



WOMEN'S HEALTH  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
AT BC WOMEN'S



# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

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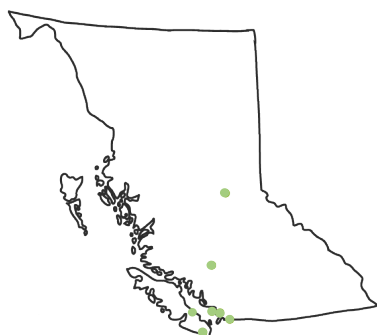
APRIL 1, 2020 - MARCH 31, 2021

This annual report overlaps with the start and peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, represents a unique report. The pandemic forced our community to pivot to online research and teaching activities and catalyzed a new focus for many of our investigators on COVID-19 related research. You will see some of the results of those activities reflected in the highlights below.

Throughout, the WHRI has remained steadfast in our commitment to our members across the province to find creative, innovative, and meaningful ways of supporting women's health research, and for living out the priorities of our [2019-2024 Strategic Plan](#). The theme of our 2021 annual symposium, "Women's health research in BC: Thriving in challenging times," became the mantra for our community as exemplified in new key research initiatives focused on women's health, and on sex-and-gender-based outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year we have also renewed our commitment to trainees following our [survey of trainee experiences throughout the pandemic](#). We saw deepened partnerships with the BC Women's Health Foundation (who supported our various grant and award competitions and provided funding for COVID-19 research), the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute (who collaborated on the COVID RESPONSE study described below), BC Women's Hospital, several new and existing community-based partners, and our other Canadian women's health research institutes.

## ABOUT US



### OUR 401 INVESTIGATORS REPRESENT

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*7 universities in British Columbia*

*27 departments at the University of British Columbia*

*18 universities globally*

The Women's Health Research Institute is the women's health research arm of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). It is also a UBC Faculty of Medicine Centre.

The Women's Health Research Institute is devoted to improving the health and health care of girls and women through knowledge generation, serving as a catalyst for research in women's health and supporting an expanding provincial and national network of women's health researchers, policy makers and healthcare providers.

Our investigators make significant contributions to improving the health and health care of girls and women in British Columbia and around the world through knowledge generation. The Women's Health Research Institute is one of only a few research institutes worldwide (and one of only three in Canada) to focus exclusively on women's health.

We aim to underscore the importance of advancing research that examines the unique health needs of women throughout the lifespan and spotlight the world-class research that is currently being conducted in the province.

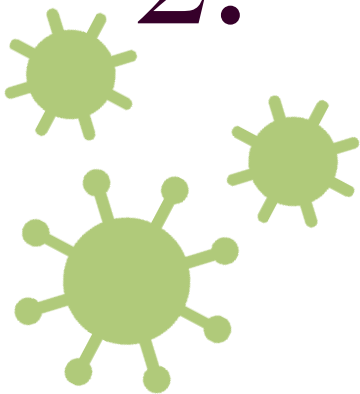
1.



**WHRI researcher is leading the [Canadian Surveillance of COVID-19 in Pregnancy: Epidemiology, Maternal and Infant Outcomes](#) project.**

