

# *Connected* It Takes a Village



**VHA** Home HealthCare  
Creating More Independence

2018  
Annual  
Report

## **Vision**

Accessible, quality  
care for all who  
need it

## **Mission**

Creating possibilities  
for more  
independence

## **Core Beliefs** Our care must be:

**Client-driven** because what matters most to clients and families  
is what counts

**Inclusive** and **committed** to serving the most vulnerable  
in our communities

**Inspired** and **creative** delivered by a skilled team that  
has tremendous heart

**Integrated** and **collaborative** to unearth innovative  
answers to complex challenges

**Spectacular** and **continuously** focused on  
quality improvement and safety



# MESSAGE from VHA's President & CEO

*"All is connected... no one thing can change by itself."*

Paul Hawken

2018 was undeniably a year of unprecedented change in the Ontario health care landscape—both because of the growing proliferation of technology and new models of care and of course, the change in government.

All of it is exciting and we are definitely entering a “fasten-your-seat-belt” era in home care! What is most compelling about the journey we’re embarking on is the increased focus on connectedness. There’s greater awareness that the system’s goals of better outcomes, improved efficiencies and an enhanced client experience can only be derived if we “connect the dots” amongst the service providers within the system.

This notion is embedded in our current strategic pillar goal of being *More Connected* and we’re grateful that 2018 was a banner year for exciting partnerships. Our research team not only secured an additional two million dollars in funding to support key studies, but continues to boast a bright future with many more dollars in the pipeline, expanding our network and collaborative efforts—including partnerships with Michael Garron Hospital, SickKids, the University of Toronto and University of Waterloo to name a few.

We continue our efforts to be *More Attuned* to client, caregiver and partner voices both at the point of care, and also on committees, workgroups and on VHA’s Client and Carer Advisory Council. Throughout the year clients and their caregivers contributed their lived experiences on a number of initiatives.

I’m incredibly grateful to our staff, service providers, volunteers and Board of Directors whose commitment, expertise and insights allow us to grow and broaden our reach. To our service partners, funders, donors and referral

sources: thank you for your unwavering support in helping us achieve our mission of creating possibilities for more independence and in supporting us in our quest to seek out *More Inspired Solutions*.

2018 was another year of laser focus not only in improving the quality of care and on our internal operations. Everything from finding operating efficiencies and process improvements within our electronic health records, service scheduling, recruitment, etc – you name it, we were on it. It was also an “all hands on deck” year to creatively find ways to address a province-wide personal support human resources shortage and minimize the negative impact this has on clients, families and staff alike.

Flexibility and a fresh approach is exactly what all of us need to embrace if we are serious about transforming health care in Ontario. While I’m cautiously optimistic about the new government’s vision for health care, we all know the devil is in the details. As an experienced and respected home and community support provider, VHA has an obligation to influence and help flesh out these details and we are keen to do just that.

We need to keep our clients, their caregivers and our workforce in the foreground as decisions are made. At the same time, we can’t let the implementation of big structural changes “mire us in the muck.” We must be bold, we must be brave and prepared to take risks and disrupt tradition—whether through technology, processes, systemic change or (most likely) all of the above—to make care better for all.

Carol Annett

President and CEO, VHA Home HealthCare



# MESSAGE

## from VHA's Board Chair



Since I joined VHA's Board of Directors in 2016, I've been impressed by the collaborative efforts of VHA in realizing its mission of creating possibilities for more independence. This is an organization firmly rooted in working together for the greater good of the clients and families it serves. So as the incoming board chair during a time of massive transformation within Ontario's health care system, I was excited—the timing couldn't be better! VHA's character as an open, thoughtful and hard-working partner is what the system needs more of and what will ultimately unite the various—and often siloed—components of our system.

As the government tackles hallway medicine, the services VHA provides will be an integral part of meeting that challenge. VHA services support clients and their caregivers so they can thrive at home and in their communities. Partnerships such as the one developed in East Toronto with Michael Garron Hospital, Woodgreen Community Services, South Riverdale Community Health Centre and the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network to get people off hallway gurneys and safely back into their homes are the kind of collaborations that will prepare us for work on Ontario Health Teams in the not-so-distant future. Programs such as extreme cleaning and hoarding support, which help people avoid eviction and live in a safe space so clients can stay safe in their homes, exist because VHA responded to the needs of our clients. VHA has built strong partnerships to develop and deliver these programs. These partnerships and linkages are a solid foundation on which to build new alliances with Ontario Health Teams, hospitals and other service providers as the government works to create a more integrated system.

