

Territory Acknowledgment

The Women's Health Research Institute would like to acknowledge that we are uninvited guests on the unceded ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sel̓ílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

As a provincial research institute committed to improving the health outcomes of women, including those across the 2S LGBTQIA+ spectrum, we recognize our responsibility in the collective effort towards establishing culturally safe health care systems and services that address health inequities among Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, girls, and Two-spirit peoples.

We recognize that we represent, and are funded by, colonial systems which have historically harmed, and continue to harm Indigenous people. We take seriously our duty as researchers and healthcare professionals to address the Truth

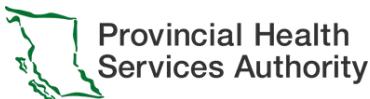
and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action – and in particular, Calls 18 through 24, which concern recognizing and implementing the healthcare rights of Indigenous people, recognizing and upholding the value of Indigenous healing practices, and fostering better understanding of Indigenous health issues pertaining to the ongoing legacy of residential schools, for current and future health professionals.

We encourage all people involved in research to read the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#), the [In Plain Sight Report](#), and the [Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) and reflect on ways we can incorporate the recommendations into our work.

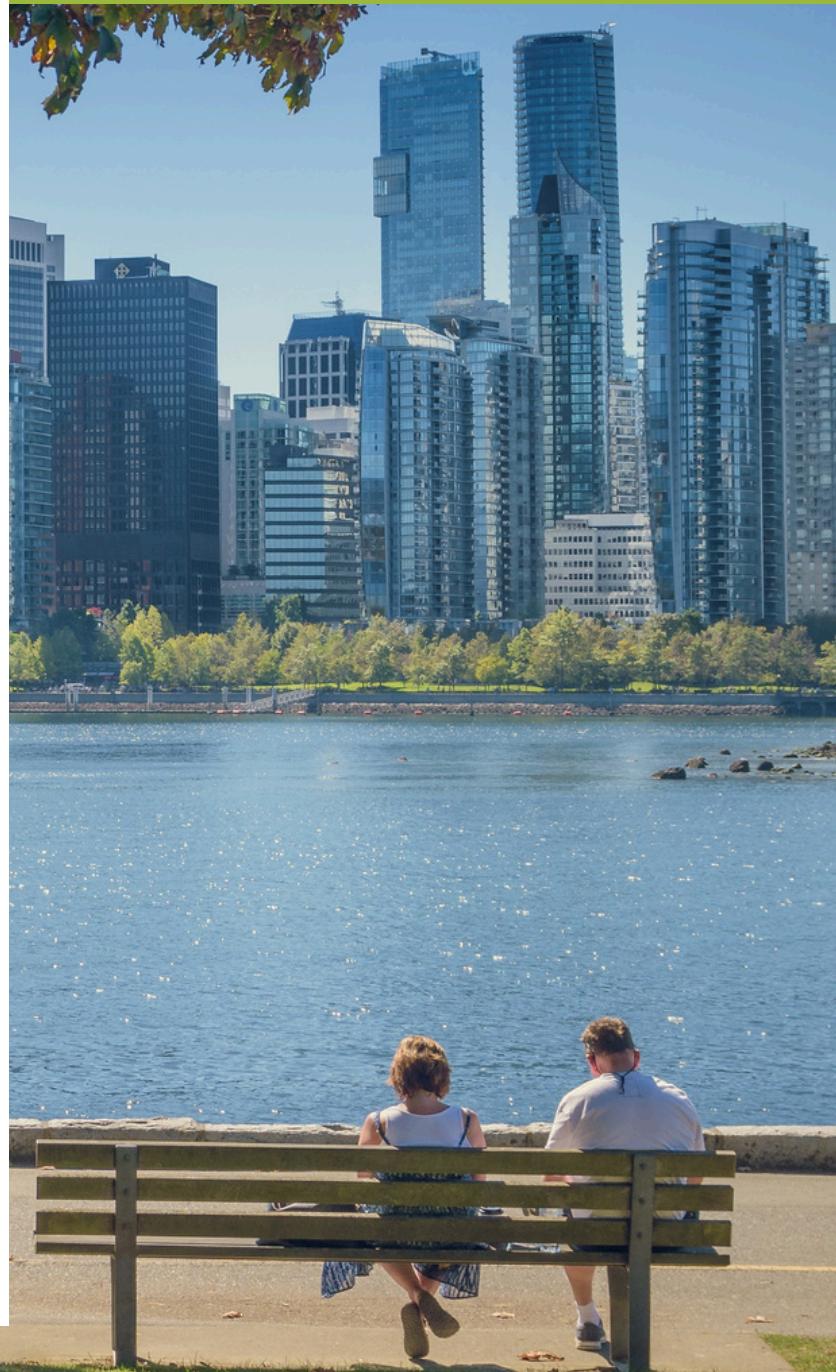
Established in 2006 in Vancouver, British Columbia, the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI) is one of only three research institutes in Canada with an explicit focus on women's health. We are a research entity of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and a UBC Faculty of Medicine Research Centre.

