

Weekly WHRI Community Update – December 11, 2020

Sent on behalf of Dr. Lori Brotto, Executive Director, WHRI

Dear WHRI community,

The WHRI has just completed the first year of our five-year strategic plan and what a year it has been. In some ways, COVID-19 has derailed some of our plans and programming for 2020, and in other ways, it provided a unique opportunity to advance aspects of our strategic plan more swiftly. As part of our strategic plan, we also developed a [Strategic Framework for Trainees and Mentorship](#) as our commitment to enhancing the success and support of our trainee community.

When the pandemic control measures were implemented in late March 2020, this immediately put a temporary hold on in-person classes, bench, dry-lab, and community based research, conferences, meetings, and workshops. With these critical opportunities curtailed, and concerns about students' mental well-being mounting, we at the WHRI felt compelled to explore these impacts on students and trainees. From May to June 2020, we undertook an online survey of trainees engaged in women's health research at universities across British Columbia with the primary purpose of better [understanding the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on the academic, professional, and personal lives of trainees](#).

We received complete survey responses from a diverse community of 119 trainees across the province. Among key findings, **96% of trainees are worried about the overall impact of COVID-19 on their physical, mental, and professional well-being**. Trainees also shared the important ways that COVID-19 has affected their coursework, ability to conduct research, and professional development opportunities. We share and discuss these findings using [infographics](#), [a presentation at WHRI Rounds](#), and a [podcast](#) discussion with trainees.

Data collection alone is not sufficient, and we are committed to doing our part to taking action. We realized that with many other institutions and groups similarly committed to identifying ways of supporting students through the pandemic, we convened a meeting of stakeholders from across the province who are committed to the success of our community of research trainees. The meeting included representatives from [WHRI](#), [UBC](#), [UBC-O](#), [SFU](#), [UVic](#), [MSFHR](#), [BCMHSUS](#), [BCCHRI](#), [BCWHE](#), and others who committed to collaborating on initiatives to support trainees. It was clear from this meeting that there are several ways, both easy and more complex, that we can better support students during this challenging time. We look forward to sharing the group's recommendations and strategies to our WHRI community early in 2021.

While we wait for these recommendations and an action plan to emerge, may I suggest that every one of us ask a trainee, "how are you, and how can I help you?"

Sincerely

Lori Brotto & Angela Kaida

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Executive Director, WHRI
Professor | Department of OBGYN, UBC

Canada Research Chair | Women's Sexual Health

Angela Kaida, PhD

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Updates from December 5th to 11th

Update: PHSA MASK USE POLICY & SELF-SERVE DISPENSERS

While many members of our community work in areas dedicated to research – not patient care – we are located on a hospital site and must take extra precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As such, **we now require that all personnel wear medical masks in all clinical and non-clinical areas.** This includes labs, meeting rooms, stairwells, hallways, bathrooms, elevators and cafeterias or break rooms (except when you are eating or drinking).

Currently, medical masks are available at [seven key entrances](#), and are handed out individually by the entrance screening staff. This week, C&W began a phased installation of *self-serve face mask dispensers* at many card- and key-accessed entrances.

All persons entering hospital buildings are requested to don a medical mask by following these procedures:

1. Remove your personal mask if you're wearing one;
2. Sanitize your hands using hand sanitizer; and
3. Remove one medical mask from the dispenser and follow proper procedures to don the mask.

If an entrance doesn't have a medical mask dispenser, signage will direct to the nearest dispenser or entrance where staff can provide a mask.

Once all mask dispensers or signage have been installed, personal masks or non-medical grade masks will not be permitted.

As a reminder, you are not required to wear a mask if you are in your office or cubicle and you are greater than two metres from other personnel or a physical barrier is in place.

Please remember that masks are only one part of our infection control strategy. Stay home if you have any signs of illness, complete [PHSA's self-screening assessment tool](#) before arriving onsite, practice physical distancing and maintain good hand hygiene.

