credited the company for not only driving awareness and education on mental health as part of their workplace culture, but also for the company’s commitment to action plans and initiatives to support workplace mental health.

Read more about these champions and the nominees [here](#).

### **Improving the health care supply chain**

Healthcare Materials Management Services (HMMS) is helping to establish a national benchmarking initiative – called the Benchmarking Cooperative – through its active participation in the Healthcare Supply Chain Network (HSCN). The purpose of the initiative is to share specific performance metrics used throughout the supply chain industry with organizations that share the common customers of Canada’s health care sector. HMMS is also involved in discussions on leading practice strategies in dealing with emerging issues or trends that may affect the health care industry. One example is the impact of hurricanes in Puerto Rico in 2017 that shut down more than 80 health-related manufacturing facilities.

The goal of the Benchmarking Cooperative is to better understand what ‘normal’ is in the industry to ensure participants can pursue continuous improvement. Some examples of metrics are: the ‘percentage of spend’ on an active contract; the number of times warehouse inventory is turned over; the time it takes to resolve invoice discrepancies; the reliability of inbound deliveries from suppliers; and more. With the initiative still in the early phase, the emphasis is currently on increasing participation from across the country and finding and refining additional metrics that are of value to the sector.

HMMS sees tremendous value in collaborating within the industry and will continue to explore all opportunities to ensure St. Joseph’s and other stakeholders receive optimized supply chain services.

## **The Patient Experience**

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### **High patient satisfaction**

Recent patient feedback received by the Palliative Care Unit at Parkwood Institute and the Roth McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre (HULC) at St. Joseph’s Hospital show high levels of patient and family satisfaction:

- In HULC, patients leaving the clinic are asked a set of questions about their care experience by volunteers, who record the feedback on tablets purchased specifically for this initiative. The information is entered into a feedback monitor system. No patient names or identifying information is included, except for the name of the physician who provided care. Reports are run daily, weekly and monthly. While the number of participating patients is relatively small in comparison to HULC patient volumes, it is growing and the feedback is informing changes at the clinic. For April 2018, more than 90 per cent of patients who responded gave HULC top scores for teamwork, courtesy and an overall excellent care experience. Opportunities for improvement include wait times and being kept informed of delays.

- In the 2017 Palliative Care Family Experience Survey, 91.9 per cent of respondents rated the overall quality of care as excellent, up from 78.6 per cent in 2016. The combined excellent/very good rating was 94.6 per cent. There were notable improvements in the following areas: opportunity to ask questions; the level of physical comfort achieved; and the ability to address both cultural needs and physical symptoms in a timely manner.

## Recognitions and Celebrations

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Congratulations to recipients of the 2018 Excellence in Professional Practice Awards, which recognize both nursing and other allied health discipline staff who are at the heart of patient and resident care at St. Joseph's. The recipients of these prestigious awards are nominated by their peers or leaders for their efforts in demonstrating excellence. The 2018 recipients are:

- **Excellence in Clinical Practice**
  - Complex Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics – Angela Ianni, registered nurse
  - Complex Care, Rehabilitation and Geriatrics – Becky Moran, occupational therapist
  - Acute Ambulatory Care – Charmaine Dupuis, social worker
- **Excellence in Leadership:** Alison Evans, clinical nurse specialist
- **Excellence in Teaching and Coaching**
  - Jody Glover, social worker
  - Dr. Gita Canaran, psychologist
- **Excellence in Innovation and Evidence Informed Practice:** Crystal Branco, speech language pathologist

Bursary applications are also accepted each year, creating an opportunity for nursing and professional practice staff to apply for funds to support their studies. The bursaries and awards are made possible through generous donations to St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation.

### Excellence in communications

Congratulations to Kelsi Break, a consultant with Communication and Public Affairs, who has received a Virtuoso Award of Merit for her work on the grand re-opening of St. Joseph's Operational Stress Injury Clinic. The Virtuoso Awards, presented annually by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) London, recognize excellence in communications and the best in creative strategy and design in Southwestern Ontario. The awards will be presented on May 31 at the IABC's Virtuoso Awards Gala.

