



# Research & Innovation

A Year in Review | 2023



# 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.

## Foundational Priorities:

Data First | Powerful Partnerships  
Creating Homecare Scientists

## Areas of Focus:

Better Care | More Connected | Safer Teams



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# Message from Leadership



**SANDRA MCKAY PhD MBA**

she/her | smckay@vha.ca

*Vice-President, Research & Innovation,  
VHA Home HealthCare*

*Assistant Professor (status), Institute for Health Policy  
Management & Evaluation (IHPME)  
University of Toronto*

*Adjunct Professor, Department of Physical Therapy  
University of Toronto*

*Adjunct Professor, Ted Rogers School of Management  
Toronto Metropolitan University*

*Affiliate Scientist, The Institute for Education Research (TIER)  
University Health Network*

*Adjunct Researcher, Michael Garron Hospital  
Toronto East Health Network*

I am delighted to share with you VHA's 2023 Research & Innovation Annual Report. This provides an opportunity to take stock of and celebrate our many collaborative accomplishments, and to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of our clients, families, clinical champions, tech-innovators, and academic partners.

2023 was another year of remarkable research productivity with a record number of peer reviewed publications including the "[Most Read Article for 2023](#)" in the Longwoods *Healthcare Policy* journal. The article provides economic evidence in support of continued investment in the Ontario homecare system and is one example of our commitment to delivering evidence to inform critical dialogue and solutions to address inequities in our system and communities.

Our responsive, tech focused innovation portfolio, directed by clients and families and grounded in implementation science, has realized meaningful advancements towards delivering on the promise of a technology enabled homecare system.

Home care plays an essential role in a responsive, effective healthcare system. It is my pleasure and privilege to lead this dynamic team who are creating insights to drive system integration forward and transform the homecare experience of today and into the future.

Thank you for your support. I hope you enjoy this report.



**KATHRYN NICHOL RN PhD**

she/her | knichol@vha.ca

*President and CEO,  
VHA Home HealthCare*

*Assistant Professor (status), Dalla Lana School of Public Health  
University of Toronto*

*Associate Director, Centre for Research Expertise in  
Occupational Disease (CREOD)*

*Chair, Research Advisory Council  
The Institute for Education Research (TIER)  
University Health Network*

*Vice Chair, Board of Directors  
Ontario Community Support Association*

Investing in research and innovation is one of VHA's most important differentiators. Entities focused on home care science are scarce, and scientists committed to researching the best and safest ways to deliver home care that result in preferred outcomes, timely access and an efficient health system are few in number. Since 2009, VHA has invested in building research capacity and today we are well on the way to being a transformational research leader and to setting the home care research agenda for the future. I am delighted by our progress and the contributions we've made to informing better care for clients and a safer work environment for providers, as shared in this report. Enjoy!



# Our Team



**Emily King**  
PhD P.Eng.

Director of Research

Assistant Professor (status), Dalla Lana School of Public Health University of Toronto Visiting Scientist, KITE, TRI, University Health Network, Adjunct Assistant Professor, School of Public Health Sciences, University of Waterloo



**Jordan D'Souza**  
MHI

Head of Innovation



**Katherine Zagrodny PhD**

Senior Research Associate,  
Quantitative Lead  
Assistant Professor (status),  
Institute for Health Policy  
Management &  
Evaluation (IHPME),  
University of Toronto



