

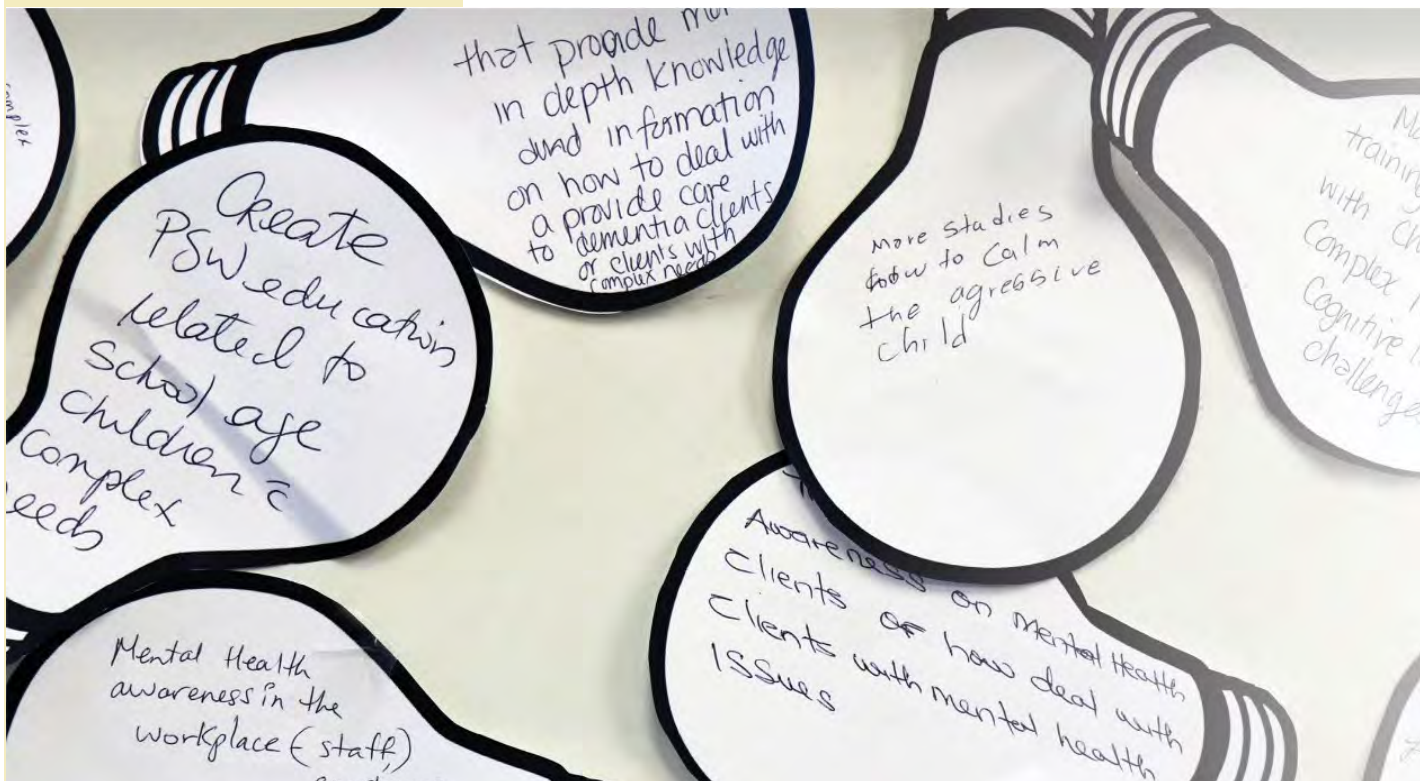
RESEARCH & INNOVATION

2022

A Year in Review



VISION 2025



By 2025 VHA Research & Innovation commits to becoming a **transformational leader** in the home and community health sector, **creating solutions** for clients, families and providers that embody our **values, expertise** and **experiences**.

The following priorities are foundational components of our vision that will cut across our areas of research focus:

- Data First
- Powerful Partnerships
- Creating Homecare Scientists

Our areas of research focus are closely aligned with VHA's strategic goals and are defined by the following three categories:

- Better Care
- More Connected
- Safer Teams

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MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Each day I have the privilege of leading the Research & Innovation team at VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) and annually I appreciate this opportunity to pause and reflect on the tremendous accomplishments of the previous year. In this 2022 edition of our research annual report, we celebrate record level productivity in awarded funding, peer reviewed publications, conference presentations and academic trainees supported. Our talented research team of graduate students, academic fellows, research associates and partners demonstrates our commitment to pursuing new challenges, deepening long-standing partnerships and continuing to support the growth and development of students and academic trainees as future leaders in homecare science.

In the following pages you will see how the Research & Innovation team members are driven to create impactful work to advance and inspire improvements in homecare and embody our organizational culture that is curious, inclusive and dedicated to continuous learning and professional growth and development.

One of our key priorities over the past year was to define our commitment to active and meaningful collaboration with clients, carers, staff and point of care provider partners in our research. Our newly developed framework identifies key strategies and opportunities for engagement with advisors, collaborators and co-designers sharing their expertise and lived experience to improve, inform and shape our research activities. We hosted the first of many community engagement sessions to encourage community building and knowledge sharing within our Research and Innovation Network. We are grateful to all our partners for their vital and generous contributions over the past year and look forward to additional opportunities to learn together in 2023.

In 2022 we welcomed Dr. Arlinda Ruco from St. Francis Xavier University & Dr. Marianne Saragosa from Hennick Bridgepoint Collaboratory as our first Affiliate Homecare Scientists, a further step in the development of our network of researchers committed to our transformational vision to advance and inspire improvements in homecare through research and innovation. We also welcomed Jordan D'Souza as VHA's Head of Innovation. Jordan is focused on fostering key partnerships to access technology pipelines of advanced prototypes and novel technologies - expanding the ways in which we can influence the independence and wellness of our clients and carers in their homes.

Together we remain steadfast in our dedication to providing high-quality evidence to support critical discussions that will deliver benefits to our clients and providers and that will help inform the transformation of our healthcare system. Congratulations and thank you to all members of the VHA community for their contributions to these achievements.