Whether it's point-of-care staff and service providers,

back office support, the leadership team or volunteers—it's the people of VHA who really make the difference, working tirelessly to ensure that VHA provides quality care. Community work isn't for the faint of heart, but it is essential to an increasingly older population. To meet these greater demands, we will need to be more efficient with our resources. Capacity building is a struggle for the home care industry and to that end VHA has remained relentlessly focused on growing its talented and compassionate team (now over 2,700 people)—be it through partnerships with George Brown College, re-doubling retention efforts or looking abroad to expand our PSW roster. This is our village: one that gives us the strength to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

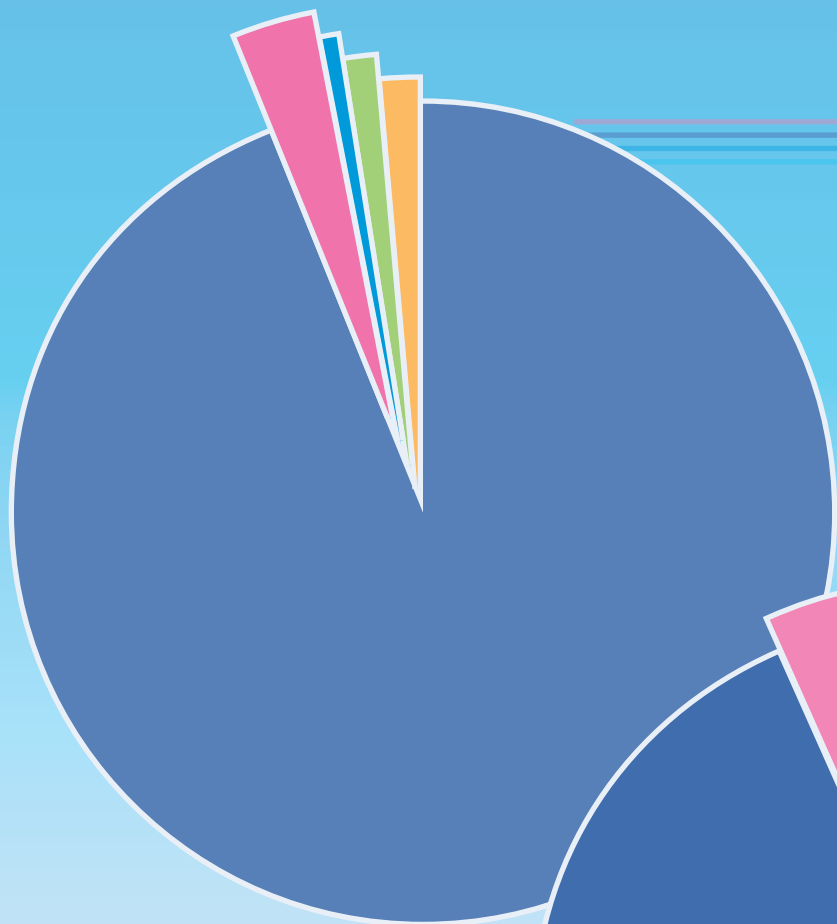
VHA has a strong foundation to meet these as the health care system continues to evolve. We have an opportunity to show continued leadership in delivering exemplary services to our clients, developing partnerships across the health care system and in our communities, and being part of innovative solutions to support our clients, caregivers, staff and service providers. I am looking forward to building on our strengths, as VHA rises to the opportunities ahead. I am honoured and humbled to be part of this village.