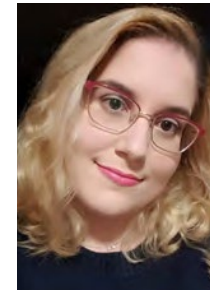
**Sonia Nizzer**  
MSW RSW

Senior Research  
Associate, Mental  
Health Research  
Lead



**Travis Van Belle**  
MPH

Research Associate



**Nicole Moreira**  
MSW RSW

Research Associate



**Mehdy Dousty**  
PhD

Postdoctoral Fellow



**Emma Perera**  
MPH

Research Assistant



**Kashmeena Mangal**

Research Assistant



**Emmelie Mohammed**

Research Assistant



**Rachael Jaffe**  
MSc

Research Assistant



**Prakathesh Rabeenthira**  
MPH

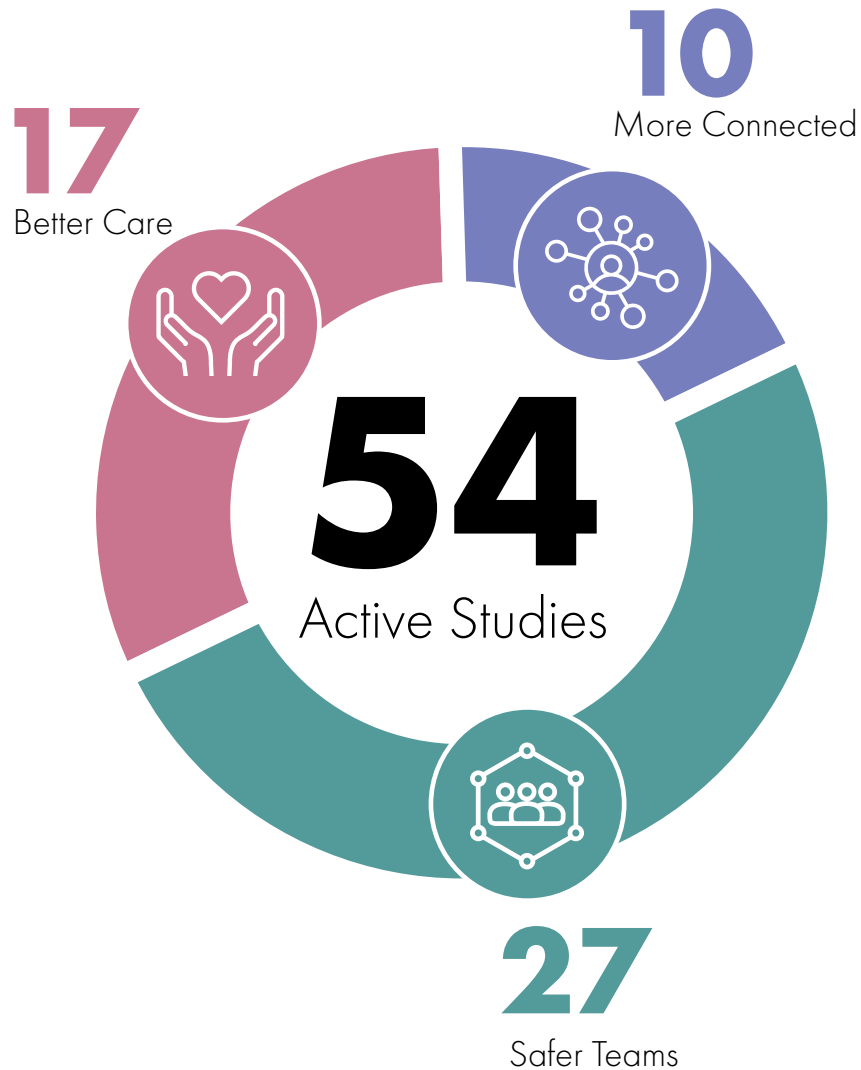
Research Associate



**Philip Woode**  
MHI

Innovation Associate

# By the Numbers



**15** Manuscripts published

**48** Academic trainees



**5** Research fellows



**74** Research partnerships



**8** Graduate student fellows



**4** Thought leadership events hosted



**11** Conference presentations



**56** Clients & providers engaged

**12** Grants awarded



**\$680K**  
Grant \$ awarded

# Research Publications

Through our peer-reviewed academic publications we continue to expand the homecare knowledge base contributing to open, evidence-informed and critical discussions necessary for sustainable health system solutions.



## More Connected



**Building the economic case for investing in home care**

### ★ MOST READ HealthCare Policy Article of 2023 ★

Zagrodney KAP, King EC, Simon D, Nichol KA, McKay SM. (2023). **Economic Evidence in Support of Home and Community Care Sector Investment: The Case for Ontario Personal Support Workers Wage Parity.** HealthCare Policy. [DOI: 10.12927/hcpol.2023.27161](https://doi.org/10.12927/hcpol.2023.27161)

Zagrodney, KAP, King EC, Simon D, Nichol KA, McKay SM. (2023). **A good investment: Expanding capacity to care for older adults in the home and community care sector through increased Personal Support Worker wages.** Canadian Journal on Aging. [DOI: 10.1017/S0714980823000557](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980823000557)



**Conversations about healthcare system changes**

King EC, Zagrodney KAP, Rabeenthira P, Van Belle TA, McKay SM (2023 – in press) **Why did home care Personal Support service volumes drop during the COVID-19 pandemic? The contributions of client choice and Personal Support Worker availability.** Health Services Insights. [DOI: 10.1177/11786329231210692](https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329231210692)



**Home care is protective against 30-day hospital readmissions**

Saragosa M, Zagrodney KAP, Rabeenthira P, King EC, McKay SM (2023) **How might we have known? Using administrative data to predict 30-day hospital readmission in clients receiving home care services from 2018 to 2021.** Health Services Insights. [DOI: 10.1177/11786329231211774](https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329231211774)