Dr. Sandra McKay
VP Research & Innovation

As a leading homecare provider in Ontario, we know that we have an obligation to use our data to generate and share high quality evidence that will inform how we transform and improve our health system. VHA has an exciting research vision and a top caliber research team who are focused on making care better for clients, families, staff and service providers. It has been exciting to see the many accomplishments of the team and the impact of the work grow over time. We hope you enjoy reading through this report and we look forward to all we can learn together in the year ahead.

Dr. Kathryn Nichol
President and CEO

VHA RESEARCH & INNOVATION TEAM

Our commitment to attract and develop homecare scientists continued in 2022. Please meet our interdisciplinary team of research associates, assistants and graduate trainees.



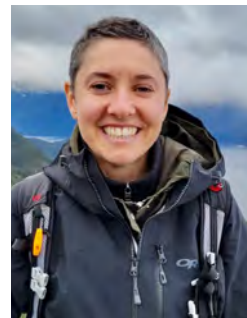
Dr. Emily King
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Mel Michener
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Jordan D'Souza
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Dr. Marianne Saragosa
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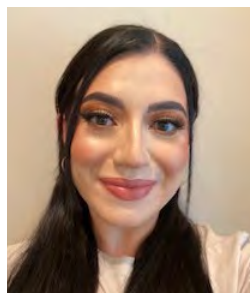
Frances Bruno
Research Assistant &
Mitacs Fellow



Simran Baliga
Research Assistant



Nicole Moreira
Research Associate



Lori Karamanlian
Research Assistant



Maiura Muralitharan
Research Assistant

CREATING HOMECARE SCIENTISTS

Each year, VHA Research & Innovation invests in the future of homecare research by supporting graduate student researchers and through clinician-focused programs that offer therapists, nurses and personal support workers the opportunity to develop their research skills. As our current fellows stride ahead with their new research projects, here is an overview of the Fellowship Class of 2022-2023:

Champions of Change Fellowship

2022's Champions of Change (CoC) Fellowship initiative focused on improving the experiences of clients and families in preparing for the discharge phase of service. In our recent client experience survey, some of our clients said that they did not feel ready for services to end. The CoC team worked with nursing and personal support clients and VHA providers to understand how we can better prepare and support clients who are being discharged, design an intervention, and evaluate its impact on clients' discharge experiences. Congrats to 2022's Champions, Vilma, Behrouz and Sumathi for taking on this important initiative.



2022 Champions of Change Fellows: Behrouz Bagheri, PSW (left), Sumathi Parama Thayanithi, RN (centre) & Vilma-Imeda Dunuan, PSW (right)

Behrouz Bagheri is an Internationally Trained Medical Doctor and orthopedic surgeon who has practiced in various healthcare fields, and he has completed several educational courses in Canadian colleges.

Sumathi Parama Thayanithi has been a Child & Family visiting nurse with VHA for the past five years. She graduated from Nursing in 1994 and worked for about 15 years in the hospital in various units.

"I am excited to participate in the Champions of Change Interprofessional Fellowship Program! I believe this opportunity will be a stepping stone for me to familiarize myself with developing, implementing, and evaluating a quality improvement project. I am eager to learn, contribute my ideas and work with the Research and Innovation team at VHA."

Vilma-Imeda Dunuan has been working with VHA for 8 years as a PSW and as a PSW Preceptor. She chose this path as she believes that helping others heartily is her calling which has been inspired by her grandmother and mom.

"I believe that every day is a challenge but a learning process especially when we have new clients as every client is unique. I trust that joining the Fellowship Program will help me open and connect to new ideas, identifying and understanding better the continuity of the needs or care of our clients and share with my colleagues the innovative best approach of quality of care the program introduces."

Graduate Research Awards

The Graduate Research Award sponsors promising young scientists to diversify research capacity and expertise in the home and community care sector. Each year, VHA co-funds up to three graduate students whose work is aligned with the strategic vision of VHA Research: Better Care, Safer Teams and A More Connected System. Congrats to our 2022 Graduate Research Fellows, Tyler Redublo, Danielle Knipping and Anna C. Reed.



2022 VHA Graduate Research Recipients: Tyler Redublo (left), Danielle Knipping (centre) & Anna C. Reed (right)

Tyler Redublo, MHSc Candidate Translational Research Program | University of Toronto

Tyler is a second-year Master's student in the Translational Research Program at the University of Toronto. His Master's research is focused on identifying the barriers and facilitators to social connectedness of young caregivers (aged 18-24 years) of people living with dementia. Additionally, by applying co-design processes, he aims to meaningfully engage young caregivers in the development of interventions to support their needs. Acknowledging and incorporating caregivers into the research process can inform the development of person centered, impactful resources for this population. Moreover, access to these resources can improve the quality of life for young caregivers, as well as the provision of care to dementia communities.

VHA Research Area of Focus:
Better Care

Danielle Knipping, RN MSc Nursing Candidate | Western University

Danielle Knipping is a Master's of Nursing candidate at Western University's Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing. Her research interests include investigating and improving the delivery of home and community-based services to better meet the needs of diverse clientele. Her research focuses on understanding how home and community-based healthcare professionals develop therapeutic relationships with diverse clients to identify areas of strength and ways to improve the safety and experiences of diverse clients using these services. She aims to empower healthcare providers to utilize evidence-informed tools and frameworks to support their work with diverse clients to improve the uptake of home and community-based services and support improved health outcomes in these clients.