Our **mandate** is to act as the research arm of BC Women's Hospital, to act as the face of women's health research for PHSA, and to support research activities designed to improve health and healthcare for women, gender diverse people, and newborns across British Columbia and globally.

With over 750 members, the WHRI supports researchers and research partners across the province from ideation to impact through specialized services, collaboration and mentorship, and facilitation of evidence into real-world outcomes.



Where We've been; Where We're Going



Progress towards our strategic goals

Building Community, Advancing Excellence

WHRI finalized our **2025-2028 Strategic Plan** at the end of the 2024/25 FY, identifying 5 strategic goals:

1. Foster an inclusive culture of research and evidence to drive research excellence.
2. Empower and equip the women's and newborn health research community with the tools and resources needed to address knowledge gaps.
3. Form and nurture equitable, reciprocal, and meaningful partnerships that drive improvements in women's and newborn health.
4. Advance Indigenous women's health as a priority for research across the Province.
5. Amplify, celebrate, and generate awareness of WHRI community achievements.

The strategic planning process began with one-on-one interviews with WHRI members, representatives from our key partners (such as PHSA, BC Women's Hospital, the BC Women's Health Foundation, UBC and the Ministry of Health).

We also engaged patient partners and members of the public with lived experience in women's health-related conditions. The 2025-2028 Strategic Plan reaffirms our commitments to gender equity, and vision of better health for all women, gender diverse people, and newborns, through research.



A photograph of three women of different ages walking together on a paved path. On the left is a young woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored blouse with puffed sleeves and wide-leg trousers. In the center is a younger woman with long dark hair and bangs, wearing a patterned blouse and light-colored trousers. On the right is an older woman with short, light-colored hair, wearing a light-colored blazer and dark trousers. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera.

WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025

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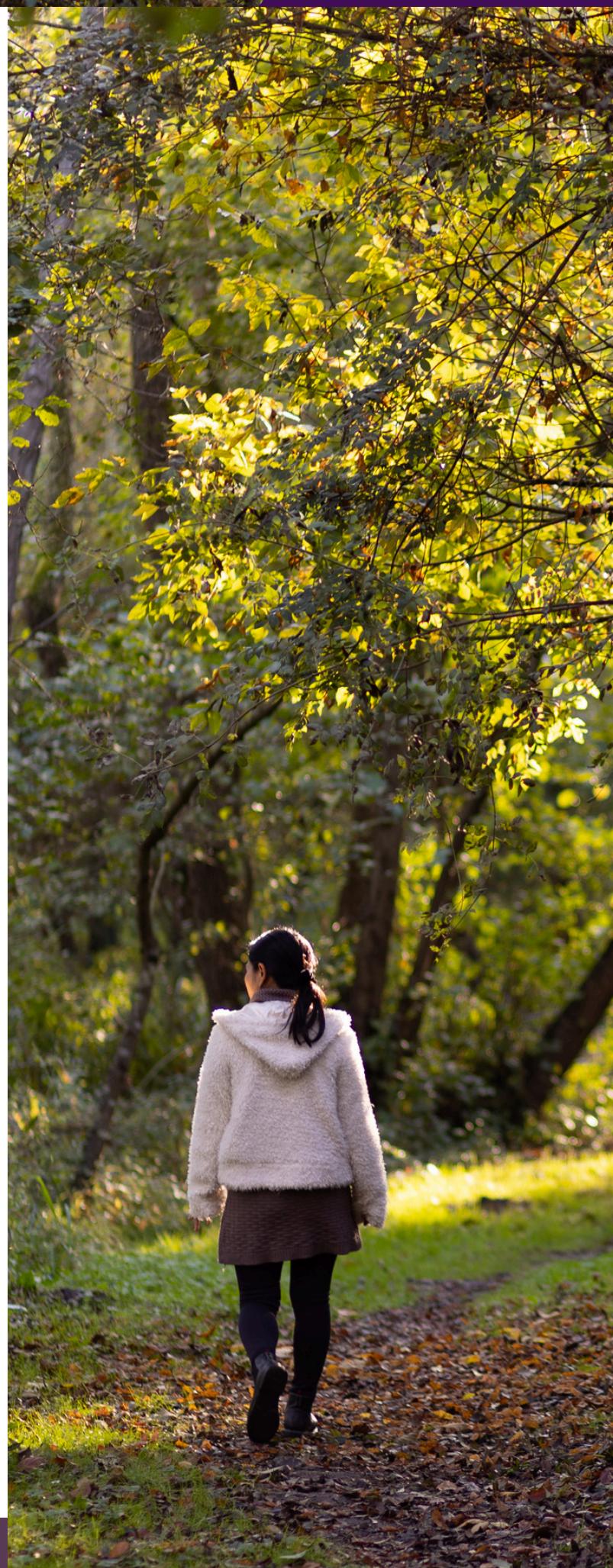
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OUR PEOPLE