### Outstanding contributions

Congratulations to Dr. Jay Rao, a psychiatrist at Parkwood Institute Mental Health Care Building, who was awarded the 2018 Hull-Roeher Award of Merit in recognition of his work in the field of developmental disabilities. Dr. Rao was the unanimous choice of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities. The award is presented in honour of John Hull and G. Allan Roeher, each of whom made a significant contribution in the field of developmental disabilities in Ontario. It is presented to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution or special achievement in the following areas:

- Education: promotion of education or training in the field of developmental disabilities
- Humanitarianism: promotion of human welfare and/or social reform
- Research: advancement of knowledge in the field of developmental disabilities
- Service: enhancing services to individuals with developmental disabilities

## **Excellence in education**

The Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) has awarded its 2018 Corporate Fellowship Award to the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Rehabilitation Program at Parkwood Institute in recognition of the program's Survivor and Caregiver Education Series.

The long-standing, annual, seven-week education series is presented at Parkwood Institute and broadcast in webinar format to communities across Ontario. It covers various key topics for people recovering from an ABI, their families, friends and caregivers. This year's planning committee for the series, which ran March 27 to May 8, included occupational therapist Kelly Williston and social workers Jill Robinson, Sarah Carroll, Jill Bowen and Anne-Marie Kap.

The Corporate Fellowship Award honours significant contributions to the development of services for those who are living with the effects of an ABI. The award will be presented at the OBIA's Annual General Meeting in June 2018.

## **Other**

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### **Expansion of the Ontario naloxone program into hospitals**

As part of its efforts to combat the opioid crisis, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is expanding the Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP) to include hospitals with an emergency department or urgent care centre. The goal of this expansion is to increase access to take-home kits for people at high risk of an opioid overdose, as well as their friends and family. More information about this program is available [here](#).

### **Ontario Research Fund review panel recommendations**

In November 2017, an expert panel was established to review the Ontario Research Fund (ORF) to ensure the province is getting the best results from its competitive research programs. The panel reviewed the ORF's Research Excellence and Research Infrastructure programs, as well as the Early Researcher Awards. Over the last decade, these competitive research programs have invested more than \$2.2 billion to 3,900 research teams to support research infrastructure, operations, and early research talent. The report praises the design and effectiveness of the ORF and Early Researcher Awards while recommending adjustments to ensure Ontario meets the needs of researchers at every stage of their careers. The recommendations include:

- Piloting a new stream of smaller awards in the ORF Research Excellence program
- Broadening eligible expenditures under the Early Researcher Awards
- Redesigning and streamlining the application and reporting processes to reduce the administrative burden on researchers
- Enhancing communications with researchers to ensure they are aware that Ontario funds research in all disciplines and types of research.

The full report, *Sharpening our Competitive Edge: Positioning Ontario's Research Funding Programs for the Future*, is available [here](#).

### **New reportable diseases**

As of May 1, 2018, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care implemented [amendments](#) to regulations under the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) related to reporting on diseases of "public health significance". As a result, the following new diseases have been added to the Ontario Reportable Disease List:

- Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE), colonization or infection
- Blastomycosis
- Echinococcus multilocularis infection
- Haemophilus influenzae disease, all types, invasive
- Respiratory infection outbreaks in institutions and public hospitals
- Gastroenteritis outbreaks in institutions and public hospitals

### **Ontario passes budget focused on care and opportunity**

On May 8, 2018, the Ontario government passed the Plan for Care and Opportunity Act (Budget Measures), 2018, which supports the government's plan to invest in health care, child care, home care and mental health, and focuses on initiatives that make life more affordable and provide more financial security during a time of rapid economic change. The media release is available [here](#).

## **Environmental Scan**

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### **Opioids tied to higher risk of fall-related injuries and deaths among the elderly**

Elderly people who are prescribed opioids may be at higher risk for injuries from falls, some of which may be fatal, a Canadian analysis of trauma cases suggests. Researchers studied more than 67,000 injured patients over age 65 who were admitted to trauma centres in Quebec between 2004 and 2014. The average age was 81. Overall, people with a recent opioid prescription were 2.4 times more likely to have been injured in a fall than other trauma patients. The study also found that, among all patients with fall-related injuries, those with recent opioid prescriptions were 58 per cent more likely to die in the hospital than patients who were not using these painkillers.