McKay SM, Konan M, Tedesco S, Turriff T, Michener M, King EC. (2023). **Optimizing weekend schedules in home health care: The Essential Care on Weekends for Personal Support Quality Improvement Project.** Home Healthcare Management & Practice, [DOI: 10.1177/10848223231183091](https://doi.org/10.1177/10848223231183091)

McKay SM, Mohammed ETCL, Roy M, Hung V, Wong M, Lum B, King EC. (2023). **Is 911 The Answer? A retrospective review of emergency medical service use by home care providers.** Health Services Insights, [DOI: 10.1177/11786329231178767](https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329231178767)

Senthinathan A, Tadrous M, Hussain S, Craven B. C, Jaglal S, Moineddin R, Shepherd J, Cadel L, Noonan V, McKay SM, Tu K, Guilcher S. (2023). **Examining the impact of COVID-19 on health care utilization among persons with chronic spinal cord injury/dysfunction: a population study.** Spinal Cord, [DOI: 10.1038/s41393-023-00930-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41393-023-00930-1)





## Safer Teams



### Understanding how PSWs' experience of work has changed

Nizzer S, Ruco A, Moreira N, Holness DL, Nichol KA, King EC, McKay SM. (2023). **"You have to be careful about every detail": How the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the experiences of Canadian personal support workers working in home care.** Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. [DOI: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000002911](https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000002911)



### Innovations to create a more open safety culture

King EC, Chan J, Benn A, Michener M, Van Belle TA, McKay SM. **Shifting the Safety Culture: Evaluation of a novel approach to understanding and responding to workplace harassment and violence experienced by home care workers.** Workplace Health & Safety. [DOI: 10.1177/21650799241232](https://doi.org/10.1177/21650799241232)

King EC, Zagrodny KAP, McKay SM, Holness DL, Nichol KA. (2023). **Determinants of nurse's and personal support worker's adherence to facial protective equipment in a community setting during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, Canada: A pilot study.** Am J Infect Control. 2022:S0196-6553(22)00577-6. [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajic.2022.07.021](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2022.07.021)

Zagrodny KAP, King EC, Mohammed ETCL, Nichol KA, Holness DL. (2023). **Occupational Hand Dermatitis in HealthCare: Development and Evaluation of an Online Training E-module.** Dermatitis. [DOI: 10.1089/derm.2023.0012](https://doi.org/10.1089/derm.2023.0012)

Howe AS, Tan J, Khan R, Li A, Edwards B, King EC, Nizzer S, Gohar B, Yazdani A, Bani-Fatemi A, Chattu V, Sinclair L, Kay M, Nowrouzi-Kia B. **The effects of occupational and mental stress among home care rehabilitation professionals working during the COVID-19 pandemic: An exploratory qualitative study.** Home Health Care Management & Practice [DOI: 10.1177/10848223231225246](https://doi.org/10.1177/10848223231225246)



## Better Care



### Clinical fellowship findings published!

Moattari M, King EC, Ruco A. (2023) **Whole versus hole: Enabling community nurses to implement holistic wound care.** Journal of Wound Care. [DOI: 10.12968/jowc.2023.32.11.748](https://doi.org/10.12968/jowc.2023.32.11.748)

Marani H, Allin S, McKay SM, Marchildon P. (2023). **The financial risks of unpaid caregiving during the COVID-19 pandemic: Results from a self-reported survey in a Canadian jurisdiction.** Health Services Insights, 16. [DOI:10.1177/11786329221144889](https://doi.org/10.1177/11786329221144889)

Saragosa M, Nizzer S, McKay SM, Kuluski K. (2023). **The hospital-to-home care transition experience of home care clients: an exploratory study using patient journey mapping.** BMC Health Services Research. [DOI: 10.1186/s12913-023-09899-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-09899-2)

# Better Care

Better care begins with listening and learning from our point-of-care providers & client partners to understand and improve clinical decisions and the care experience.









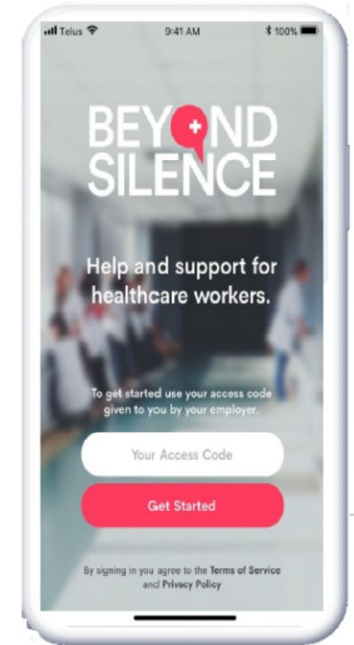


### Co-designing action-oriented mental health conversations between home care providers and aging Canadians

The mental health of aging Canadians is of heightened concern following the pandemic. The dual stigmas of systemic ageism and negative attitudes toward mental illness can create barriers to accessing needed mental health support, care and treatment. We are working with our colleagues at the SE Research Centre who are leading this project to co-design intentional conversations about mental health in home and community care settings. VHA PSWs lent their insights and expertise during an interactive co-design workshop on how to integrate mental health conversations between care providers and older adults during home care visits.