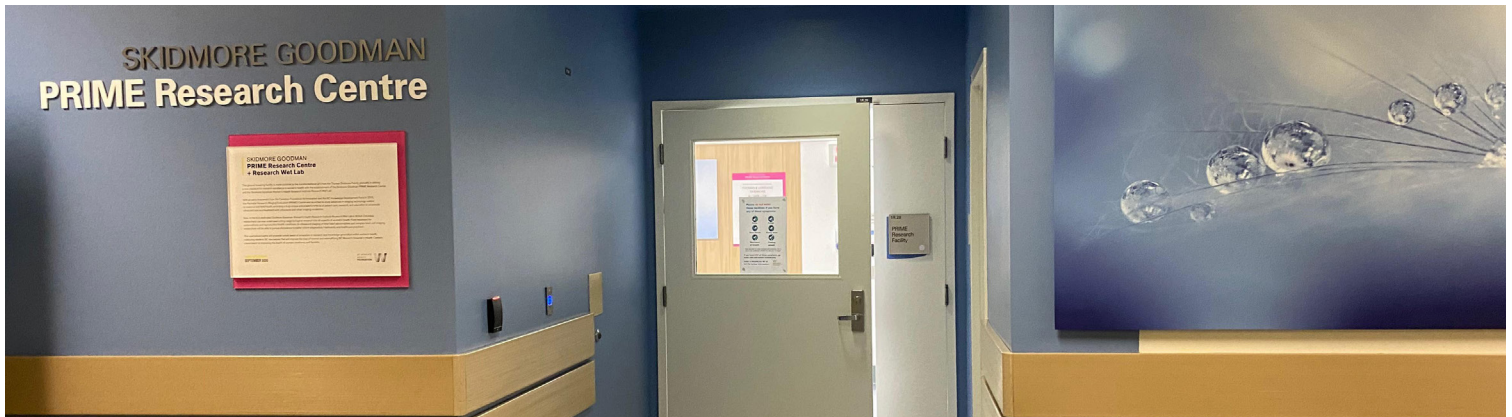
Globally, there has been limited data on COVID-19 in pregnancy to inform recommendations for pregnant women and their care providers. This national surveillance project, which involves provincial/territorial data being combined for a national dataset of cases, seeks to better understand the epidemiology and outcomes associated with COVID-19 in pregnancy and to thereby provide critical data to inform recommendations for pregnant women and their infants. This project also lays the foundation for additional COVID-19 research through the establishment of a biospecimen repository from COVID-19 affected mother-infant pairs. As the pandemic progresses, interim findings from this project have been released regularly and have shown that expectant mothers with COVID-19 have a greater risk of hospitalization, ICU admission, early labour and stillbirth. Data from this surveillance project is being used at the local, national and international level to inform public policy and evidence-based guidelines for clinical care of pregnant women and their infants during this rapidly evolving global pandemic.

2.



**The WHRI launched the [COVID-19 RESPONSE](#) (Rapid Evidence Study of a Provincial Population Based Cohort for Gender and Sex) study** as a means of providing comprehensive, population-level data to determine the impact of COVID-19 and associated public health measures on British Columbians, grounded in a sex- and gender-based analysis. Led by investigators at WHRI, in partnership with BC Children's Hospital Research Institute, the Vaccine Evaluation Center, the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University, this study provides the first provincial estimates of COVID-19 infection and identifies COVID-19's specific impacts on communities of diverse sexes, genders, ages and locations. Over 6300 British Columbians took part in the study, which involved the completion of online surveys and the self-collection of dry blood spot samples to test for COVID-19 antibodies. The results of this study provide a better understanding of the impacts of sex and gender on the impact of pandemic management on existing inequalities in BC and Canada. The outcomes of this study will be used to aid in informing future public health decisions including the development of social policies to better support vulnerable populations during current and future pandemics.





3.

**The WHRI opened the newly constructed Skidmore Goodman Research Lab for Women's Health.** Thanks to a \$2.5M donation from the Skidmore family via the BC Women's Health Foundation and a Canada Foundation for Innovation Grant, awarded to WHRI member Dr. Denise Pugash, the WHRI was able to construct one-of-a-kind research facility that encompasses both the Perinatal Research IMaging Evaluation (PRIME) Centre and the Women's Health Research Wet Lab onsite at BC Women's Hospital. The PRIME Centre is an ultrasound imaging research facility (unique in Canada) dedicated to the development of new imaging technology to benefit maternal and fetal health. Equipped with the latest ultrasound imaging technology, the Centre is a shared resource for researchers interested in prenatal diagnostics. In the first wet lab dedicated specifically to women's health research in the province, local investigators can now undertake cutting-edge biological research into all aspects of a woman's health and will be able to pursue discoveries to better inform diagnostics, treatments, and health practices.