The WHRI is made up of an Executive Leadership Team, 31 core staff members, and our Scientific Advisory Board members. The WHRI also shares office and lab space with staff members of various WHRI-affiliated research teams.

Our Team

EXECUTIVE

DR. LORI BROTT
Executive Director

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

DR. PAUL YONG
Assistant Director

EMMA GOODWIN
*Research Coordinator, WHRI
Data Analyst*

ELIZABETH KALENTERIDIS
Research Assistant, FIR

CYNTHIA LIN
Research Coordinator

CAROLA MUÑOZ
Research Manager

HEATHER NOGA
Research Manager

SORAYA UTOKAPARCH
Finance Administrator

JESSE VEENSTRA
Research Manager

SARAH WISSMANN
Research Assistant

MARYAM YASINIAN
Research Coordinator

STAFF

TRAVIS BOULTER
Research Coordinator

STEVE CHAND
Laboratory Technician

SALLY CHEN
*Research Coordinator, Digital
Health*

JAYMIE CRISTOBAL
Research Assistant

DR. KATHRYN DEWAR
Senior Research Manager

SARA DERIKVAND
Research Manager

JENEESHA DHALIWAL
Research Assistant

SABINA DOBRER
Statistician, WHRI

REBECCA FRIESEN
Executive Assistant

SHANLEA GORDON
Research Manager, FIR

SARAH OSIFO
Communications Coordinator

BETH PAYNE
Research Manager, Digital Health

OLIVIA PATRICK
Communications Assistant

NICOLE PRESTLEY
*Manager, Research + Knowledge
Translation*

BEHEROZE SATTHA
Research Laboratory Coordinator

MAHFUZA SREYA
Research Technician

NICOLA ST-ONGE
Research Project Manager

JULIA SANTANA-PARRILLA
Research Coordinator

STEPHEN RISTOW
Research Assistant

ROSIE TWOMEY
Research Development Facilitator

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

DR. BRITTANY BINGHAM

DR. KRISTIN CAMPBELL

MS. GENESA GREENING

DR. GILLIAN HANLEY

DR. ANGELA KAIDA

DR. DEBORAH MONEY

DR. SARAH MUNRO

DR. JOELLE LEMOULT

DR. LUIS NACUL

DR. TONIA NICHOLLS

DR. JERILYNN PRIOR

DR. ELIZABETH RIDEOUT

DR. CAROLINE SANDERS

DR. LAURA SCHUMMERS

DR. SANDESH SHIVANANDA

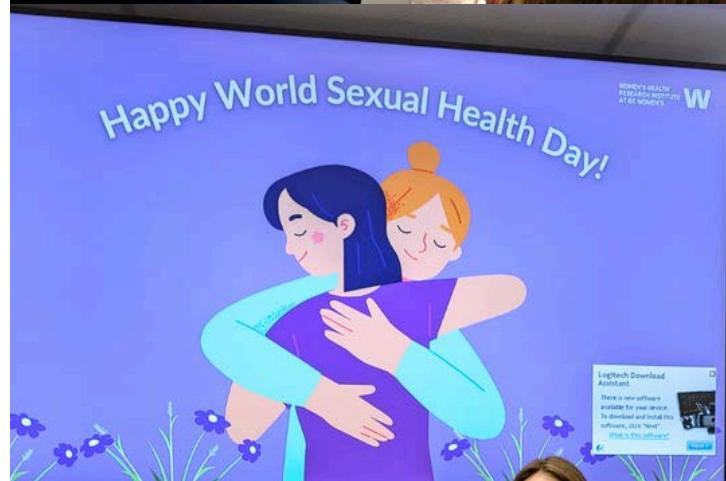
EVENTS

World Sexual Health Day 2024

World Sexual Health Day took place on September 4, 2024. This year's theme was "Positive Relationships". The WHRI hosted researchers, trainees, and guest speakers from Options for Sexual Health (OPT) and the World Association for Sexual Health. The event featured 14 short presentations on topics related to sexual health and wellbeing, including mental health, pregnancy, and contraception.

2024 World Sexual Health Day highlighted the great impact that trainee research can have on the overall research landscape, as well as on government policy. Notably, Catherine Xu and Carissa Chan (medical and pharmacy students at UBC, respectively) were invited to connect with OPT after the event to discuss their research on Mifepristone access in BC, and how the findings could impact OPT's services as well as conversations with the Government of BC.

The WHRI hosts regular events that aim to mobilize science, amplify important topics in women's health, and foster connection within our broad community of researchers and research partners.