**Karen Singh**

*VHA Board Chair*



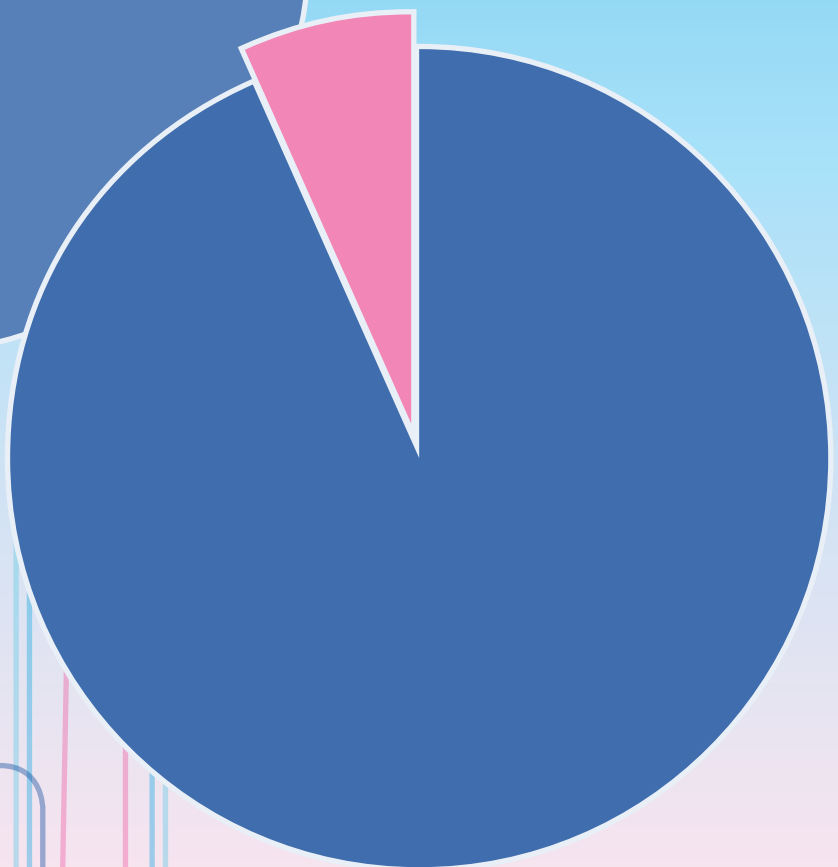




## Revenue 2018

\$142,101,843

● LHINs	94.2%
● Client Fees	2.9%
● United Way	0.7%
● Municipal	1.1%
● Other	1.1%



## Expenses 2018

\$137,957,989

● Salaries / Benefits / Purchased Services	93.5%
● Building/Operations	6.5%



# VHA by the Numbers



In  
**2018**

**462**

Extreme Cleaning clients were able to stay safe in their home and avoid eviction

**158**

Hoarding Support clients received critical services through programs like VHA's Hoarding Support Volunteer Program and through the Toronto Hoarding Support Services Network, of which VHA is the lead

**41,014**

Hours of staff and service provider Education and Training delivered



**\$280K**

from VHA's Simple Comforts and Ideas to Innovation Action Funds were used to support clients' essential needs and provide staff and service providers with the resources to kickstart a new innovative project

**72**

Client and Carer Partners provided their sage advice to co-design and/or improve services

**3,079,745**  
units of  
service delivered



**2,717**  
staff and  
service  
providers

**107,800**  
clients admitted  
to care where  
and when they  
needed it

**9,000**  
hours of parent  
relief provided

**67,767**  
hours of  
charitable  
community  
support services  
delivered to  
clients  
in need

Our volunteers gave  
of their talents and  
enthusiasm to the  
tune of  
**6,292**  
hours of volunteer  
service











# People



*"Be the reason someone smiles. Be the reason someone feels loved and believes in the goodness in people."*

Ray T. Bennett

## Profile in Partnership: LeZlie Lee Kam



LeZlie Lee Kam became a client partner with VHA in 2016. She often describes herself as a "proud brown, Trini, Carib, callaloo, differently-abled, queer dyke elder" and she is all of that and more!

In her late 40s, LeZlie was ravaged by psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, and had to go through four months of physical rehabilitation. "Many of us queer seniors start going back into the closet when we start receiving home care because we have to choose whether we want to be our whole selves and experience homophobia, or hide in the closet and get the kind of health care that we need," says LeZlie.

Her personal life stories and contributions have inspired many changes at VHA by creating more awareness about home care provider interactions with clients of diverse identities. "I was given this opportunity to work with PSWs at VHA. They have a lot of power to change and improve the lives of queer seniors and that's why I'm doing what I do with VHA," she says.

LeZlie estimates she has worked with at least 500 VHA staff. "I come in during the workshops and I do a 20-minute presentation of my lived experience. When I first started, I'd ask the group, 'How many of you work with LGBTQ clients?' and no one would put their hand up. But now, because they know what signs to look for, just about every single PSW is working with LGBTQ clients."

LeZlie sits on the Client Carer Advisory Council and is a member of VHA's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and

Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2S) committee. She appreciates that VHA is the only home care organization that she knows of that has taken the initiative to do this work. "When I'm asked for my advice, I see things happening in action, usually within a matter of months if not weeks. I'm a person of action. This is why I like working with VHA, because I see things happening immediately," she says.

## Honouring a Lifetime of Achievement

On October 4, the Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists (OSOT) recognized Barbara Cawley, VHA's Vice-



President of Client Services, with its Honourary Life Membership Award. The award acknowledges Barbara's profound impact on clinical practice within VHA and across the home care sector over her amazing 40-year career. Among her many achievements, Barbara has spearheaded VHA's efforts to co-design every

aspect of our work with patients and family caregivers. She continually promotes the growth of occupational therapy within the LHINs, advocates for occupational therapists (OTs) with the Ministry and its Assistive Device Program division, and strategically expands OT services within VHA.

Barbara has paved the way for hundreds of OTs by leading taskforces, project committees, think-tanks, advisory groups, steering committees and diverse teams with a tireless commitment to collaborative quality care. The profession and clients have many reasons to be grateful for her contributions and passion.



## Spectacular Spirit Surprise

The holiday season can be anything but bright if you are going through a difficult time. VHA Home HealthCare once again brought a bit of cheer to people who could use a pick-me-up during the season with our Spectacular Spirit Surprises. Staff nominated their clients and colleagues who they felt could use some special recognition over the holidays. Of the 100-plus submissions, 25 nominees were selected to receive surprises. Members of VHA's communications team arranged for gifts—ranging from flowers to spa days to sports tickets to a much-needed reclining chair—to be delivered to the deserving winners.

**Watch six of the 2018 VHA Spectacular Spirit Surprise winners we caught on film!**

<http://bit.ly/Spectacular18>



## David Shaul: Sharing a Lifetime of Experience

At age 94, Dr. David Shaul is full of life, laughter and new responsibilities as one of the newest members of VHA's Client and Carer Advisory Council. A retired obstetrician and gynecologist, he recently began receiving services from VHA on the advice of his children. Now he has five amazing workers who visit him throughout the week to provide support and care, and he has joined the Advisory Council to share his lived experience with us.