### Beyond Silence: Advancing E-mental health solutions to support Canadian healthcare workers

VHA nurses piloted the use of a new e-mental health app called Beyond Silence, designed by researchers from McMaster University. Beyond Silence supports the mental health needs of healthcare workers through evidence-based mental health information and resources which can be targeted to individual needs through a check-in chatbot. The app also facilitates access to healthcare workers trained to provide high-quality peer support and can act as a complement to existing employee and family assistance programs like VHA's [Inkblot](#).



### Unplanned absences: How socio-demographic, job, and contextual factors affect the probability of a PSW taking an unplanned absence before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

Like any employees, PSWs sometimes need to miss work unexpectedly. This project aims to improve our understanding of factors that contribute to unplanned absences. To do this, we are leveraging our extensive administrative data (more than 42 million data points!) to understand the influence of workplace, geographic, and other factors to develop data-driven insights that can inform the development of strategies to minimize the impact of unexpected absences on clients and colleagues.





## Predicting home care service reduction: identifying factors leading to a client's decision to pause care

To predict future home care service usage, it is important that we understand which factors lead to a client choosing to place a hold on home care services and the length of that pause in care. We are leveraging administrative client data from within VHA, to examine the degree to which factors like client age, care needs, and previous service use contributed to a client placing a hold on their VHA home care services and the length of that hold. Findings will provide data-informed indicators that will allow us to identify which clients are more likely to place a hold on their home care services, and for how long, based on socio-demographic (age, sex) and care-related (number of visits) factors.



## Smartphone Enabled Fall Prediction

VHA welcomed Dr Mehdy Dousty to the team as our first post-doctoral fellow. The Mitacs funded research partnership is a collaboration between VHA Research, The University of Toronto & North York OHT. Mehdy is refining a fall prediction app that uses deep learning algorithms to predict 90 day fall risk by leveraging accelerometers in smartphones to capture walking related data during a simple walking tasks that could be readily applied to those living in the community.



# Building the Future of Home Care Science

We have a tremendous opportunity to invest in those who possess the skills, experience and passion required to shape the future transformation of home care to be better, safer and more connected.





This year's Champions of Change fellows are focused on ethical challenges experienced by PSWs as they provide client care. They are facilitating conversations with their peers to identify PSWs' highest-priority ethical challenges, learn about strengths and gaps in how VHA currently supports them, and identify how VHA can improve.

The Champions will share these findings with the VHA Ethics committee to inform future initiatives to support providers' ethical decision-making.

## Champions of Change

This VHA-run fellowship program is a professional development opportunity in which point-of-care providers receive training and coaching as they work together to lead a quality improvement project related to VHA's strategic priorities.



### Champions of Change 2023-2024 Bios:

**Kasepae Mendono** (left) is a PSW with previous experience in Early Child Assistance. She is passionate about supporting her clients as they have become a part of her family. She sees being a Champion of Change as an opportunity to learn, discuss ethical tools, and to share her learnings with her colleagues.

**Janet H. Valenzuela** (centre) is a PSW and has provided exceptional care and respect to VHA clients for the past nine years. She firmly believes that being a PSW is not just a job, but a privilege to make a difference in someone's everyday life.

**Waneza Carvalho** (right) is a PSW who has provided care to VHA clients for ten years and entered the PSW field because she loves helping others. She looks forward to learning from and sharing her experiences with the other Champions and anticipates discovering new approaches and techniques to providing the best care for her clients.

## VHA's Rehab partnership with UHN/Sunnybrook Collaborative Academic Practice Program

**VHA is investing in provider driven solution to improve our care thought participation in the Sunnybrook/UHN interdisciplinary quality improvement fellowship program creates opportunity for networking and professional development.**

**Corinna Murray** is a VHA Occupational Therapist and aims to protect the mental health of clients through an activity-based program where individuals can practice social skills and receive support to gain skills and confidence towards new levels of independence. In addition to her expertise in acquired brain injury, splinting and physical medicine, Corinna is trained in mental health, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and trauma-informed approaches.