10 Years of the WHRI Symposium



On March 7th, 2025, the annual Women's Health Research Symposium celebrated its 10th year with the theme "Driving Equity Through Healthcare Innovation". The event coincided with International Women's Day and marked the start of Women's Health Research Month. We were joined in-person and over Zoom by 267 attendees, who were welcomed by Executive Director Dr. Lori Brotto, Syilx Métis Elder Sheila Nyman.

The event included a keynote talk from Dr. Brittany Bingham on "Indigenous Women's Wellness: ReSearching, ReClaiming and ReMatriating", which emphasized the idea of matriarchy outside of gender roles, honoring accountability and building lasting supports for future generations.

There was also a spotlight talk on an emerging women's health issue from Dr. Laura Arbour on "Silent Genomes: Addressing the challenges of equitable access to genetic/genomic diagnosis", as well as rapid-fire research presentations that highlighted examples of equity-focused and person-centred BC-based research. The day highlighted the vital importance of Indigenous ways of knowing and how we can all benefit from matriarchal wisdom in health system transformation.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Menopause in the Media

2024-2025 saw significant media coverage for WHRI's work toward building better understanding of menopause.

The HER-BC report. The findings of the HER-BC Study Report were covered by multiple top-tier media outlets, including [CBC](#), [Vancouver Sun](#), [CityNews Vancouver](#), and [CTV News Vancouver](#).

In total, 10 media interviews were secured, with coverage representing 22.9 million impressions.

King Charles III Coronation Medal

Dr. Wendy Norman, Dr. Brigid Dineley, Dr. David Huntsman and Dr. Rachel Ollivier (pictured left to right) received the [King Charles III Coronation Medal](#) in January 2025, for their significant contributions to the advancement of women's health in Canada.



Royal Society of Canada Inductees

On November 8, 2024, Dr. Gina Ogilvie and Dr. Manish Sadarangani (pictured left to right) were inducted into the esteemed [Royal Society of Canada](#).

Dr. Ogilvie is a Professor and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in the Global Control of HPV (human papillomavirus)-Related Disease and Cancer. Her career is dedicated to eliminating cervical cancer in Canada and globally.

Dr. Sadarangani studies vaccines and infectious diseases. He is chair of the Canadian Association for Immunization Research, Evaluation and Education, and the director of the Vaccine Evaluation Centre (VEC) at BC Children's Hospital Research Institute.



Other Awards



Dr. Patricia Janssen received the Digital Health Canada's [Women Leaders in Digital Health Award](#).



Dr. Laura Schummers received the [Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC Early in Career Award](#) (2025).