David was director of the course on Human Sexuality at the faculty of Medicine at University of Toronto, and also the host of TV and radio shows about health. "Listeners would call into the radio station and ask me medical questions," explains David. "My solution was always communication. I never gave them answers, I simply taught them how to find the answers and how to talk to each other."

David brings his strength and expertise in communication to the Client and Carer Advisory Council. "The reason this council is so important is because we're communicating," he says. "Communication is key. I'm learning a lot more about what VHA is trying to do for me and other clients, and they're learning a lot more about what we, the clients, would like to receive in care. I'm impressed with all the people who are part of the council."





## Heart of Home Care Awards

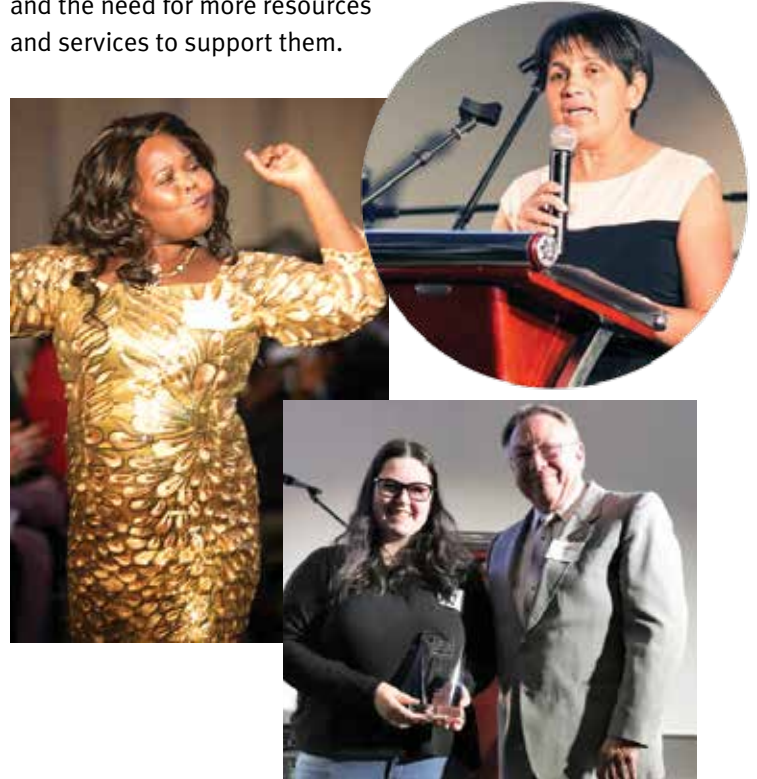
For the 14th year, VHA Home HealthCare honoured caregiving heroes at the annual Heart of Home Care Awards ceremony in Toronto. The event, held on National Caregiver's Day in April, recognized the extraordinary efforts of friends and family members who go above and beyond the call of duty to provide a loved one who is disabled, elderly, or chronically ill, with the support needed to live at home with more independence.

Three winners received awards this year. Zulfikar Alladina won the Caregiver to an Adult Award in recognition of his dedication as the full-time caregiver for his father, Sultan. Madolina Sasa was the Caregiver to a Child Award winner. In addition to her demanding job as a VHA Extreme Cleaner, Madolina always wears a smile as she cares for her 17-year-old daughter Joy, who was born with Cerebral Palsy, is non-verbal and uses a wheelchair. This year, we introduced a new award category to honour an often overlooked group: children and young adults who perform caregiver duties. The first Young Caregiver award went to Taylor Allen, an active teenager and A-student who is also a caregiver to her brother, Alex, who has severe autism.



Nominees and winners shared lunch together before the main event. This special day included: the debut exhibition of caregiver pictures shot as part of the VHA PhotoVoice research project (in part funded by the Beryl Institute); an inspiring keynote presentation by Manjusha Pawagi, author of *Love and Laughter in the Time of Chemotherapy*, and the award ceremony. The afternoon ended with a rousing performance by 'the new First Lady of Soul' Ania Soul.

As this event gains in popularity, the Heart of Home Care Awards continues to shine a light on caregiver experiences and the need for more resources and services to support them.



**Watch Heart of Home Care Award Videos at**  
<http://bit.ly/HOHC2018>



## Client Choice Awards

In what has become one of the highlights of the year for VHA, we honoured 10 special staff with the Barbara Blackstock Cody Client Choice Award in May. As the name implies, this award celebrates VHA staff and service providers nominated by clients and their families for their outstanding work and support. We received hundreds of nominations for the Client Choice Awards again in 2018, signaling that VHA staff and service providers continue to take our commitment to spectacular care to heart!