4.

**Launched the Graduate and Fellowship Research Award in Women's Health.** This year, the WHRI launched its Strategic Framework for Trainees and Mentorship which aims to expand capacity for women's health research through initiatives that support the next generation of women's health scholars. To this end, we launched the **Graduate and Fellowship Research Award in Women's Health** as a funding opportunity specific to our trainee community. This award is intended to provide salary support to WHRI-affiliated graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who are engaged in women's and/or newborn health research.



Via a partnership with the BC Women's Health Foundation, we funded one postdoctoral fellowship award and one graduate award this year, valued at \$12,500 each.

## OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

From April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021, our investigators have advanced knowledge through a substantial increase in scientific publications and trainee supervision. The excellent calibre of research at the WHRI continues to attract competitive external funding and our provincial network of women's health research grew significantly this past year.



950\* PUBLICATIONS

26% increase in research publications over the previous year  
\*96% peer-reviewed



401 INVESTIGATORS

25% increase in our provincial network of researchers over the previous year



\$38.1 MILLION IN FUNDING

26% increase in external research funding over the previous year



820 RESEARCH TRAINEES

11% increase in learners supervised by our investigators over the previous year

## OUR YEAR ONLINE



4.1k  
followers

1.2k  
retweets

2.7k  
likes

694k  
impressions



1.1k  
followers

1.3k  
engagements

18k  
impressions



829  
followers

27.3k  
users reached

Connect with us on social! Find us @womensresearch on Twitter and Instagram, and as Women's Health Research Institute on Facebook and LinkedIn.



The @WomensResearch podcast launched its second season, and received 356 plays from 13 countries.



Our virtual home, WHRI.org, had a similar record performance with 31.1k unique visitors from 164 countries.

## OUR PEOPLE

### WHRI EXECUTIVE

DR. LORI BROTT  
*Executive Director*

DR. GINA OGILVIE  
*Senior Advisor, Research,  
BC Women's Hospital  
Associate Director, WHRI*

DR. LIISA GALEA  
*Scientific Advisor*

DR. ANGELA KAIDA  
*Scientific Advisor*

### WHRI STAFF

DR. ARIANNE ALBERT  
*Senior Biostatistician*

JANICE ANDRADE  
*Research Manager*

AREZOU AZAMPANAH  
*Research Assistant*

ALLY BAASKE  
*Research Assistant*

AMY BOOTH  
*Research Coordinator*

TRAVIS BOULTER  
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EMMA BRANCH  
*Research Data Analyst*

AMBER CAMPBELL  
*Research Coordinator*

VICTORIA  
CARRIQUIRIBORDE  
*Research Assistant*

DR. KATHRYN DEWAR  
*Senior Research Manager*

SHANLEA GORDON  
*Research Program Manager -  
FIR Square*

DR. ANNA GOTTSCHLICH  
*Postdoctoral Research Fellow*

ANIRUDH KOTLO  
*Research Coordinator*

ERIC LUSSIER  
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*Research Coordinator*

JESSICA MADDOX  
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TIANNA MAGEL  
*Research Assistant*

DR. ULRIKE MAYER  
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*Research Projects Manager*

MELISSA NELSON  
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HEATHER NOGA  
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ZAHRA PAKZAD  
*Research Projects Manager*

DR. BETH PAYNE  
*Research Associate*

NICOLE PRESTLEY  
*Manager, Research + Knowledge  
Translation*

DR. SARAI RACEY  
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MARSHA SIMONS  
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Translation*

LAURIE SMITH  
*Research Program Manager –  
HPV FOCAL & HPV Related  
Diseases*

CANDICE TAGUIBAO  
*Digital Health Research Manager*

MELODY TSAI  
*Research Assistant*

SORAYA UTOKAPARCH  
*Finance & Research Associate*

MARKETA WALDRUM  
*Research Projects Manager*

MELISSA WATT  
*Research Coordinator*

ADRIANNA XUE  
*Research Assistant*

### SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

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