### Multiplying Mental Health Supports in the Community

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**Miao "Teresa" Hu** is a VHA Registered Dietitian and is looking to streamline the process of providing clients and their carers with the necessary food preparation information based on their unique circumstances. Her project focuses on developing and evaluating a more accessible method of sharing this information, and includes a strategy to incorporate feedback from clients, careers and dietitians.



### Reducing Barriers to Food Preparation for Clients and Their Caregivers

## VHA Graduate Student Fellowships

**By partnering with promising young scientists, we will continue to expand and diversify the research that matters to home and community care. These academic partnerships create greater awareness and appreciation of the expertise and capacities that exist in both home care and academia.**

**Alyssia Sanchez** is a 2nd year MAsc (Biomedical Engineering) student at the University of Toronto. She is developing a home-based reminder system to enhance communication between individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.



### Home-Based Reminder System to Enable Self-Directed Dementia Care and Remote Behaviour Monitoring

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**Gaya Bin Noon** is a PhD candidate (Public Health) at the University of Waterloo. Her research focuses on standards and guidelines for active assisted living-enabled smart homes to help older adults to remain in their homes and maintain independence.



### Applications of Active Assisted Living Technologies and Data in Older Adult Care

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**Rebecca Rios** is a MSc candidate (Applied Health Sciences) at Brock University in Applied Health Sciences. Her research focuses on the financial burden of the healthcare system, the individual and their care partners upon patient designation as Alternate Level of Care.



### Financial Burden on Healthcare and Society Resulting from ALC Patient Designation



# More Connected



Through collaborations with health system partners and academics, we are prioritizing data-informed contributions to public discourse about how home care can best contribute to health system excellence and efficiency.



## How Might We Have Known? Using Administrative Data to Predict 30-Day Hospital Readmission in Clients Receiving Home Care Services from 2018 to 2021

Reducing hospital readmissions for home care clients can lead to better health outcomes while lowering total healthcare system-level costs. But how do we reduce the number of 30-day hospital readmissions for home care clients?

We used VHA's administrative data to identify key drivers of 30-day hospital readmission for VHA clients. Hospital readmissions were less likely for clients who received more home care service in the 30 days following their return from hospital. Hospital readmissions were more likely for clients with higher care needs, less social support, longer initial hospital stays, and more hospitalizations overall.

These findings suggest an opportunity for targeted, evidence-based support to reduce home care clients' likelihood of returning to hospital – including an increase in home care support posthospitalization.

This work demonstrates how existing data sources can provide meaningful insights to inform interventions to improve client health outcomes.



## Wage parity - A Good Investment

### Expanding Capacity to Care for Older Adults in the Home and Community Care Sector Through Increased Personal Support Worker Wages

Leveraging our expertise in health economics through this collaboration with the Ontario Community Support Association (OCSA), we calculated the return on investment that could be realized at the system level from paying PSWs in home care at the same rate as PSWs who work in institutional long-term care.

We found that investing in wage parity is the fiscally responsible option which sets the foundation for expanding the home and community care sector to meet the future care needs of Ontarians more efficiently. This investment would be expected to increase retention by an estimated 21%, creating 23.5 million hours of additional home care capacity. This would result in savings of approximately \$6 billion per year and a return on investment of approximately 88%!

Findings have been shared with a wide variety of audiences through two peer-reviewed papers and multiple presentations to a wide variety of audiences. **OCSA has also used these findings to support their ongoing advocacy efforts within the home care sector.**



## Who provides and receives home care in Ontario?

VHA Research is leading the first meaningful collection, analysis and public reporting of homecare specific service delivery data with scientists from Institutes for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences and University of Toronto. Access to these data will allow us to characterize, across the previous 10 years, changes in client complexity and trends and patterns associated with homecare service delivery to inform evidence-based conversations and decision making regarding home care. This unprecedented access to homecare data is through VHA's application to the Ministry of Health's Applied Health Research Question program.



## Elevate Impact Hub

The Elevate Impact Hub is a new initiative led by our partners at the Ontario Community Support Association to find and share high-quality research related to the Home and Community Care sector. VHA Research supported the creation of this resource through providing expert advice and by co-supervising a student who identified appropriate research for inclusion. Our student also created the ongoing searches and alerts that will help the Elevate Impact Hub team to keep this resource up-to-date.