VHA is grateful to our nominees and these winners for their incredible work:

- Nancy Becker, *Personal Support Worker*
- Carmencita Cruz, *Personal Support Worker*
- Marife Felibello, *Personal Support Coordinator*
- Christine Froude, *Personal Support Worker*
- Yolanda Lacap, *Personal Support Worker*
- Yeshi Namdhak, *Personal Support Worker*
- Medhanit Negusse, *Personal Support Worker*
- Trudi Steward, *Registered Practical Nurse*
- Janeth Valenciano, *Registered Nurse*
- Debbie Zinger, *Personal Support Worker*



**Watch the amazing videos of our workers and their clients online at**  
<https://bit.ly/2018ClientChoiceWinners>





## Connecting with Clients and Caregivers



Since VHA began making concerted efforts to incorporate the client and caregiver voice in every aspect of our work, the initiative has matured as clients and caregivers help to shape its direction. Over the years, the client and caregiver voice has contributed to many improvements at VHA.

Our client and caregiver voice staff champions, Barbara Cawley, Vice-President of Client Services, and Stacey Ryan, Client Voice Liaison, were in high demand this year, delivering many presentations on VHA's client voice successes and challenges. The pair presented at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Patient and Family Engagement in Health Information Technology Symposium, and at a webinar on the Client Voice journey for leaders in home care and ambulatory care in New Brunswick. A delegation of Japanese community care workers learned about client voice on a fall visit to VHA in November, and the next day Stacey was a panellist at the International Forum on Care and Caregivers at the Munk School.

The Client and Caregiver Advisory Council continues to be very active, with members describing 2018 as a year when they felt they had even greater input and impact than previously.

The Advisory Council's input was crucial on a number of panels, committees and projects including: hiring panels to fill key positions at VHA, Medically Complex Children and Adults with Cognitive Impairment Steering Committees, and the design and testing of a performance feedback tool for PSWs, to name a just few.

We are exceedingly grateful to all our Advisory Council members—whether veterans or new members—whose experiences and vision for good health care will be invaluable to VHA as we move into the future.

**Visit the link for more details on key accomplishments.**  
<https://bit.ly/ClientVoiceImpact>









# Community

*"Without a sense of caring there can be no sense of community."*

Anthony J. D'Angelo



## Peer to Peer Stroke Support

After her stroke nine years ago, Jane learned firsthand the isolation, frustration and anger that goes with this condition. "When I was in the hospital there was no one to talk to about what I was going through. Nurses and doctors told me what they thought would happen, but they only know what they've seen through their work, not what it's actually like to have a stroke," says Jane.

In response to this need, VHA, March of Dimes and The Toronto Stroke Network launched the Peers Fostering Hope Community Pilot (PFH). PFH partners VHA clients who are recent stroke survivors with trained peer volunteers. The three organizations bring unique strengths to the initiative: the March of Dimes has expertise in peer programming at hospitals; Toronto Stroke Network contributes knowledge and insight into stroke recovery; and VHA brings expertise in home and community care. Jane says that there's a real need for this type of program because there "are plenty of groups out there for other illnesses like cancer, but not enough for the stroke community."



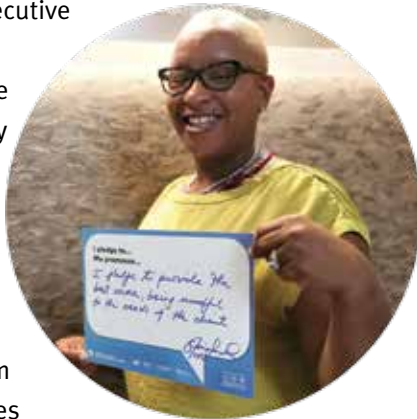
Through the PFH program, Jane was paired with Deb, who is recovering from a severe stroke that affected her mobility and use of her arm and hand. During weekly visits or phone calls, they share their stories and experiences and talk about concerns and fears. This connection provides hope, reassurance and emotional support for both women. "I enjoy talking to Jane," Deb says fondly. "She talks about what she's gone through and what's worked for her. It helps me know what's coming."

Jane loves celebrating each win—even seemingly minor ones—with Deb because "stroke recovery is such a slow, slow process," she explains. Jane and Deb's relationship has offered a trusting and meaningful connection "that works both ways," insists Jane. "Since my stroke, I can't work and there are certain things I can't do. This program helps me feel better about what I'm doing or not doing. It helps me feel as if I'm working and giving back, and that means a lot."



## Change Day

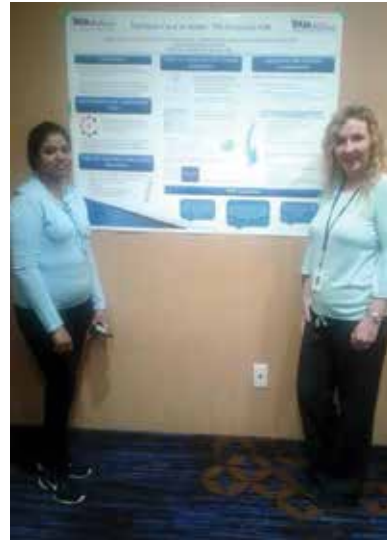
For the second consecutive year, VHA joined organizations across the province for Change Day Ontario on November 17, 2018. The initiative, spearheaded by Health Quality Ontario, empowers people within the health system to make positive changes by making pledges to take actions, big or small, to improve compassionate quality care.