While some previous research has linked opioid use to an increased risk of falls, results have been mixed and studies to date haven't provided a clear picture of the severity of injuries or the risk of death for elderly patients. In the current study, 92 per cent of the patients were injured in falls and 59 per cent of the patients required surgery. Half of them were hospitalized for at least 12 days.

[CBC News, April 24, 2018](#)

### **How the brain is folded provides researchers with marker to predict psychosis**

By using images of the brain to look at how its outer surface is folded on itself, researchers can predict which high-risk patients will develop psychosis with more than 80 per cent accuracy. Until now, there has been no way to examine young people before they become ill to reliably identify who will develop acute psychosis and who will not.

Researchers from Western University and Lawson Health Research Institute collaborated with scientists at the University of Basel in Switzerland to develop an approach using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain that can identify which patients with pre-psychotic symptoms will go on to develop full-blown psychosis. The hope is that this information can then be used to begin early-intervention therapy with these patients before they develop illness.

“If we can identify patients early, before they drop-out of schools or lose their jobs due to a psychotic episode, we can reverse the trajectory of this illness,” said Dr. Lena Palaniyappan,

associate professor at Western's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Robarts Research Institute, and associate scientist at Lawson Health Research Institute.

In the study, the researchers collected MRI data from 161 participants in Switzerland – 44 healthy control subjects, 38 patients with first-episode psychosis (characterized by brief hallucinations or delusions), and 79 people with an increased risk of psychosis. The researchers followed the participants for four years to determine which of those patients developed psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, and which did not.

[Western University, April 25, 2018](#)

### **Provincial funding to expand health care for newcomers and east Londoners**

Newcomers to Canada and people living in London's east end are the targets of a health care expansion announced on May 2, 2018. The South West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) is getting a \$1.3 million funding boost from the province, which will be used to expand services at the London InterCommunity Health Centre (LIHC). The LIHC is directing the money to two main projects:

- A health clinic for Canadian newcomers, which is located at London's Cross-Cultural Learner Centre and run by the LIHC
- A program that will help connect patients in east London with allied health professionals such as social workers, respiratory therapists and physiotherapists

[CBC London, May 2, 2018](#)

### **Report urges Ontario to curb long delays when patients sue doctors for malpractice**

Medical malpractice cases in Ontario linger before the courts up to six years on average, unacceptable delays that need to be curbed, says a government-commissioned report.

Even malpractice lawsuits that are thrown out of court drag on an average of three and a half years before being dismissed, suggested the analysis by retired judge Stephen Goudge. He calls on the province to consider appointing judges with special expertise in medical-legal issues to better handle the cases, and for trial dates to be set early on to “focus” lawyers’ attention.

Goudge also documented the rising costs of medical malpractice, which he said have increased as much as 700 per cent in the last 25 years in Ontario, where the cases are more expensive than in any other province. Taxpayers end up covering most of those costs given that the government subsidizes the liability coverage used by most doctors.

Goudge also urges the province to invest more resources into preventing medical error in the first place, calling that the best way to control the expense.

[National Post, May 3, 2018](#)

### **Health Canada's prescription opioid stickers and leaflets get a qualified welcome**

Starting in October 2018, Health Canada will be putting warning stickers on opioid medications and giving patients leaflets each time they get a prescription filled. The [new regulations](#) will require:

- prescription opioids to come with a yellow, rectangular warning sticker saying opioids can cause dependence, addiction and overdose

- a one-page handout be included with the prescription to provide concise and consistent information on the risks of opioids
- drug companies to make risk-management plans.

The stickers will act as reminder of the risks to patients every time they go to use the drugs, said Dr. Supriya Sharma, Health Canada's chief medical adviser.

"We want patients to have ongoing conversations with their health care providers and pharmacists about the risks and the benefits of prescription opioids," said Sharma. "These stickers and handouts will help continue those conversations."

A number of studies show that the provision of information at point of sale in the form of a patient leaflet helps both the dialogue patients have with the pharmacists as well as provide consistent information.