VHA Research Area of Focus:
Better Care

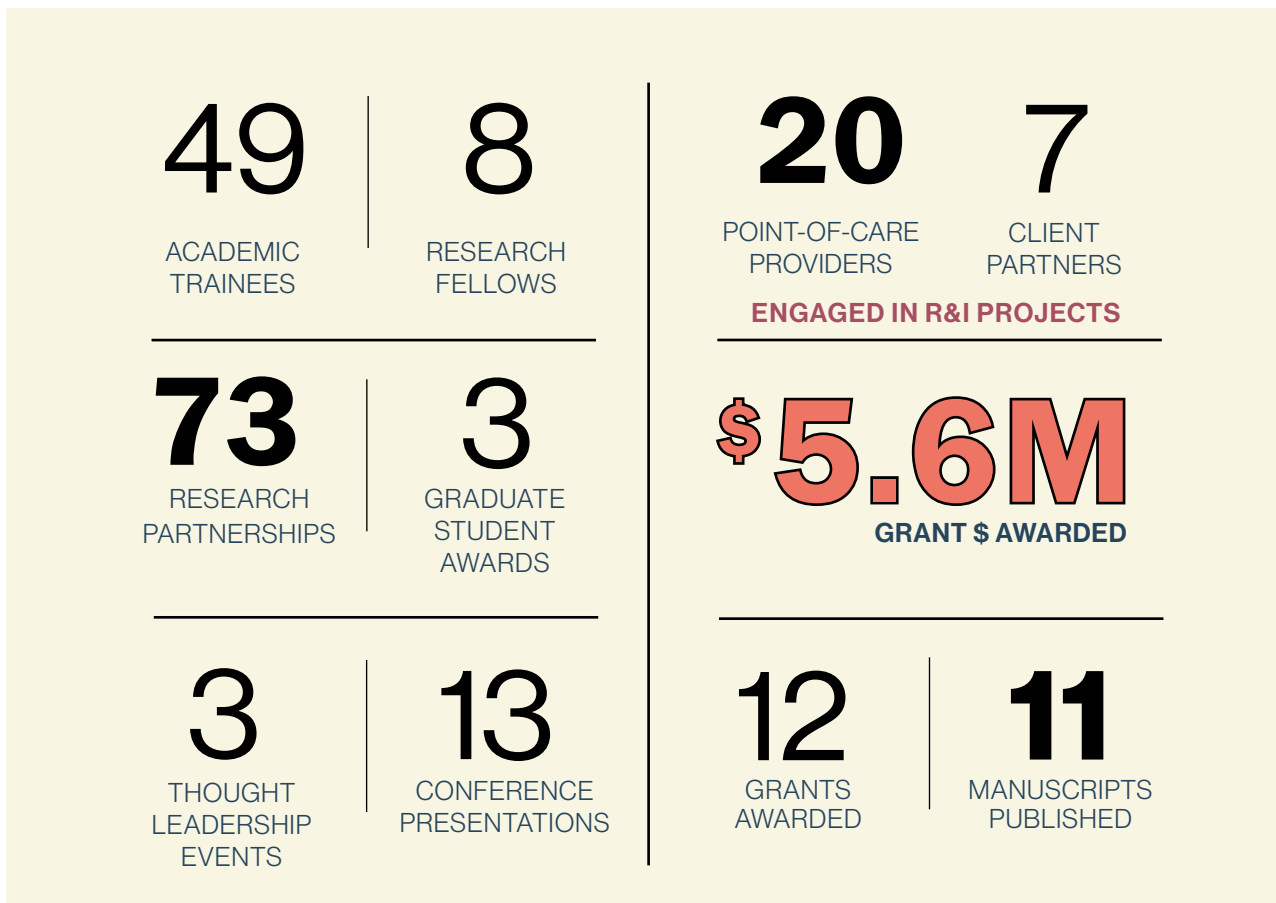
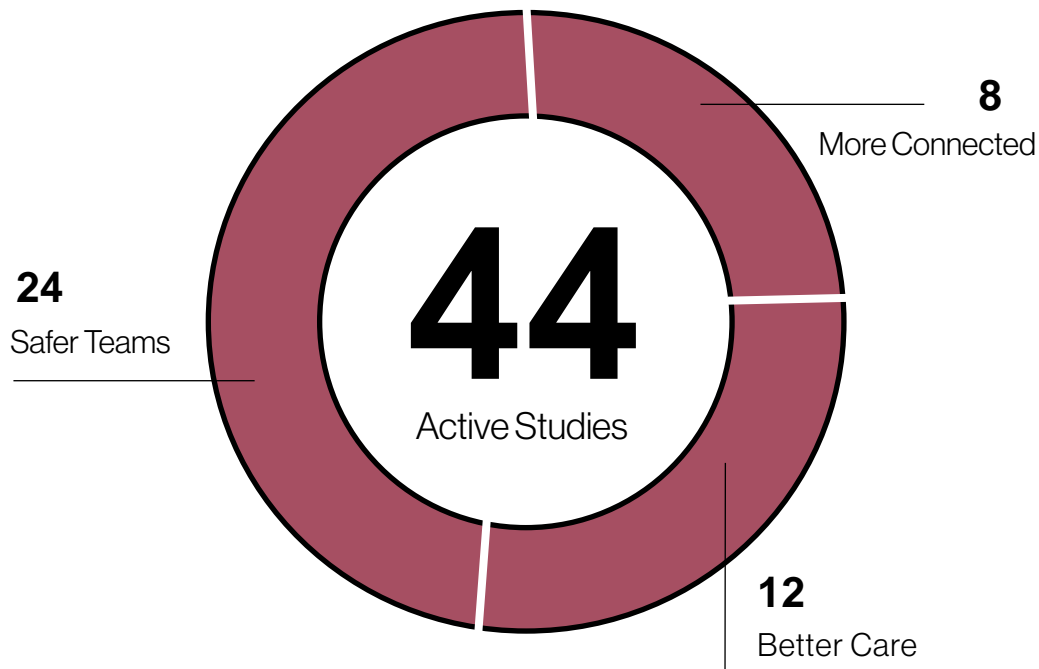
Anna C. Reed BSW, MSW, RSW PhD Candidate IHPME | University of Toronto

Anna Reed is a social worker and a PhD candidate at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto. Anna's work and research interests include aging care, staffing policies in home and long-term care, as well as emergency medicine. Anna's doctoral research explores the experiences of personal support workers who hold multiple jobs. Specifically, her research focuses on why personal support workers engage in this practice and what impact it has on their lives inside and outside of work. Anna hopes this research will contribute to improved staffing policies in the home and community care sectors.

VHA Research Area of Focus:
Safer Teams

R&I BY THE NUMBERS

VHA's Research and Innovation (R&I) areas of focus are defined by three categories: Better Care, More Connected and Safer Teams. Below is an overview of our academic productivity over the past year:



SHARING OUR WORK

Publications

McKay, S., King, EC., & Nichol, K. Create and Sustain a Culture of Curiosity: A Case Study of a Large Home Care Organization in Toronto, Canada. *HealthCare Quarterly*. Accepted.

King, EC., Zagrodney, KAP, McKay, SM., Holness, DL., & Nichol, KA. Determinants of nurse's and personal support worker's adherence to facial protective equipment in a community setting during the COVID-19 pandemic: A pilot study. *American Journal of Infection Control*. Accepted.