## TIER Dialogic Facilitation Training for PSWs: PSWs Leading the Way

The PSW-led Dialogue Project, conducted in partnership with The Institute for Education Research (TIER) at UHN, aimed to foster open conversations and create a platform for PSWs to share with peers their experiences and thoughts on how the pandemic and vaccine education was managed. Fourteen VHA PSWs completed a facilitator training program to support skill building and confidence in conducting facilitated dialogues with their colleagues. Through PSW-led dialogues, valuable insights into their attitudes, beliefs, and emotions surrounding the handling of the pandemic crisis were provided.

One PSW Facilitator shared that:

“following completion of the program, I was eligible to facilitate sessions and had some really interesting sessions, with PSWs from across Ontario who worked in long term care, hospitals, retirement homes and the community. This was a great leadership opportunity.”



## RAIN Drop Events



Every quarter, the Research and Innovation Network hosts a RAIN Drop - virtual events to bring our VHA community together to share recent VHA Research & Innovation activity. RAIN Drops are an opportunity to learn about current research and opening the floor for discussion between VHA clients, caregivers, point-of-care service providers, staff, researchers, and external partners.

### **Supporting and Retaining Homecare RPNs through Employer Based Assistance Programs, Frances Bruno & Tonya Martin (client partner researcher)**

Tonya Martin (VHA Client Partner) and Frances Bruno (RN, PhD Candidate) shared learnings from a study exploring the impact tuition-assistance programs, like Work\$mart at VHA, have on career growth for home and community care workers pursuing nursing education.

### **Fostering Dialogue with 2SLGBTQIA+ Older Adults and PSWs Through Art, Dr Celeste Pang**

Dr. Celeste Pang and researchers at EGALE shared learnings from an arts-based research approach to foster dialogue between 2SLGBTQIA+ older adults and VHA PSWs through creating art. This work explored the meanings of home, care and hopes for the future of home and community care.

### **Understanding the Hospital to Homecare Journey, Dr Marianne Saragosa**

Dr. Marianne Saragosa shared learnings from two studies conducted at VHA that provide a greater understanding of homecare clients' care transitions and factors associated with their risk of hospital readmission within 30 days.

## **Research And Innovation Network:**

VHA Research and Innovation is committed to integrating client and provider engagement in all aspects of research. Partnering with those with lived experiences of delivering and receiving care 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.

Join us at [researchhelp@vha.ca](mailto:researchhelp@vha.ca)





# Safer Teams

To inform enhancements to the work experience of our VHA team, we prioritize internal research questions focused on workplace wellbeing and opportunities for improvements to workplace health and safety.







## The pandemic introduced new challenges which impacted many VHA providers' wellbeing and mental health.

This suite of studies explored the pandemic experiences of rehabilitation providers, nurses, nurse leaders and PSWs, extending our understanding of how changes to their work impacted their perspectives and desire to practice. **Providers from all disciplines were motivated by their interactions with clients throughout the pandemic, knowing they were making a difference.** These connections were strained by pandemic safety procedures, impacting their experience of work. We are identifying evidence-based opportunities to design work in a way that enhances motivating factors while providing the supports that providers identify as necessary.

### Rehabilitation Professionals

We collaborated with the Restore Lab at the University of Toronto to examine the experiences of occupational therapists, physical therapists, social workers, dietitians and speech language pathologists. In addition to identifying strongly with many common concerns related to infection control and increased workload, many found that the autonomy and independence offered through home care work became isolating during the pandemic, highlighting an opportunity to enhance work through increased connection with colleagues.

### Nurses

Through interviews with nurses, we heard how pandemic conditions disrupted many desirable facets of their work such as stable, balanced, and flexible work conditions, and exacerbated unfavourable aspects such as feelings of isolation. Many nurses are reevaluating their relationship to their careers; for some this means stronger professional attachment and for others it means intentions to leave. Improved connection, workplace supports and wages were identified as strategies to sustain this workforce beyond the pandemic.

### Nurse Leaders

Home care nurse leaders bear extensive responsibilities for clients' quality of care and for large teams of providers. This study explored their experiences as they are emerging from the pandemic. Participants were inspired to lead and driven to improve the healthcare system. During the pandemic they assumed expanded responsibilities, requiring professional growth to balance many competing demands. These leaders remain committed to their clients and team. They expressed a desire for greater workplace social support and training opportunities to help them to grow in their roles."



## Personal Support Workers’ Pandemic Experiences: “You have to be careful about every detail”

This qualitative descriptive study explored the experiences of VHA’s PSWs early in the pandemic. PSWs shared a strong perception of a duty to work during a health crisis and were deeply motivated by a sense of responsibility to support their vulnerable clients despite feeling vulnerable themselves. The weight of pandemic anxiety was felt daily and intensely by most. PSWs described how long-standing system challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic and how increased physical distance from clients diminished their motivations to work and impacted their emotional wellbeing. These findings highlighted the necessity of targeted interventions to address the workplace stressors voiced by PSWs and of designing work conditions that allow them to thrive.