The following WHRI researchers were also winners in the 2024 UBC Faculty of Medicine awards cycle:



Daniela Palombo 2024 Killam Research Prize (Arts and Humanities – Early Category)



Todd Woodward 2024 Killam Research Prize (Applied Science, Medicine, Sciences – Established Category)



Ali Bashashati 2024 UBC Faculty of Medicine Distinguished Achievement Award (Overall Excellence – Early Career)



Manish Sadarangani 2024 UBC Faculty of Medicine Distinguished Achievement Award (Overall Excellence – Mid-Career)



Lori Brotto 2024 UBC Faculty of Medicine Distinguished Achievement Award (Overall Excellence as a Senior Faculty)



ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Launch of the POETIC Network Website

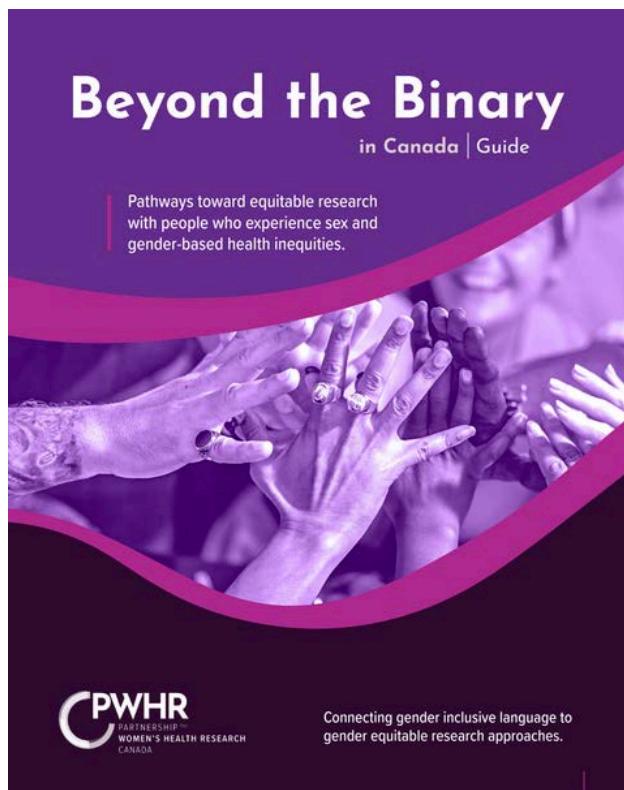
Principal Investigator: Dr. Charissa Patricelli

In August 2024, the [POETIC \(Perinatal Opioid Exposures, Trajectories, Insights, and Concentrations\) Research Network website](#) went live. POETIC is a pan-Canadian initiative formed in 2022 with the goal of addressing the growing health challenges associated with substance use during pregnancy, including neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS).

The POETIC Network website was created to highlight the team's work, which is focused on improving outcomes related to opioid use in pregnancy. The site was co-created with POETIC Co-Investigator and Matriarch Elder Roberta Price, and the POETIC Patient Advisory Committee.



National version of Beyond the Binary released in November 2024



The WHRI continues to drive transformation of gender-equitable health research with an institute-led, community engaged initiative: **Beyond the Binary**. The project is anchored in person centered, trauma informed, justice oriented and integrated knowledge translation approaches. It recognizes that the phrase “women’s health” does not wholly encompass the diversity of identities and lived experiences that our research supports.

In its first phase, the initiative focused on British Columbia and resulted in a provincial guide for incorporating gender equitable practices into health research.

Principal Investigators: Dr. Lori Brotto, BC Pomeroy

The second phase involved a national scale-up and French translation of the guide. The Beyond the Binary in Canada guide was made possible through a collaboration with the Partnership for Women’s Health Research Canada (PWHR), a national network of research institutes focused on research and knowledge generation toward improving health and healthcare for women, trans, and non-binary people. The cross-collaboration and amplification facilitated by PWHR were instrumental in scaling up the BTB guide for a national audience.

The guide was released in October 2024 at a National Knowledge Exchange hosted by PWHR and the WHRI. In November 2024, the BTB project received funding in the form of a CIHR Planning and Dissemination Grant to support implementation of the guide in research ethics boards. This implementation is now underway, led by Dr. Sofia Ahmed supported by existing BTB Community and Research Task Force members, with new members from the PHSA Community including Dr. Kathryn Dewar, Dr. Holly Longstaff, and Brittany Schichter. This next phase focuses on an initiative to inform and mobilize nationally appropriate, acceptable, and feasible guidance and resources to advance gender-equitable, person-centered, trauma-informed women’s health research.