Zagrodney, KAP, King, EC., Nichol, KA., & Holness DL. Occupational Dermatitis – What's New? *OOHNA Journal*. Accepted.

Zagrodney, KAP, King, EC., Simon, D., Nichol, KA., & McKay, SM.. Economic Evidence in Support of Home and Community Care Sector Investment: The Case for PSW Wage Parity in Ontario. *HealthCare Policy*. Accepted.

Ruco, A., Nichol, K., Edwards, B., Roy, M., Morgan, D., Holness, DL., & McKay, S. Spot It, Prevent It: Evaluation of a rapid response algorithm for managing workplace violence. *Workplace Health & Safety*. Accepted

Ruco, A., Pinto, AD., Ho, JW., Nisembaum R., Bellicoso, E., Hassen, N., Hanna, A., Muntaner, C., & Holness DL. Collecting occupation and hazards information in primary care using O*NET. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*. Accepted.

Keilty K., Chu S., Balibi A., Wong M., & McKay S. Innovation in remote delivery of 'hands-on' practice for family caregivers and homecare nurses of children with medical complexity. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership*. Accepted.

Moattari, M., King, EC., & Ruco, A. Whole versus hole: Enabling community nurses to implement holistic wound care. *Journal of Wound Care*. Accepted.

Shi, J., Orkin, J., Walsh, C., Chu, S., Keilty, KJ., McKay, SM., Mocanu, C., Qazi, A., Munazzah, A., & Amin, R. Pediatric Chronic Tracheostomy Care: An Evaluation of an Innovative Competency-based Education Program for Community Health Care Providers. Accepted.

Marani, H., Allin, S, McKay, S., & Marchildon, P. The financial risks of unpaid caregiving during the COVID-19 pandemic: Results from a self-reported survey in a Canadian jurisdiction. *Health Services Insights*. Accepted.

Levine, IC., Lau, ST., King, EC., & Novak, AC. Consumer perspectives on grab bars: A Canadian national survey of grab bar acceptability in homes. Accepted.

Conferences

Nizzer S., Ruco, A., Moreira, N., King, EC., McKay, S., Nichol, K., & Holness DL. (2022, February 6-10). Homecare personal support worker experiences working during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study. *International Congress on Occupational Health*. Virtual.

King, EC., Zagrodney, KAP, McKay, SM., Holness, DL., & Nichol, K. (2022, February 6-10). Determinants of nurses' and personal support workers' adherence to facial protective equipment in a community setting during the COVID-19 pandemic: A pilot study. *International Congress on Occupational Health*. Virtual.

Holness, DL., King, EC., & Zagrodney, KAP. (2022, June 3). Health and Workplace Safety in Healthcare Settings: Occupational Hand Dermatitis and Facial Protective Equipment Use During the Pandemic. *51st Annual OOHNA Conference*. Virtual.

Levine, IC., King, EC., & Novak, AC. (2022, July 22-23). Fall prevention in the bathroom: understanding and informing public perception of grab bars for safer bathing. *International Conference on Slips Trips & Falls*. Sendai, Japan.

Ruco, A., Pinto, AD., Nisenbaum, R., Ho, JW., Bellicose, E., Hassen, N., Hanna, A., Muntaner, C., & Holness, DL. (2022, September 15-16) Collecting occupation and hazards information in primary care using O*NET. *Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health Conference*. Toronto, ON.

King, EC., Ameer, H., Zagrodney, KAP, McKay, SM., Holness, DL., & Nichol, KA. (2022, September 15-16). What factors influence home care nurses' and personal support workers' adherence to facial protective equipment usage guidelines? *Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health Conference*. Toronto, ON.

Nizzer, S., Moreira, NA., McKay, SM., & King, EC. (2022, September 15-16). Who Meets Home Care Workers' Emotional Support Need? *Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health Conference*. Toronto, ON.

Fayyaz, Y., King, EC., Yazdani, A., Gohar, B., Howe, A., Bani-Fatemi, A., Chattu, VK., Jain, M., Nizzer, S., Kay, M., Sinclair, L., Edwards, B., & Nowrouzi-Kia, B. (2022, Sept15-16) Workplace burnout among home care rehabilitation professionals working during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario. *CARWH*. Toronto, ON.

Zagrodney, KAP, King, EC., Nichol, K., Holness, DL. (2022, Sept15-16). Occupational Hand Dermatitis in HealthCare: Development and Evaluation of an Online Training E-module. *Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health Conference*. Toronto, ON.

Murray, M. (2022, Oct 12). Accountable Spaces: Improving VHA Provider Readiness to Serve 2SLGBTQI+ Clients in the Community. *Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario annual conference*. Toronto, ON.

Zagrodney, KAP, King, EC., Nichol, KA., Simon, D., & McKay, SM. (2022, Dec 6-8). Economic Evidence in Support of Home and Community Care Sector Investment: The Case for PSW Wage Parity in Ontario. *Canadian Health Workforce Conference (CHWC)*. Virtual.

Goyal, J., Zagrodney, KAP, & King, EC. (2022, Dec 6-8). Exploring Mental Health and Well-being for Personal Support Workers in a Home Care Setting in Ontario During COVID-19. *Canadian Health Workforce Conference (CHWC)*. Virtual.

Bruno, F., Martin, T., Moreira, NA., Nizzer, S., King, EC., & McKay SM. (2022, December 2). WorkSmart: Supporting and retaining homecare RPNs through employer-based tuition assistance. *WeRPN Research Day*. Mississauga, ON.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Maintaining and establishing powerful partnerships across the healthcare sector remains a key driver of our Vision2025 strategic plan. Cultivating these relationships is essential to our role as a valued partner in the sector and to inform decisions that will impact our clients and providers as well as our ability to deliver services that reflect our vision of homecare. These are just some of the ways our partnerships are helping us advance knowledge development and solutions in homecare.

Empowering the PSW Workforce Through Education and Training

Researchers from VHA Research and The Institute for Education Research (TEIR) at UHN have been sharing their academic expertise to evaluate a suite of three freely accessible e-resources co-designed with PSWs:

- Accessible online resources about the COVID-19 vaccine,
- PSW as educator training model development
- PSW-led vaccine education experiences for PSWs.