As the homecare sector enters pandemic recovery, there is an opportunity to revisit PSW’s work conditions and experiences as they transition out of the pandemic crisis. Continued research in this area will bolster evidence regarding influences on PSWs’ attitudes towards their work and intentions to remain in the job. These insights are particularly vital at a time when the availability of PSWs in home and community care is too low to meet current demand.

## Are exosuits a practical way to make client handling safer?:

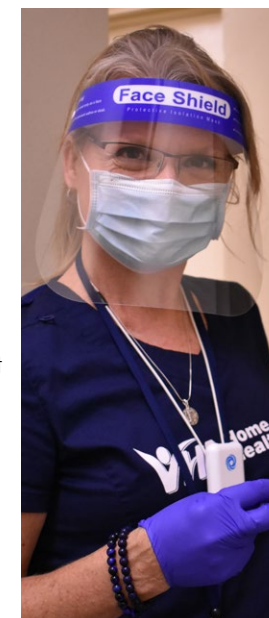
Exosuits are a new technology that present an exciting opportunity to reduce the demands on point-of-care providers’ backs – hopefully reducing fatigue and injury risk. We are working with PSWs, nurses, OTs and PTs to test out these exosuits during simulated care activities, to evaluate whether they feel like they will be practical and feasible to use during client care. If providers find the suits promising, the next step will be to test them at the point of care!

Our partners and funders for this work are the Centre of Research Expertise in Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders.



## Facial Protective Equipment

The VHA Research team leads a MLITSD-funded partnership between Ontario’s three largest not-for-profit homecare providers and the Centre of Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD) to understand factors that drive PSWs’, Nurses’ and Rehab providers’ adherence to respiratory and eye protection when working in home care. Through this work with SE Health, VON and CREOD we have identified opportunities to better target training and are highlighting barriers that continue to make it difficult for some providers to use their facial protective equipment comfortably. The resources that we are creating and sharing based on this research will help to inform our sector’s work to improve equipment and practices as we prepare for future respiratory illness seasons.





## Breaking the Silence: A new Workplace Violence & Harassment Initiative

To improve safety for our care providers, we have to know if they are facing violence or harassment. VHA Research collaborated with our Best Practice and Education and Human Resources teams to design, pilot and evaluate a new approach to increase openness about these experiences. It is designed based on evidence about factors that affect providers' decisions about whether to report negative workplace experiences. This comprehensive program combines education, rapid screening, and end-of-visit reporting, supported by updated policies.

- Education to challenge the normalization of violence and harassment, while highlighting the practical value of reporting.
- Rapid screening of clients before the first provider visit.
- A rapid end-of-visit reporting tool that:
  - allows the PSW to request or decline active supervisor follow-up,
  - facilitates peer-to-peer communication of challenges and strategies,
  - respects providers' expertise in managing difficult interactions with clients,
  - works on PSWs' mobile phones.
- Policy updates clarified definitions and expectations, while providing updated guidance on responding to reported incidents.

Several key measures found evidence of culture change: PSWs in the pilot reported increased comfort and confidence discussing and reporting workplace violence and harassment. Most PSWs used the end-of-visit reporting system at least once and nearly half submitted reports regularly. During the 7-month pilot, 21% of PSWs reported incidents. Over half of PSWs' reports shared client-specific strategies for managing the difficult situation. Usually, PSWs indicated that they had managed the situation and did not want further follow-up. In other cases, supervisor follow-up was requested and provided.

Pilot participants supported extending this approach to be used with all VHA providers. VHA will be extending this approach to all PSW teams in 2024.

“Because of the way PSW work is organized, there just wasn't time to report between visits. This new tool has made things much easier.”

PSW & Team Coach





# Innovation

Bringing the future of homecare closer by enabling the adoption of technologies that create more independence.



## VHA InnoVHAtion Lab: Tech that ‘fits’ your life

In 2023, the VHA Innovation team focused on developing partnerships with established age-tech ecosystems, designers and entrepreneurs who share our vision of safe and successful aging in our homes and communities. Through these partnerships we are gaining access to cutting edge technologies such as ambient sensing, wearable tech and in-home rehabilitation devices that are available in the VHA Lending Library. This curated library of emerging technologies creates low-risk opportunities for in home trials by clients, families and providers. The lending library program bridges a gap between tech startups and end users by enabling testing in real world situations and real people’s homes. Feedback is then shared with the designers so they can better incorporate the needs and wants of potential users into their products. Through this process, we become part of the solution - contributing expertise and insights to the iterative design cycle, which will improve the technology and fine tune it for success in the home.