In the weeks leading up to Change Day, VHA staff and service providers actively shared their pledges, ideas and stories by posting pledge cards around our offices, posting them on social media and on the Change Day website. And, just like last year, VHA staff and service providers were standouts among Change Day participants. Stacie-Ann London, one of our Care Team Supervisors, won the “most liked pledge” in the Ontario-wide health care initiative with her commitment to “provide the best care by being mindful to the needs of the client.” Stacie’s pledge garnered 48 likes and 25 glowing comments from colleagues and peers. Last year, another VHA staff person, Kartini Mistry, earned the same achievement on the Change Day website for her pledge. It looks like we now have a title to defend for Change Day 2019!



## PSWs in Palliative Care



“There are a lot of misconceptions about what Personal Support Workers (PSWs) actually do,” says Sharon Tonner-Clarkson, VHA Palliative Care PSW and Team Coach. “It’s much more than grooming, dressing and bathing. And while these jobs are so important, the close relationships that we build with our clients

and their families are much deeper.” Sharon and the Central East Palliative PSW team this year began work to challenge these perceptions and shed more light on the vital role PSWs play in end-of-life care. “Palliative PSWs are there for families and clients from diagnosis to the last hours of life and through death, grief and bereavement,” notes Sharon. “We navigate difficult family dynamics, have really hard conversations and aim to make death as comfortable and as peaceful as possible. We only have one crack at it.” After working with her supervisor, Akil Ade, to develop specialized training for Palliative PSWs that recognizes this broad role, they were invited to present at the Care of the Actively Dying: Melding Quality with Compassion Palliative Care Conference. Akil, Sharon and their colleagues Latha Jaya and Kimberly Murphy presented their poster Palliative Care at Home: The Essential PSW as the first VHA PSWs to take the lead on researching and presenting. This VHA team provided a voice for PSWs to share their experiences and create meaningful changes to their processes.



## Pride Month

In June, VHA enthusiastically joined in Pride Month celebrations in Toronto. For the first time, we had a presence at Pride's premier event, the Pride Parade, on the final weekend of the month-long celebration. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2S) VHA staff, service providers and their families, friends and

allies marched in the parade to represent VHA as a leader in supporting the LGBTQ2S communities.

In celebration, we also shared with staff and service providers an LGBTQ2S Guide developed by LeZlie Lee Kam and members of VHA's Client and Carer Advisory Council. The guide offered a list of affirming spaces for older LGBTQ2S adults including events, programs, services and businesses in Toronto.



## New Online Palliative Care Toolkit Designed by VHA Caregiver Partners

Zinta Erdmanis and her family were thrust into a new, frightening and confusing reality when Zinta's husband was diagnosed with ALS and immediately deemed palliative. A VHA client and family partner, she shared her experience of feeling stressed and her sense of feeling lost during that early period—a common theme expressed by caregivers on VHA's Palliative Care Committee. The committee wanted to ease these feelings for people facing a similar situation by developing a toolkit for them to use.

"Caregivers can already feel overwhelmed by the situation, so we wanted a way to make it easier to get relevant information without taking a lot of time or energy sifting through it," says Christina Darlington, VHA's project manager for our new palliative digital toolkit.

Launched in December of 2018, the toolkit provides relevant resources thoughtfully chosen by caregivers, including articles on providing palliative care at home, support links to community resources, knowledge, tips and planning, and upcoming events and information sessions.

The palliative toolkit is another example of the invaluable ways client and caregiver partners have positively influenced VHA's work, and is sure to provide exactly what individuals and families dealing with a palliative diagnosis need in a way that is useful to them.

**See the toolkit here.**

<https://www.vha.ca/palliative/>



## A Second Serving of PIES

Approximately 50 participants representing paediatric nurses, personal support workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and registered dietitians attended VHA's second annual Paediatric Interprofessional Education Symposium (PIES). Organized by VHA's Children with Complex Medical Needs Committee, the event was an opportunity for care providers from all disciplines to address service questions when working with children to support their cross-professional peers. By all measures it was a huge success.

Parent partner Tonya Martin led a presentation on the successes and challenges of coordinating care for a child with complex medical needs. Attendees, including OTs, PTs, RDs, Nurses and PSWs from VHA, also had the chance to share information and experiences with each other, answering a range of questions, such as "can you provide physiotherapy exercises for someone who experiences seizures?" and "as a PSW, what is the most challenging task that you were asked to do?" The opportunity to ask and answer questions with their colleagues was both productive and appreciated. Participants then developed interprofessional care plans together. Case study posters were made available to all VHA staff and service providers through VHA's intranet.