All education materials are co-created with many VHA PSWs to ensure the information they want and need is available to make informed choices for themselves and to share their experiences and knowledge with peers and their communities.



Occupational Health and Safety and Charting a Path Forward

In March, VHA in partnership with the Center for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD) hosted at KT Symposium that brought together professionals in the homecare, long-term care, and community support sectors to exchange information and share emerging and promising research on occupational health, safety, and disease prevention for the sectors' workforces. The event highlighted key community-based research and resources focused on the unique challenges faced by workers in these sectors which have been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Read about how VHA and CREOD have collaborated to share research-based solutions on [page 14](#).

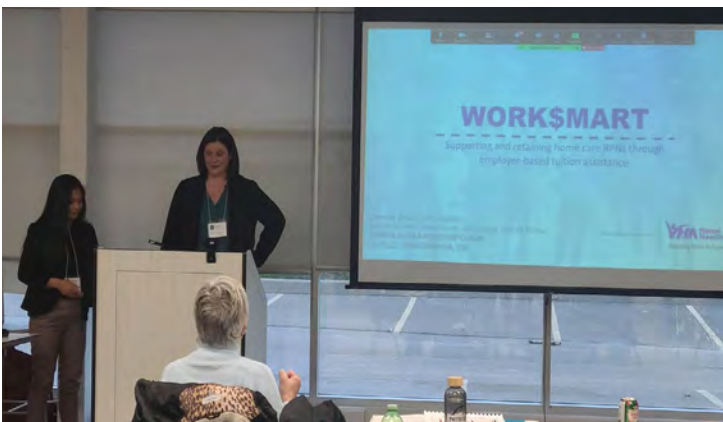


PARTNERS IN RESEARCH

VHA Research & Innovation is committed to conducting research that is informed by those that provide and receive care. This broadly includes partners who are clients of VHA, family members of those receiving care, and representatives of the communities we serve, along with VHA point-of-care providers and staff. Partnering with those with lived experiences brings new and much needed perspectives to the research process and is essential to building inclusive and authentic homecare services that meet the needs of communities we serve. Here we highlight some key client and provider partners who were instrumental to advancing our work in 2022. You can learn more about our approach to engagement [here](#).

Spotlighting Client Engagement in Research with Tonya Martin

Tonya is a mom of a child with complex medical needs receiving care from VHA Home HealthCare and has been an active client partner at VHA for many years. Tonya has experience as both a researcher and a public speaker, advocating for all aspects of the homecare system. In the past year, Tonya has been an integral member of the research team, exploring the impact of VHA's Work\$mart tuition-assistance program on homecare providers pursuing a nursing career. Tonya supported development of the grant proposal, contributed to developing tools, including the interview guide and, alongside Mitacs-funded graduate student Frances Bruno from U of T, she also supported the analysis. Having interacted with many nurses over the years, Tonya brings to research an important caregiver perspective that highlights the need for investing and retaining community nurses. Her contribution also extended to sharing the study findings at the WeRPN Research Day alongside the research team.



Tonya (R) co-presents with Frances Bruno (L) at WeRPN Research Day



(L-R) Sandra McKay, Nicole Moreira, Frances Bruno & Tonya Martin

Spotlighting Provider Engagement in Research with Joie Francisco

Joie is a PSW Coach who is always one of the first provider partners to offer her skills and expertise. On several occasions, Joie expressed a desire to help further research in homecare so that the research team may have the insights and tools to improve the mental health and working conditions of not only her team members, but all homecare workers in the sector. Recently, Joie was a key advisor in developing the survey sent to VHA providers to ask about their emotional support needs and then discussing the preliminary findings. Her thoughtful insight into the needs of both herself and her team gave our research team the direction they needed to create the "Refill Your Cup" Directory, an emotional support resource for homecare providers named by Joie herself.



Visit [page 13](#) to learn more about the research project Joie contributed to and more about Refill Your Cup.

In Conversation with **Michael Murray**

In 2017 VHA Home HealthCare partnered with University Health Network (UHN) Collaborative Academic Practice (CAP) program to offer a fellowship program to support point-of-care providers to engage in successful quality improvement work. The VHA-UHN Research Fellowship provides unique opportunities for clinicians to improve quality of client care by leading a quality improvement project, related to the organizations' strategic priorities, and to engage in ongoing dialogue and learning about leadership and spearheading positive change.

From September 2021 to March 2022 Michael, who is an OT, joined the CAP program and started his quality improvement journey to Improve VHA Rehab Provider Readiness to Service 2SLGBTQI+ Clients in the Community.

What led you to develop your quality improvement intervention?

Firstly, within my own practice I had challenges supporting my 2SLGBTQI+ clients and recognized that there were limited resources available. Then I had an experience in which I was asked to work with a particular client who identified as trans. They had a previous negative care experience and specifically requested a trans competent occupational therapist. I wondered why I had been chosen because I didn't think my own lived experience of being a bisexual man covered the umbrella of being trans competent. This signaled to me that we might have some work to do at VHA.

How did you address the identified challenge?

I first tried to gather as much information as I could. I did a literature review to gather background information in current best practices, I connected with different community organizations, I spoke with VHA's Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and I reached out to client partners. From all of these sources, I put together some educational resources and held what I called an "education sharing session" (as I am not an expert on this topic generally, I didn't want to call it a training session). And I made the resources widely available for reference.

What were you able to achieve?

At the education sharing session, I was able to connect with more than 40 rehab providers and I was able to make the educational materials widely available for VHA's providers who are supporting gender diverse clients who are part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. I also created pronoun buttons for VHA providers to wear if they wished. The pronoun buttons, which were printed with she/her, he/him, and they/them, are a helpful way of indicating one's openness to clients without having to engage in a conversation. A number of providers were glad to have the opportunity to wear the pronoun buttons who found they were useful to their practice. Preliminary results of these activities point to an increase in comfort amongst the providers involved.

What was it like engaging with a client and what impact did that have on your project?

When I was developing this project, I had the opportunity to connect with a client partner who has been engaged in supporting 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Their insights were really helpful and they also connected me with a number of community organizations which helped in the development of the educational materials.

If you could go back and give yourself one piece of advice, what would it be?