“As a leading home care organization serving many of Ontario’s most densely populated and diverse regions, we are well-positioned to play an important role in the Age Tech space. We’re thrilled to be able to share our research and innovation expertise in the home and community care sector with our partners as we collectively work towards building a better future for caregivers and seniors wishing to age well in their home and communities,” says Dr. Sandra McKay, Vice President, Research & Innovation at VHA.

The logo for InnoVHAtion features the word "innovation" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "i" and "nno" are in pink, while "VHA" is in blue with a stylized human figure integrated into the letter "V". The "tion" is in pink.

Far too often home care technologies are not well-adapted to end-user needs nor are they accessible to those who need them most. The Community InnoVHAtion Lab seeks to change this narrative by identifying and deploying new and emerging technology to gather real end-user feedback for product iteration and awareness.





## Age-Tech Networks

Engaging in the established national and provincial innovation ecosystems are critical for access to sustainable sources of new and promising technology.



### AGE-WELL

a leading Canadian network that brings researchers, academics, older adults and innovators together to develop technologies and services for healthy aging while investing in the future through trainee education and mentorship.



### Center for Aging + Brain Health Innovation

'Discover and Adopt' program which helps develop, disseminate, scale, and promote adoption of innovations.



### Envisage

which brings together an ecosystem of innovators, researchers, aging communities, health organizations and investors to ensure that solutions meet market needs to address challenges of aging.



### Ontario Bioscience and Innovation

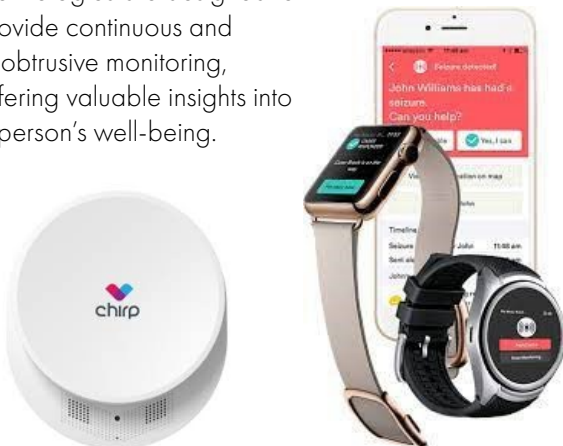
'Early Adopters Health Network' program which matches Canadian health technology companies with healthcare organizations for real-world evaluations to facilitate adoption.

## Community InnoVHAtion Lab Technology Partners

An important aspect of the program's overall success is staying on top of Age Tech trends and appropriately matching these growing opportunities with the right clients and families to trial in the community.

### Wearable Tech and Ambient Monitoring for Home Safety

Devices and systems that collect information about a person's health and daily activities without requiring active participation from the individual. These technologies are designed to provide continuous and unobtrusive monitoring, offering valuable insights into a person's well-being.



### Facilitating Physical Activity & Social Connection

Devices and platforms designed to support individuals to connect with others more easily helping with loneliness and social isolation.

#### Gerry Connect & Centivizer



### Clinical Innovation

These technologies encompass a range of tools and systems designed to help individuals, healthcare professionals, and caregivers in the safe and effective administration of medications.



## Powerful Partnerships:

**Innovation thrives in collaborative environments that respect diverse perspectives, experiences and expertise. Together with our partners we will take a leadership role in defining solutions that fit home care.**

### Clients & Families

We are grateful to the 39 clients and families who have partnered with us in 2023. The valuable first hand experiences provided by these partners are the foundation of our innovation activities. Their feedback is used to further iterate existing technologies or identify new opportunities.

### Clinicians and Healthcare Providers

The Innovation team works closely with other departments and teams within VHA to identify opportunities for improving the quality of care for clients and the work experience of all staff. Clinician insights guide the team to seek and select promising technologies for in-home trials.



*Trialing clinical innovation - hands-free video consultation*

## INNOVATION PLEDGE

Our Innovation promise to you!



### Rapid Response

we commit to always respond to your questions and concerns in a timely manner



### Safe & Secure

we ensure the deployed technology abides by Canada's privacy and security laws



### Supported by Science

we review the evidence related to each technology



### High Quality

we require each technology to be user-ready for in-home deployment



### 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.



Creating More Independence

### Contact Us

VHA Home HealthCare  
30 Soudan Ave  
Suite 600  
Toronto, ON M5V1S5  
Phone: 416-489-2500

### Follow us Online