It was an incredible opportunity for all home care disciplines to share their unique perspectives and expertise and will ultimately improve care for children with complex medical needs and their families.



## VHA Playdate Benefits from Emajjin Foundation

The laughter of children with complex medical needs playing together will be heard again in 2019 thanks to the generosity of the Emajjin Children's Foundation. The foundation selected VHA's Playdate program as the beneficiary of its annual fundraising gala, a "Denim and Diamonds" themed event, on October 14, 2018 in Scarborough.

VHA Playdate is a unique program that gives kids with complex medical needs a rare and much-needed opportunity to come together and socialize, play and just have fun as kids should—all under caring supervision from skilled caregivers who are trained to work with medically fragile children.

"We are thrilled that the Emajjin Foundation's board saw the critical need for VHA's Playdate program and the value it brings to families with children with complex medical needs," says Dr. Kathryn Nichol, Vice President of Quality, Best Practice, Research and Education and Chief Nursing Executive at VHA. "Emajjin strives to partner with organizations that enhance the lives of children with disabilities to help them reach their full potential, so it is a perfect fit with VHA and our Playdate program, which lets kids be kids."

The VHA Playdate program was co-developed with client and caregiver partners who are parents of children with complex medical needs. A pilot of the program ran for two six-week sessions in 2017 to rave reviews. VHA has since been seeking funding to make the program permanent. With the Emajjin Foundation's donation, we are able to run two more sessions for these families in 2019.



## OT Integrated Palliative Team in Toronto Central

The palliative care team in the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area has expanded to include Occupational Therapists (OTs). "I really think this is a wonderful initiative," says VHA Toronto Central Regional Manager, Sandra Tedesco. "OT insights and expertise help us quickly handle equipment issues and help our clients—especially those who are receiving longer-term palliative services—live as comfortably and independently as possible." OTs are also well positioned to support clients with meaningful activities that add value and purpose so that clients are living their last days as fully as possible.

Since June 2018, VHA has been actively delivering an integrated model of care in the Toronto Central LHIN. Before, these care teams included the client's doctor, home care nurse(s) and personal support worker(s). But teams found that problems with equipment weren't easily addressed and referrals for an OT visit took time. "Toronto Central LHIN stepped up with the idea and our OTs were quick to volunteer to be part of this initiative. It's a great chance for them to join forces and be part of a team that really takes a holistic approach to palliative care to ensure the best possible journey."

VHA OT Colleen O'Toole notes that being part of an integrated team really opens up the lines of communication between the team and clients, respecting wishes and avoiding any confusion. It also helps proactively address issues that arise, because "situations can change rapidly. If I can have any part in easing someone's death, or providing some care for the family in their grief, I consider myself pretty lucky," she notes.



# RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

79

research  
partner  
organizations

**\$2 million**

currently invested into research projects, \$3 mill in pipeline

134

Co-investigators



30

active research  
studies

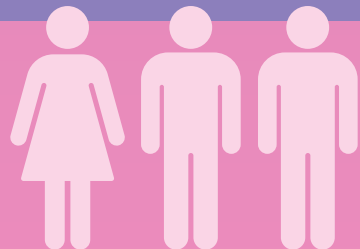


25

academic  
trainees

3

funded graduate students



7

manuscripts published







# Research



*"Research is creating new knowledge."*

Neil Armstrong

## Connecting to Curiosity

Designed to spark attendees' imaginations while educating them about the range of projects VHA's Research team is working on, VHA's first-ever Curiosity Carnival merged fun with science. Through interactive games, contests to identify new research ideas, fun giveaways and food, the Curiosity Carnival provided learning opportunities for VHA staff and service providers and sparked new ideas for the research team.

The event highlighted our MusicCare and PhotoVoice projects, virtual reality research with dementia patients, and other VHA research activities. In June, we brought a scaled-down version to the Health Shared Services Ontario (HSSO) conference, generating line-ups and earning rave reviews.



## Linking Innovation to the Big Picture

While innovation is a buzzword in many health circles these days, VHA took innovation to a deeper level in 2018 by developing an overarching innovation strategy. A Thought Leader Speaker Series was organized so staff could learn more about different aspects of fostering an innovative culture.

Megan Mitchell and Lee-Ann McAlear, who head up the Schulich Business School's Strategic Innovation and Leadership Program; Daniel Rose of The Moment, an innovation consultancy; and Marguerite Mcleod-Fleming of Innovation Culture Group all shared their insights on a range of innovation topics. These included characteristics of a creative work culture, effectively leading innovation, design thinking and managing change.

"We have lots of vehicles to generate innovation at VHA, and many creative people working here who know where



we need to innovate and how best to get started,” notes Pam Stoikopoulos, VHA’s Head Solutions Strategist, who organized the series. “We’re really looking to take innovation at VHA further by embedding it in every aspect of our culture,” she says.

## Reducing Falls, Improving Lives

Nearly 80,000 older adults are hospitalized each day because of a fall, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, and many of these injuries happen in tubs or showers. Grab bars, bathmats and other assistive devices can improve bathing safety and are often recommended by health-care professionals, but current clinical bathing equipment recommendations are based only on perceptions of safety, not clinical evidence.