It's heartening to hear that they have identified so few issues and we are grateful that so many continue to show their commitment to protecting our community and those around them.

Our goal is for everyone to feel safe while working onsite. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions, **including requests for medical masks**, to Marsha Simons at Marsha.Simons@cw.bc.ca, Todd Jacques at tjacques@bcchr.ca, and Dr. Lori Brotto at Lori.Brotto@cw.bc.ca.

OAK STREET CAMPUS STAGE 2 RESUMPTION OF ONSITE RESEARCH

The intake process to resume onsite work has been streamlined in Stage 2. In this stage, assuming the activities fit within the Stage 2 criteria and cannot be done offsite, PIs will determine the scope of their research activities and who on their team should resume onsite work.

If you applied to resume onsite work during Stage 1, you do not need to apply again. Please email Todd Jacques at tjacques@bcchr.ca with any updates to your onsite personnel and research team safety plans.

If your team includes any new personnel or existing personnel who require training on new tasks, you are also required to create a written training plan for these staff. This could include detailing whether training will happen virtually or in person and the types of PPE that will be used to protect all those taking part.

For **new research activities**, please submit a request through the [Oak Street Campus Research Institutes Return to Onsite Research Intake Form](#).

If you have any questions, please email KDewar@cw.bc.ca

FUNDING AGENCY UPDATES and OPPORTUNITIES

Updated COVID-19 WHRI Funding Updates

For all the latest funding news, COVID-19 funding opportunities, latest updates for deadlines and official statements from funding agencies regarding grant programs.

Email [Eric Lussier](#)

For assistance with grants applications or grants revisions. I am available every Tuesday from 8am-4pm for virtual office hour meetings with WHRI researchers, or by appointment.

NEWS

[MSFHR Extends deadlines for 2021 Scholar and Trainee Competition](#)

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research has extended the deadlines for the LOI and Full Application for both the 2021 Research Trainee and Scholar competitions. For applicants who submit their LOI applications ahead of the February 8 deadline, MSFHR will conduct eligibility checks and advance applications to Full Application every Friday up to Friday, January 29, 2021 to allow applicants working ahead to have advance access to the Full Application. The new deadlines are as follows:

2021 SCHOLAR

LOI Deadline: **Monday, February 8, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**

Full Application Deadline: **Monday, March 22, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**

Host Institution Deadline: **Monday, March 29, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**

2021 RESEARCH TRAINEE

LOI Deadline: **Monday, February 8, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**
Full Application Deadline: **Monday, March 29, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**
Host Institution Deadline: **Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT**

COVID-19 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- N/A

UPDATES (12/05 – 12/11) TO COMPETITION DEADLINES

- MSFHR – [Scholar Award](#) – **LOI 02/08/2021, Full 03/22/2021**
- MSFHR – [Research Trainee Award](#) – **LOI 02/08/2021, Full 03/29/2021**

Updated Funding Opportunities and Deadlines List

HAVE A FEW MINUTES?

Join Us, **December 18th at 8 am Pacific** for **BC WOMEN'S HOSPITAL RESEARCH ROUNDS**. **Dr. Michelle Chan** will present, "Current dispensing and practice use patterns of ulipristal acetate (UPA) 30mg (Ella[®]), as emergency contraception in British Columbia".

ZOOM link: <https://ubc.zoom.us/> click **Join a Meeting**

Meeting ID: 965 160 897 77

Password: 089777

Telephone Participants (audio only):

The following telephone number can be used to join and *callers WILL be charged for any long distance charges that may apply:*

Dial: **+1 778 907 2071** Canada

Enter the Zoom Meeting ID: **965 160 897 77** followed by "#"

Enter the Password: **089 777**

Conference Alert! GLOBAL CHILD HEALTH: BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

The Global Health Conference will be held virtually on **January 28, 2021**. Registration is [FREE](#). Poster presentations are being accepted until **December 18, 2020**: submit your poster [HERE](#).