I would encourage myself to say yes and jump in. I was initially worried about taking on this project, and then about presenting on this work because I felt there was a lot I didn't know. But as the project got underway, and as I started to speak about this work more and more, I got more comfortable and confident. I learned how important it was to push myself out of my comfort zone in order to learn. This [fellowship] has really built my confidence and I've learned that I don't need to be afraid of what I don't know.

What advice you would give to someone interested in this opportunity?

Do it. It's just such a great experience. It may feel like it will have a small impact, but I feel that I helped start a change within the organization. To know something you've worked on for six months has helped move the needle in the right direction is a really good feeling.





REFILL YOUR CUP EMOTIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES DIRECTORY: A NEW TOOL FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY WORKERS

Words By Isabel Terrell

A new resource for timely, accessible and low-cost mental health resources is now available. The Refill Your Cup: Emotional Support Resources Directory contains tools, including culturally specific supports, for some of healthcare worker's biggest stressors like burnout, grief and bereavement and supporting others during times of stress.

The directory was created by members of the Research and Innovation team in response to findings from a recent survey study conducted with VHA Nurses, PSWs and Rehab Providers entitled Who Meets Homecare Providers' Emotional Support Needs?

In this study, the Research and Innovation team set out to better understand perspectives on their emotional support needs, current and preferred sources of support, and barriers to accessing resources.

"Over the past three years living and working through a health crisis has put an incredible amount of strain on all of us, but especially on essential workers such as VHA's workforce. We felt it was important to understand help-seeking behaviours in order to provide meaningful recommendations on how best to protect and support our valued staff and service providers,"

said Sonia Nizzer, Senior Research Associate and Mental Health Research Lead at VHA.

One of the findings that the team learned is that while nurses, personal support workers and rehab service providers indicated that emotional support resources are beneficial, they also indicated that they are not sure what types of affordable resources are available and where to find them, and that they need resources that they can access on their own schedules. Given these responses it was clear that a resource like the Refill Your Cup: Emotional Support Resources Directory would be a useful tool for staff and service providers within the VHA community and beyond.

Eva Di Gregorio, a Master of Social Work practicum student from the University of Windsor and Nicole Moreira, a Research Associate on the Research & Innovation team were at the helm of bringing the directory together. They spent months collating and vetting resources that were low-cost and likely to be helpful to homecare workers. They also worked closely with a provider-partner advisory group comprised of PSW Coaches, Registered Practical Nurses and Occupational Therapists connected to the study to ensure that

the information was accessible, and the topics were relevant.

In fact, the name of the directory "Refill Your Cup" came directly from a PSW provider-partner who used that phrase to describe how emotionally draining homecare work can be and how challenging it can be to "refill your own cup" at the end of the day. The directory has information on supports ranging from mental health apps, webinars, information on mental illness and how to support others. In addition to the publicly available resources found in the directory on our website, an internal version of the directory for VHA staff also includes VHA-specific resources.

"With nation-wide staff shortages, burnout and adjusting to healthcare during the pandemic among other stressors, it's critical more than ever to have a healthy workforce. Encouraging positive emotional health and well-being is imperative. I think this starts with listening, creating space for wellness and normalizing seeking support," said Sonia.

To explore the Refill Your Cup: Emotional Support Resources Directory, you can view and share it anytime at www.vha.ca/refill-your-cup.

CHARTING A PATH FORWARD

VHA KT SYMPOSIUM FOCUSES ON SOLUTIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Words By Isabel Terrell

VHA Home HealthCare (VHA), in partnership with the Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD), co-hosted a knowledge translation symposium on March 23rd, 2022 that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders providing care and support to people at home and in the community, and representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

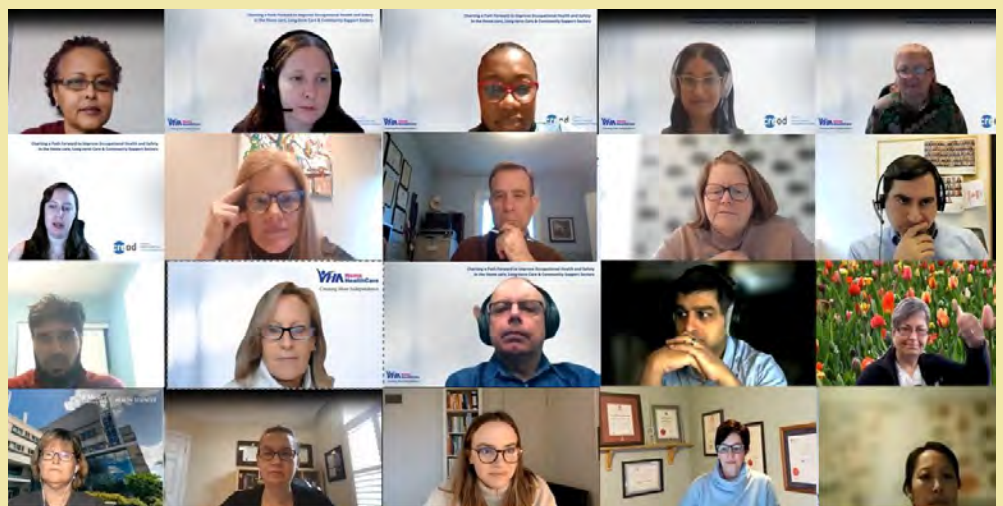
The event highlighted research and recently created resources focused on the unique challenges faced by workers in these sectors which have been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic. The symposium connected stakeholders from the government, disability, long-term care, retirement and community care sectors in an exchange of knowledge and shared experiences to identify opportunities to work collaboratively towards bridging the gaps and building a safer and healthier workforce. Read on to learn more about the four keynote speakers and their unique research-based solutions.

Care Provider Safety – Mental Health, Facial Protection Use, and Dermatitis Education Presented by: Dr. Emily King the Manager of Research at VHA. Emily presented findings that provide a greater understanding of the interconnected stressors that are experienced by the PSW workforce during the global COVID-19 pandemic as well as a study that field-tested and identified solutions for the fogging of facial protective equipment.

Wellness Hub Research and Support Program Presented By: Keelia Quinn de Launay. Keelia is a Research Coordinator on the Team of Implementation, Evaluation and Sustainability (TIES) within the Knowledge Translation (KT) Program in the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute at St. Michael's Hospital, Unity Health Toronto. In the KT Program, Keelia supports a research project focused on applying KT science principles to support congregate living settings such as long-term care and retirement homes with implementing best practices in infection prevention and control, staff wellness, and vaccine confidence throughout the pandemic.