With a \$450,000 grant from the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR), VHA is helping to develop evidence-based recommendations for preventing falls and improving safety during bathing transfers, so clinicians can better advise on bathroom safety. The research will also inform national building codes and provide clinical practice recommendations to occupational therapists.

Partnerships with leading clinicians and policy makers to support aging-in-place strategies will undoubtedly positively impact building planning and help prevent falls.



## Partnering with Junior Researchers

VHA’s Junior Research Development Program helps to find and reward promising young research scientists each year by co-funding three graduate students studying topics related to our research priority areas: supporting people with cognitive impairment; caring for children with medical complexities at home; and clinical and health service delivery in the community. We received a flurry of applications for the program in 2018, with three stars from the University of Toronto shining most brightly.



Joseph Donia is a Master’s student specializing in health policy. His project, *Patient and Public Involvement in Health Care Improvement Projects Involving Design*, focuses on understanding core assumptions that underpin patient and public involvement in health care improvement and innovation.



Husayn Marani is in the second year of his doctorate studying Health Services Research with an emphasis on Health Policy. His research interests include social care, social health protection, and caregiver welfare. His dissertation explores the costs of caring incurred by family caregivers of people living with dementia in Canadian communities.



Joanne Tay is a Registered Nurse with a background in paediatric nursing, who is pursuing her PhD in Nursing. Her research interest is to understand the family’s experience when living with an ill child. Her study, *Exploring the Healthy Siblings’ Coping and Adjustment Trajectory in Children with a Life-Threatening Condition*, aims to lay the foundation to develop interventions that can best support these families.

## From Hallway to Home

When emergency departments are overwhelmed by surges in visits that use all available beds, care spills into the hallways, which is unsafe, inefficient and undignified. This situation plays out repeatedly in Ontario, especially during flu season and over holidays when primary caregivers and clinics close or operate on reduced hours. VHA has partnered with Michael Garron Hospital, Woodgreen Community Services, South Riverdale CHC and the Toronto Central LHIN on a research project aimed at maintaining critical capacity and reducing “hallway medicine” in hospitals.

The research project explores three strategies: 1) Improving hospital emergency department efficiencies; 2) finding ways to serve patients outside of the emergency department; and 3) providing additional support in the community to facilitate discharging patients. VHA is involved in two of the three strategies. We are providing a nurse-led outreach team to deliver care and supports to individuals in the community as part of the second strategy. We are also involved in two aspects of the third strategy—specifically, providing PSW and HSW in-home supports and participating in a Home2Day pilot, enabling people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) to be discharged early from hospital.

Dr. Sandra McKay, VHA’s Director of Research, and Patrick Feng of the Institute of Health, Policy and Evaluation at the University of Toronto have created the evaluation framework for the project and will conduct the evaluation of nine critical capacity programs and three priority programs. The pair will then produce a report with recommendations on implementing effective strategies to address hallway medicine.

## Cultivating Quality Improvement Champions with the University Health Network (UHN)

The disparate topics of paediatric palliative care and isolation among seniors are the focus of two new initiatives created through the VHA-UHN Research Fellowship program. Launched in 2017, the fellowship gives two VHA service providers a year to explore and execute a solution to a health care challenge they’ve identified.



Tandiwe (Tandi) Betani, a VHA Registered Nurse, channeled her passion for improving children’s well-being into a project focused on filling the gap in resources available to community-based paediatric nurses. It aims to help them engage clients and family caregivers in ways that are

effective, meaningful and appropriate. Her project includes creating a virtual library of resources for nurses and aims to improve awareness, best practice and knowledge of nurses working with clients at this critical life stage.



Occupational Therapist Nadine Narain’s fellowship project seeks to expand VHA’s volunteer program and address seniors’ social isolation and loneliness.

The VHA-UHN Research Fellowship helps care providers be more involved in quality improvement and creates

great benefits for clients and the people who care for them.







## Board of Directors 2017-2018

VHA Home HealthCare is governed by an independent volunteer board of directors that provides leadership, expertise and time to support VHA's vision, mission and core beliefs. We are indebted to this team for its tremendous commitment and wise counsel.

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- Adrienne Largo, *Vice-Chair*
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\*(retired April 23, 2018)



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## Creating More Independence

### Head Office

30 Soudan Avenue, Suite 600, Toronto, ON M4S 1V6  
tel 416.489.2500 • toll-free 1.888.314.6622 • fax 416.482.8773



A DIVISION OF VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

### Branch Offices

#### Toronto

700 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 360, Toronto, ON M6A 3B4  
tel 416.489.2500 • fax 416.482.4627

#### London

400 York Street, Suite 203, London, ON N6B 3N2  
tel 519.645.2410 • fax 519.438.2682



#### Ottawa

2625 Queensview Drive, Suite 101, Ottawa, ON K2B 8K2  
tel 613.726.9823 • fax 613.726.7512

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