STAFF RESOURCES

PHSA UPDATES

Contact tracing process for positive staff cases

- If you test positive for COVID-19, these are the steps:
 - 1) **Public Health will contact you.** You may already be aware of your positive result if you have signed up for text notification or checked my eHealth.
 - 2) **Contact PHSA's COVID-19 Resource Line** (1-833-875-2155) to get further information while you wait for direction from Public Health.

- 3) **Public Health conducts contact tracing and will contact the individuals who need to be contacted** with specific instructions, based on their exposure criteria.
- If you are aware of another staff member who has tested positive, it's important that you respect their privacy. Please do not start contacting other employees who may have been exposed unless you are directed to do so by Public Health or PHSA's Occupational Health & Safety nurses.
 - If you have questions in the meantime, please feel free to discuss them with your manager and/or contact PHSA's COVID-19 Resource Line.

PHSA employees can claim up to \$400 in home office expenses

- As stated at last month's town hall, [PHSA will not be issuing the tax form T2200](#) to employees who are working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The T2200 will continue to be issued to employees who work from home on a permanent, regular basis.
- On Nov. 30, 2020 the federal government announced in its "[2020 Fall Economic Statement](#)" that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will allow employees working from home in 2020 due to COVID-19 to claim up to \$400 in home office expenses, based on the amount of time working from home, without the need to track detailed expenses.
- The CRA will generally not request employees to provide a signed Form T2200 from their employer (still to be confirmed). The CRA is expected to communicate further details in the coming weeks.

C&W Open Forum, Dec. 16

The next virtual C&W Open Forum, which gives care providers and staff the chance to ask the C&W senior leadership questions via Slido, is Wednesday, Dec. 16 from 12-1pm. You can submit questions anonymously in advance on [Slido](#).

Flu policy now in effect: Please self-report

- Flu season is here, and the [provincial influenza policy](#) and [PHSA's influenza prevention policy](#) are now officially in effect. These will remain in effect until the end of the flu season is declared, usually at the end of March.
- Please make some time to [self-report your flu protection choice](#) as soon as you can! **All PHSA employees, including medical staff and contractors, are required to self-report.**
- Questions? Visit [Flu Prevention on POD](#) or email flu@phsa.ca.

Support your mental health:

- To access the following recorded webinars from Homewood Health (PHSA's Employee and Family Assistance Provider), log in to [Homeweb](#) (or create a new account):
 - [The Second Wave and Your Mental Health](#)
 - [COVID-19 and Mental Health](#)

Register for mindfulness meditation sessions

- Looking for ways to better cope with stress, increase resilience, enhance connections with others, and bolster your ability to experience more joy and peace?
- [Register on LearningHub](#) for weekly, virtually-delivered mindfulness meditation sessions.
- In addition, this November we are also partnering with the [Lab of Meditation](#) for a [special 3-part series of meditation sessions](#) that invites a place for rest and respite.

Don't forget to sign up for free virtual fitness classes!

- Sign up on [LearningHub](#) for a variety of free classes during the month of November, including Zumba, Pilates, yoga, stretch breaks, power circuit, high intensity interval training (HIIT), mindfulness and more!
- Fitness classes are 45-minutes long and available Monday to Friday at various times throughout the weekdays to accommodate different work schedules.

PHSA has the following resources available to you during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **C&W COVID-19 collection site** – Open seven days per week, 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Priority given to health care workers and priority population patients between 7 and 8 a.m. Health care workers have a unique number to call (**604-875-2016**) that allows them to leave a message.
- **C&W COVID-19 learning modules** – Three courses for all C&W staff and students to provide a current overview of the COVID-19 pandemic. Courses are for staff already working at the C&W campus. Staff also need to review prior to returning to the workplace. Courses are available on [Learning Hub](#) and will take about two hours to complete.
- Visit www.phsa.ca/covid19staff for COVID-19 staff guidelines and updates.
- Visit [ePOPS](#) for all C&W clinical practice and policy documents.
- Learn about [health and wellness resources](#) available to support you.