MARCO Sector Pandemic Planning Initiative Evaluation (SSPI) Presented by: Dr. Barry Isaacs and Dr. Linn Holness. Dr. Isaacs is the Director of Research, Evaluation and Education at Surrey Place in Toronto and Dr. Holness is the Director of CREOD. Their presentation highlighted how 28 diverse agencies collaborated through the SSPI to address safety, labour, policy, training needs, legal and ethical issues arising from the pandemic and developed resources to support agency management, staff and adults experiencing developmental disabilities.

How High-performing PSWs Set and Maintain Boundaries When Providing Care Presented by: Elizabeth Kalles. Elizabeth is a researcher at SE Health focused on the intersection of health and care delivery in both home and community contexts. Elizabeth's presentation focused on the development of a boundary-maintenance framework to provide PSWs, supervisors and organizations with strategies to respond effectively when boundaries are challenged, recognizing that there is risk to both the PSW and the client if a boundary isn't managed successfully.



Above: Symposium attendees participate in Q & A period.

VHA and East Toronto Health Partners Host Research Fair to Celebrate Research and Quality Improvement Efforts that Improve Care

A unique research event in Toronto's east-end community marked the start of a new model of working together for Ontario Health Teams, focused on collaboratative education and evaluation across health and community care.

Words By Tracey Turriff

VHA and East Toronto Health Partners (ETHP) Ontario Health Team organized ETHP Fair: Celebrating Research, Improving Care this June to celebrate and showcase innovative research, quality improvement and evaluation work that is underway across the Ontario Health Team (OHT) focused on community health. “ETHP is becoming a Learning Health System and we want to share our progress with our partners,” stated Anne Wojtak, Lead, East Toronto Health Partners. In a Learning Health System, research, evaluation and clinical team members work side by side to support rapid cycles of learning, decision-making and knowledge transfer. “We are aiming to incorporate research and evaluation in all of our work so we can learn as we go, focus our efforts, and make care better for all our East Toronto residents,” Anne added. ETHP Fair took place at Michael Garron Hospital on June 23rd. The event highlighted 16 different research, evaluation and quality improvement initiatives that have taken place across the ETHP network during the past two years, underpinned by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on healthcare workers and community members. “This event gave us the opportunity to actually come together physically in a safe way, celebrate the great work that’s happening and have some fun with interactive activities,” shared Kelly Smith, Inaugural Michael Garron Research Chair in Patient Oriented Research and Interim Chief Scientific Officer.

Steering away from the traditional academic environments often associated with this type of work, the Fair aimed to create an engaging and interactive environment for knowledge sharing through carnival-themed activities for all who stopped by. Activities at the Fair included: a giant Jenga game, an East Toronto-themed ‘Adventure Walk’ map, a Taylor Massey puzzle, a giant Spin-the-Wheel trivia





Above: VHA Research & Innovation Team attend the Research Fair



game, a life-size Connect Four, and more, all of which will incorporate information and learning from the featured projects. There were also takeaway carnival-themed snacks such as popcorn and cotton candy available for participants. And finally a raffle prize opportunity was available for all participants to win a \$100 donation to the East Toronto health or community care organization of their choice and 2 passes to Canada's Wonderland to continue some fair-themed fun. VHA projects highlighted included:

ETHP Collaborative Quality Improvement Plan:

Alternate Level of Care Essential Care on Weekends: As the entire health network works to recover from COVID, it's more important than ever to support patient transitions to access care in the most appropriate setting, ensuring hospital beds are available for those with acute care needs. A patient is designated "alternate level of care" (ALC) when they are occupying a bed in hospital and do not require the intensity of resources or services provided in this care setting. A designation of ALC can have negative effects on the patient, as well as stress and uncertainty for family caregivers. In 2021, partners in East Toronto came together to prioritize areas of work to better support seniors and caregivers to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and avoid delayed discharges.

Essential Care on Weekends (ECoW): VHA conducted a rigorous engagement program involving point of care providers, supervisors, managers and scheduling coordinators, facilitated by an innovation specialist to brainstorm and identify a promising approach to address ongoing weekend capacity challenges. ECoW was implemented and evaluated as a pilot program in the Toronto Central (TC) region among the 10 TC Teams from February to August 2021. The activities and operations prioritized scheduling more complex and vulnerable clients during weekends when PSW capacity is limited and efforts to make care and travel more efficient on weekends.

E-module on Occupational Hand Dermatitis: VHA and the Centre for Research Expertise on Occupational Disease partnered to develop a training e-module on occupational hand dermatitis designed for healthcare workers with input from a multi-stakeholder group, assess its usability and evaluate whether the training improved knowledge about occupational hand dermatitis. This free training module can be accessed anytime at <https://creod.on.ca/SkinDiseasePreventionEN/story.html>.

Refill your Cup: An Emotional Support Resource Directory:

This project aimed to understand homecare providers' perspectives on their emotional support needs, current and preferred sources of support, and barriers to accessing resources. Once these needs were more deeply understood through a survey process, VHA's research team created a resource directory to facilitate and encourage access to low or no-cost emotional support tools and resources.

"Our ETHP Fair was designed to make the research and evaluation work happening across ETHP accessible to everyone involved in our work," commented Sandra McKay, Vice President, Research & Innovation at VHA Home HealthCare, one of the organizers of the event and an ETHP anchor partner organization. "Whether you are a caregiver on ETHP's Community Advisory Council or a front-line worker at one of our organizations, everyone plays a role in understanding our work so we can collaboratively transform the health care system and make care better for everyone."

To view all project posters [click here](#).

Visit the **ETHP website** to learn more about health care in East Toronto.

VHA RAIN DROP Event Presents:

An Economic Analysis Supporting Increased Investments in Ontario's Homecare Sector

Words By Crystal Gonder

The number of Ontarians in need of homecare services has been growing rapidly with demand projected to increase by 53% between 2019 to 2031. The majority of older adults want to remain at home for as long as possible; for most, homecare is also the most cost-effective care option. New research conducted by VHA Home HealthCare shows that increased public investment in homecare worker wages is a promising option for growing this workforce and increasing health care system capacity to meet the growing demand for care.