HER-BC Study Report

Principal Investigator: Dr. Lori Brotto

The WHRI, in partnership with Pacific Blue Cross and the BC Women's Health Foundation, conducted the first provincial study of menopause, the [Health and Economics Research on Midlife Women in British Columbia \(HER-BC\) study](#). The HER-BC study recruited 2,133 participants from across geographic regions in BC to participate in a comprehensive survey on their experiences of menopause. Of the initial group, 275 individuals were excluded due to ineligibility, leaving a final sample of 1,858.

In phase 2 of the study, 20 participants were recruited to participate in qualitative interviews exploring barriers to accessing menopause-related care. The HER-BC Study Report, released November 2024 at the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade Health Care Forum, summarized the high-level findings from the study. Based on the research, the report makes 5 recommendations to better respond to and support women in midlife.



5 Recommendations



Public health campaigns that raise awareness of menopause symptoms.



Multidisciplinary collaboration and education for health care providers.



Supportive work place.



Workplace accommodations and prevention of workplace discrimination.



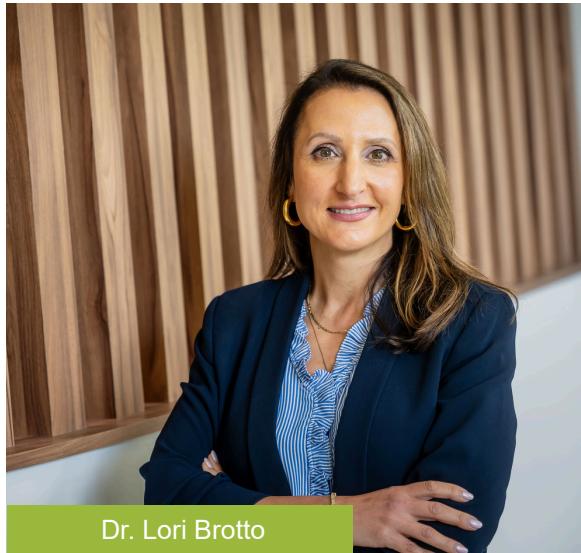
More research.

Next Steps

As a follow-up to the HER-BC study, the Mapping Menopause project seeks to fulfil the 5th recommendation and understand current knowledge gaps and research priorities. We are currently collecting survey responses from clinicians and members of the public to discover the most pressing questions related to menopause.

Principal Investigator Dr. Lori Brotto was awarded two knowledge translation grants from Health Research BC. **The Convening and Collaborating Award (MSHR)** was awarded to Dr. Brotto with co-lead Dr. Stephanie Rhone (now Fisher) of BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, to support the Mapping Menopause survey and related initiatives.

The Reach Award (MSHR) was awarded to Dr. Brotto and community partner Shirley Weir of Menopause Chicks to support dissemination of HER-BC findings with the public and with healthcare practitioners.



Dr. Lori Brotto



Dr. Stephanie Rhone



Shirley Weir

New Clinical Guideline for Diagnosing Endometriosis

Principle Investigators: Dr. Catherine Allaire, Dr. Paul Yong, Dr. Kate Wahl

In May 2024, Drs. Catherine Allaire, Paul Yong and Kate Wahl co-authored a national clinical practice guideline: Society for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada's *Diagnosis and Impact of Endometriosis – A Canadian Guideline*. Endometriosis, which affects up to 10% of Canadian women, is an inflammatory disease characterized by the growth of endometrial-like tissue outside the uterus that causes chronic pelvic pain, painful periods, painful sexual intercourse, bowel and bladder symptoms, and infertility.

This guideline will support health care providers and policymakers involved in the care of those impacted by endometriosis and addresses the need for earlier recognition of endometriosis to facilitate timely access to care and support. Uptake of this guideline will result in increased awareness and education about the impact and approach to diagnosis and will support timely access to care for patients and families affected by endometriosis.