[CBC News, May 4, 2018](#)

### **Dr. Vladimir Hachinski wins 2018 Killam Prize**

Western University's Vladimir Hachinski, past president of the World Federation of Neurology and a world-renowned stroke expert, is a 2018 Killam Prize winner for health sciences.

Administered by the Canada Council for the Arts, the prestigious prize is funded by a private endowment supporting creativity and innovation through research and higher learning. Five Canadian researchers will receive \$100,000 each in recognition of their exceptional career achievements in humanities, engineering, natural sciences, social sciences, health sciences, and interdisciplinary studies within these fields.

Dr. Hachinski, a professor of neurology at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, transformed the understanding, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of the two greatest threats to the brain – stroke and dementia. He co-discovered a link between Alzheimer's and stroke and introduced new concepts and a new clinical diagnosis tool, the Hachinski Ischemic Score, for identifying the treatable components of dementia. He founded, with John W. Norris, the world's first successful acute stroke unit, now the standard of care.

Having published 18 books and more than 800 frequently cited scientific articles, Dr. Hachinski was Editor-in-Chief of Stroke – the leading publication in the field – for an unprecedented 10 years (2000-2010).

More about the 2018 Killam Program, including the other winners, is available [here](#).

[Western University, May 8, 2018](#)

### **Nine out of 10 long-term care residents have some form of cognitive impairment**

A staggering 90 per cent of long-term care residents have some form of cognitive impairment, with one in three severely affected, says the annual report of the Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA). In addition, since 2011, the proportion of residents that have Alzheimer's or other forms of dementias has grown, with 64 per cent of residents affected today.

"The demographic of seniors that come into long-term care today has changed over the last five years," says Candace Chartier, CEO of the OLTCA. "Our report shows that the majority of

seniors coming into long-term care require extensive or complete support with their daily activities as a result of their cognitive or physical condition.”

The report, [This is Long-Term Care 2018](#), also provides context on challenges impacting the long-term care sector, such as availability of staff, out-of-date infrastructure, inspections, in-home altercations and incidents, and antipsychotics.

To help prepare the province for the number of seniors that will require access to long-term care, the OLTCAs are calling for:

- 10,000 new long-term care beds over the next five years
- funding for additional registered nursing staff and personal support workers
- expanding in-home Behavioural Supports Ontario teams to every long-term care home in Ontario
- taking steps to modernize the 40 per cent of long-term care homes that require renovations or to be rebuilt

#### [Ontario Long Term Care Association, May 8, 2018](#)

##### **Nearly quarter of opioid prescriptions exceed clinical guidelines**

Nearly a quarter (23.9 per cent) of initial opioid prescriptions in Ontario had a daily dose of more than 50 milligram morphine equivalents (MME), exceeding the suggested dose threshold for opioid prescriptions outlined in North American clinical guidelines, according to a new study from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences and St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

The study, published May 16, 2018, in the journal *Pain*, examined initial opioid prescriptions for more than 650,000 Ontarians from April 2015 to March 2016 and linked each to health administrative data from Ontario's publicly funded health care system.

The researchers grouped the reasons for starting opioids into six clusters: dental pain (23.2 per cent of prescriptions), post-surgical pain (17.4 per cent), musculoskeletal pain (12 per cent), trauma-related pain (11.2 per cent), cancer or palliative care (6.5 per cent), and other types of pain (17.7 per cent). Overall, 78,481 (12 per cent) of individuals could not be linked to any of the six indications.

The study showed that the dose and duration of initial opioid prescriptions varied considerably by indication. Across all clinical indications, however, a high percentage of people received daily doses of more than 50 MME and prescription lengths exceeding seven days, a combination which has been associated with opioid-related adverse events and long-term opioid use.

#### [Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, May 16, 2018](#)

##### **Half of Canadians have experienced a mental health issue**

Half of Canadians – 49 per cent – have experienced a mental health issue at some point in their lives, according to a new national survey. More than one-third (37 per cent) have suffered from anxiety, and three out of 10 (30 per cent) report having dealt with depression.

Millennials, ages 20 to 34, are most likely to report mental health concerns (63 per cent), followed by Generation X (50 per cent) and “late boomers” (41 per cent).