On November 16, VHA hosted its first virtual Research and Innovation Network (RAIN) event to share current research with our community. RAIN is a collaborative network of VHA clients, carers and staff and service providers with lived experience, knowledge and expertise in homecare who help to shape the organization's research activity and influence decisions made throughout the research process.

Dr. Katherine Zagrodney, a health economist and VHA researcher, presented an economic analysis quantifying the expected impact of raising homecare worker wages on retaining skilled homecare providers. This work is VHA's contribution to an exciting research-based partnership with the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA), to inform their advocacy for wage parity between PSWs who work in homecare and long-term care.



The VHA Research and Innovation Network Presents:
Research to inform advocacy – Government funding for home care wages

Facilitators: Dr. Sandra McKay, Dr. Emily King, Nicole Moreira
Key Speaker: Dr. Katherine Zagrodney

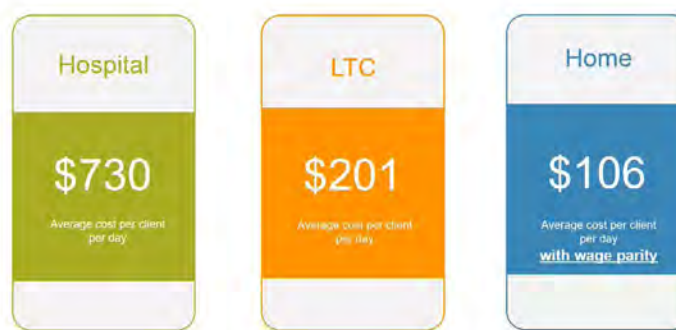
November 16, 2022

VHA RAIN Research and Innovation Network

Research and Innovation VHA Home HealthCare Creating More Independence



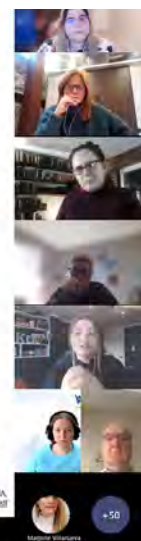
“We all care deeply about improving homecare.”



Even with wage parity, home and community care continues to be the least expensive



Ontario Home and Community Care Branch. (2018). Presentation to the Premier's Council on Improving Healthcare & Ending Halfway Medicine. As cited by National Institute on Aging (NIA). <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/aging-in-place/2018/05/23/2018-05-23-13750443a-Peol.pdf>



Personal support workers (PSWs) deliver three quarters of paid homecare services, but because of differences in funding between sectors, homecare PSWs are paid, on average, \$5 less per hour than their colleagues in long-term care. The home and community sector is by far the least expensive option for care provision, and demand for these services is rising as a growing number of people require some support in their daily lives, without needing the high level of care provided by institutions. In order to meet the growing demand for in-home care, we need to attract and retain an increased number of skilled PSWs. There are many reasons beyond wage for people to choose to work in the home and community sector and wage parity would make this decision easier for many who love community-based work. In doing so, it would help to stabilize the homecare workforce and increase capacity for the healthcare sector as a whole.

“There are many logical and moral reasons for making sure homecare PSWs can be paid the same as other sectors given the nature and importance of the work that PSWs do every day. We hope our research can help to inform decision-making regarding investments in our sector,” said Dr. Zagrodney, Senior Research Associate & Quantitative Research Lead at VHA.

Working with OCSA, which represents close to 230 not-for-profit organizations that provide homecare

and community support services to over one million Ontarians, the VHA Research team was asked to analyze the financial impact for the healthcare system of OCSA’s proposal to invest in wage parity between PSWs working in home and community care and those working in long-term care.

At present, hospital care costs seven times more than homecare and long-term care is double the cost of homecare. Dr. Zagrodney’s analysis finds that even with PSW wage parity, home and community care will continue to be, by far, the least expensive care option. Assuming that care continues to be provided at current service levels, wage parity will add only \$3 to the daily cost of home and community care, while growing capacity in the sector by an estimated 21% and providing a return on investment (ROI) of 88%. Even if we assumed that newly-accommodated clients would require high-intensity care to live safely in the community, the ROI remains high at 26%. Moving forward, this analysis can be used by OCSA and others to support evidence-based decision-making and policy development.

While the present analysis focuses solely on PSWs, who provide three quarters of paid home and community care, Dr. Zagrodney says “This is just a starting point and our work will expand to other point-of-care providers with time.” Dr. Zagrodney and VHA’s Research team were thrilled to share the results of this

impactful research at the first of many RAIN events to come. “The network was launched to bring our community together to learn about current research and innovation activity at VHA, and to open the floor for discussion between VHA clients, caregivers, point-of care service providers, staff, researchers and external partners,” said Dr. Sandra McKay, Vice President of Research and Innovation at VHA. “We all care deeply about improving homecare and we know that together—through listening, learning and sharing at events like this one—we can create positive change in our sector through evidence and data-based research,” she added. █

If you would like to sign up to be a part of RAIN, please visit our Research and Innovation Network: Sign-Up for Client and Provider Partners [form here](#). If you have any questions, you can reach out to the VHA Research team at researchhelp@vha.ca.



ABOUT VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Founded in 1925 as the Visiting Homemakers Association, VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that offers 24/7 health care and support services to people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Our goal is to provide clients with spectacular service when, where and how they want it to support their independence. Our caring team of professionals includes nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, personal support workers, home support workers, cleaners, social workers, dietitians, and speech-language pathologists. We deliver the highest quality client support at home, in the community and in long-term care facilities.

VISION, MISSION & BELIEFS

Vision: High quality care delivered with great heart - for every person, every time, everywhere

Mission: Creating possibilities for more independence, championing the needs of our clients and families and delivering high quality, integrated care

Core Beliefs: Our care must be:

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

Spectacular and continuously focused on quality improvement and safety

Integrated and collaborative to unearth innovative answers to complex challenges

Inclusive and committed to serving the most vulnerable in our communities

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

As a charitable not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, VHA is committed to:

- Valuing and supporting our staff and care providers
- Fiscal responsibility
- Driving positive change in community support and home health care
- Ethical practices in all our operations

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Sharifa Wright

Catherine Wiley



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

VHA Home HealthCare would like to acknowledge that we are living and working on Indigenous land. This includes the territories of the Unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe, the Attawandaron, the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Lunaapeewak, the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Wendat peoples.

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