New National Clinical Guideline for Reducing Perinatal HIV Transmission

Principal Investigators: Dr. Deborah Money, Dr. Karen Tulloch

In June 2024, two WHRI researchers (Dr. Deborah Money and Dr. Karen Tulloch) co-authored a national clinical practice guideline: Society for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada's *Care of Pregnant Women Living with HIV and Interventions to Reduce Perinatal Transmission*. The use of antiretroviral therapy in pregnancy has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of perinatal transmission. Despite this, in Canada, optimal access and adherence to antiretroviral therapy in pregnancy has not been universally achieved, leading to increasing rates of perinatal transmission, which have significant morbidity and mortality implications for the child. This guideline outlines best practice for perinatal management of pregnant women living with HIV and practices for the reduction of perinatal transmission of HIV toward a target of eradication of perinatal transmission. Uptake of this guideline will confer health benefits to both mother and child by optimizing maternal health and preventing perinatal HIV transmission.

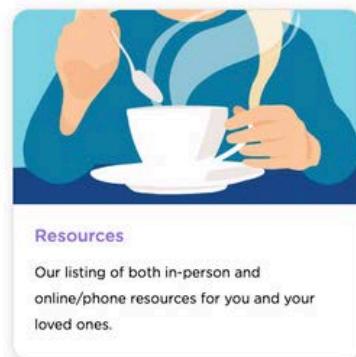
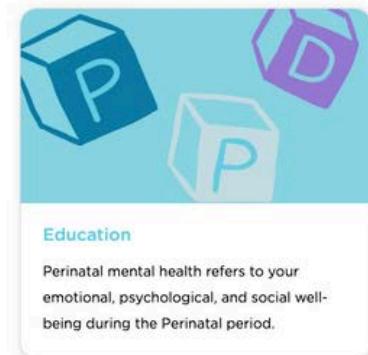
BC Women's launches research-driven website to connect people experiencing postpartum anxiety and postpartum depression with evidence-based local resources

Principal Investigator: Dr. Lori Brotto

Catalyzed by a patient and provider identified knowledge gap and informed by findings from an integrated Knowledge Translation research project led by Dr. Lori Brotto, a new online platform, postpartumcare.ca, was created to provide access to postpartum mental health care and information for postpartum individuals in British Columbia.

This website was co-developed in partnership with postpartum care providers at Reproductive Mental Health at BC Women's Hospital, and patient partners, and was made possible with generous funding support from the Diamond Foundation and Gillespie Family Foundation, via the BC Women's Health Foundation. The research demonstrated the effectiveness and useability of a digital psychoeducational resource for postpartum depression and anxiety among participants and demonstrated that engagement with the platform significantly reduced symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety compared to a control group¹.

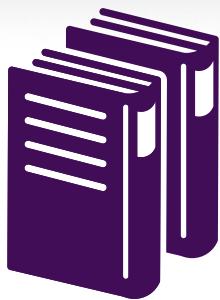
These findings also exposed a critical need: new parents need easy access to clear, reliable and region-specific support. The resulting website, postpartumcare.ca, launched in February 2025, provides postpartum individuals with expert guidance, local services, reassurance that what they are feeling is valid and was designed to make finding help simple.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

1,332

NEW PUBLICATIONS



753

WHRI INVESTIGATORS



1,086

RESEARCH TRAINEES



\$52.1M

TOTAL RESEARCH FUNDING

3.9k

INSTAGRAM PAGE ENGAGEMENT



112k

LINKEDIN POST IMPRESSIONS



215

YOUTUBE TOTAL FOLLOWERS



24.1k

MAILCHIMP SENDS



39k

WEBSITE ENGAGED SESSIONS



Top Referral Websites



3,927 (28.31%) Sessions

1,771 (29.51%) Engaged Sessions



416 (3%) Sessions

212 (3.53%) Engaged Sessions



312 (2.25%) Sessions

165 (2.75%) Engaged Sessions



Provincial Health
Services Authority

268 (1.93%) Sessions

142 (2.37%) Engaged Sessions

Women's Health Research Institute

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References

1. Lawrence, C. G., Breau, G., Yang, L., Hellerstein, O. S., Hippman, C., Kennedy, A. L., Ryan, D., Shulman, B., & Brotto, L. A. (2024). Effectiveness of a web-enabled psychoeducational resource for postpartum depression and anxiety among women in British Columbia. *Archives of women's mental health*, 27(6), 995–1010.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-024-01468-8>