These numbers are part of a recent survey by Sun Life Financial that asked 2,900 Canadians ages 20 to 80 about their experiences with mental health. According to the survey, only 28 per cent of working Canadians living with a mental health issue have spoken to their employer about it – a sharp drop from the 56 per cent of Canadians who have had a conversation about a serious physical issue with their employer.

Despite how common mental illnesses are among Canadians, many continue to suffer in silence. Twenty-seven per cent did not speak to a health professional about what they were going through.

[Sun Life Financial, May 16, 2018](#)

### **One in four Canadian seniors prescribed 10 or more drugs**

In 2016, about 1.6 million seniors (representing approximately one in four Canadians age 65 and older) were prescribed 10 or more drug classes, according to a [new report](#) by the Canadian Institute for Health Information that looks broadly at drug use among Canadian seniors.

A drug class is a group of chemicals that works in the same way to treat similar medical conditions. For example, opioids are a type of drug class commonly used to manage moderate to severe pain.

Seniors continue to be prescribed a large number of drugs, and this number increases with age. There was minimal change in the average number of drugs prescribed to seniors between 2011 and 2016.

In 2016, drugs used to treat high cholesterol – used by nearly half of all seniors – were the most commonly prescribed drug class. Other common drug classes prescribed included drugs for acid reflux disease, peptic ulcer disease and high blood pressure.

The study also found that about 1.9 million Canadian seniors chronically used at least one potentially inappropriate drug in 2016, which is comparable with the 2011 rate. Potentially inappropriate drugs can increase the risk of adverse effects, such as falls, fractures and mental impairment, and there are often safer alternatives.

[Canadian Institute for Health Information, May 17, 2018](#)

## **St. Joseph's in the News**

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[Death dealing: What London is doing about opioids](#), 980 CFPL, April 18, 2018

[Global run for spinal research comes to London](#), Londoner, April 25, 2018

[London lottery opens doors to dreams](#), Londoner, April 26, 2018

[Beating breast cancer](#), CTV London, May 1, 2018

[Easing the trauma of reporting sexual assault](#), CBC London, May 2, 2018

[Interview room – Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program, interview with Cassandra Fisher](#), CBC London, May 3, 2018

[Gut bacteria study could help combat heart disease](#), Blackburn News, May 2, 2018

[Frontline workers learn how to improve geriatric care for seniors](#), CTV London, May 2, 2018

[6 ways Canada is failing moms with maternal mental illnesses](#), Huffington Post, May 1, 2018

[It's infections, not ODs, that most threaten London opioid users](#), London Free Press, May 3, 2018

[Destroying gut bacteria could help develop novel treatment to combat heart attacks](#), Economic Times, May 3, 2018

[Researchers show novel relationship between gut microbiome and atherosclerosis](#), News-Medical, May 3, 2018

[Lifesaving probiotics](#), CTV London, May 3, 2018

[St. Joseph's celebrates 'positives' of cutting-edge mammogram](#), London Free Press, May 4, 2017

[Rajaie Elshorafa's world changed forever after he was viciously beaten last fall](#), CBC London, May 6, 2018

[Lifesaving probiotics](#), CTV London, May 7, 2018

[A more comforting place for sexual assault victims](#), Blackburn News, May 8, 2018

[Mental health group recognizes more champions](#), London Free Press, May 8, 2018

[NHL Goaltender Clint Malarchuk's story of survival](#), CTV London, May 7, 2018

[On-site interview room offers safe space for sexual assault, human trafficking victims](#), London Free Press, May 8, 2018

[New way to report sexual assaults](#), CTV London, May 10, 2018

[Gut bacteria linked to risk of heart attack and stroke](#), Nutraingredients.com, May 11, 2018

[Couple learning there is life after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's](#), Sarnia Journal, May 15, 2018

[New research on microbes in the stomach](#), CTV London, May 14, 2018

[Mental health patient speaks out](#), CTV London, May 16, 2018

[Special guest spent time with the station's most experienced news crew](#), CTV London, May 18, 2018

[London hospitals have ditched another dated technology used by doctors: pagers](#), London Free Press, May 22, 2018