



**UHN**

Centre for  
Mental Health



**IMPACT  
REPORT  
2023**

## UHN's Centre for Mental Health

is home to Canada's largest medical psychiatry team serving some of the country's most complex patients who suffer from comorbid physical and mental illnesses. We are one of Canada's largest mental health research hospitals. We are in a unique position to drive the integration of physical and mental health care forward in partnership with patients, caregivers and care providers.

We acknowledge that the land on which we work is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. We remember and honour the legacy of the peoples who have been here before us and all who strive to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real. We recognize that Indigenous communities are adversely and inequitably affected by mental health issues and remain committed to advocating for the needs of Indigenous communities.

The Centre for Mental Health is committed to championing inclusion, diversity, equality, equity and accessibility in the learning, work and service environments. We believe that our differences enrich our ability to develop creative and innovative approaches to delivering exemplary patient care, research and education.

*Front Cover. Multi-patterned walls and brightly coloured floors of the reinvigorated tunnel system connecting UHN's Toronto General Hospital, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and Toronto Rehabilitation Institute with SickKids and Mt. Sinai Hospital. Designed by Stefan Sagmeister. Completed in 2022. Funded by the Weston Family Foundation.*

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# Pushing Forward

Navigating Challenges and Cultivating Change.

**D**etermination fuels our progress. The Centre for Mental Health continues to forge ahead implementing a strategic plan that advances the integration of physical and mental health, designs seamless models of care and cultivates a strong program and culture. In the face of a changing landscape and a global pandemic that has strained the healthcare system, our team has exhibited unwavering compassion, extending care to patients, their families, and one another.

In the past year, our commitment to improvement yielded significant recognition at the provincial and federal levels. Drs. **Hasan Sheikh** and **Kathryn Trotter** were appointed Provincial Clinical Leads for Ontario Health's Mental Health and Addictions Centre for Excellence, responsible for developing high-quality, integrated and equitable care. We are proud to see their expertise and leadership in substance use disorders and eating disorders, respectively, be recognized. UHN secured two of the five available positions, and these appointments will strengthen our alignment with future provincial planning developments.

At the federal level, our researchers garnered prestigious recognition. Two teams, one led by Dr. **Sarah Hales** and the other by Dr. **Joshua Rosenblat**, received \$1 million dollar grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to study the therapeutic potential of psilocybin combined with psychotherapy. One team is working on end-of-life care for patients with advanced cancer; the other is focused on individuals with treatment resistant depression. These grants are the first of their kind in the realm of psychedelic research, and epitomize the groundbreaking work we are doing in the field, with UHN securing two of the three available grants (pg. 24).

Internally, we launched several successful initiatives. The Substance Use Intervention Team, a collaborative effort across multiple UHN programs, provides support to hospitalized patients with substance use disorders at the Toronto Western (pg. 14). A partnership with the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre embeds a nurse practitioner within their program to conduct mental health screenings and help us understand the correlation between cardiac and psychiatric care (pg. 12).

And our newly created Mental Health Academy expands education offerings, providing professional development and public education opportunities (pg. 22).

While external recognition and new initiatives affirm our progress, our primary mission remains exceptional patient care. Our unwavering dedication to improving the lives of those affected by mental illness remains the cornerstone of our work.

As we navigate the future, we embrace the challenges that lie ahead. The Centre for Mental Health is soon to embark on a fundraising campaign partnership with the UHN Foundation (pg. 26). Together, we will enhance our resources and drive forward the delivery of quality mental health care.

In dismantling barriers and sparking change, we pave the way towards a world where mental health receives the same urgency and compassion as any other aspect of well-being. Join us in this vital mission, propelling us towards a future where mental health care is truly transformative.



**Dr. Susan Abbey**  
Psychiatrist-in-Chief &  
Program Medical Director  
Centre for Mental Health, UHN



**Ms. Marnie Escaf**  
Vice President, Clinical  
UHN

# Centre for Mental Health At a Glance



## Clinical Care

**88,100**

Outpatient Visits

**9,294**

Emergency Visits

**77%**

Virtual Visits

**51**

Inpatient Beds

**15,845**

Inpatient Days

**32 days**

Avg. Inpatient Stay



## Education

**105**

Residents

**254**

Clerks

**28**

Health Professions Students

**6**

Nursing Students

**\$79 M**

Active Research Funding

**\$9.3 M**

New Research Funding

**173**

Published Papers



## Research



## People

**110**

Physicians

**86**

Nurses

**153**

Health Professions Staff

**54**

Additional Staff



## Finance

**\$25 M**

Budget

**\$2.5 M**

Philanthropy

## Centre for Mental Health

We are composed of 6 divisions, each containing a number of specialized clinics and services that provide support to a complex and diverse range of patients.

### Acute Care & General Psychiatry

Delivering critical psychiatric care to patients experiencing a crisis and requiring urgent intervention.

### Eating Disorders

Providing intensive, personalized treatment to patients as well as information, resources, and support to Canadians affected by these illnesses.

### Medical Psychiatry

Providing mental health support across UHN to patients with complex medical and surgical illnesses in areas like oncology, cardiology and transplant.

### Outpatient Mental Health & Addictions

Supporting patients with a wide-range of services including substance use disorder treatment and culturally competent care.

### Poul Hansen Family Centre for Depression

Advancing multiple treatment types to provide integrated, wrap-around care in the treatment of mood disorders.

### Seniors' Mental Health

Supporting patient care, research and education for older adults living with mental health issues such as cognitive impairment and mood disorders.

# Improving Decision-Making

How we are reorganizing to enhance patient care.

The Centre for Mental Health was designated as UHN's 12th clinical program in 2021, reflecting the hospital's strategic goal to integrate physical and mental health organization-wide.

To reinforce this enhanced focus on mental health and addictions care, research and education, the Centre underwent a strategic restructuring. A group of 200+ health professionals and 100+ psychiatrists spread across four hospital sites are now organized within six different divisions (as outlined on pg. 8).

Each division is co-led by medical and operations leads who conduct regular business meetings. This approach allows health care teams to collaboratively

merge clinical insights with operational data, ensuring alignment of goals and strategies. It's a holistic approach to healthcare management that contributes to the program's overall success in efficiently delivering high-quality care.

Moreover, program-wide communication have been improved with the creation of regular newsletters, semi-annual town hall meetings and other channels of information dissemination. This enhanced connectivity fosters a more informed and engaged program culture.

These refinements better position the program to adapt, expand and strengthen its focus on interprofessional clinical care, research and education.

## Centre for Mental Health Program Executive Team



Dr. Susan Abbey  
Psychiatrist-in-Chief



Ms. Marnie Escaf  
Vice President, Clinical



Ms. Charlene Reynolds  
Clinical Director



Dr. Raed Hawa  
Deputy  
Psychiatrist-in-Chief



Dr. Michael Armanyous  
Outpatient Mental  
Health



Dr. Justin Delwo  
Acute Care  
Emergency Services



Dr. Hasan Sheikh  
Substance Use  
Services



Dr. Donna Stewart  
Research



Dr. Adrienne Tan  
Medical Psychiatry



Dr. Andrea Iaboni  
Seniors' Mental Health



Dr. Justin Weissglas  
Acute Care  
Inpatient Services



Mr. Zsolt Hering  
Director of Finance



Mr. Matthew Kelsey  
Director, Transformation,  
Partnerships & Medical  
Excellence

# Protecting Patients and Staff

Creating a Safer Healthcare Environment at UHN.



Dr. Christian Schulz-Quach and Ms. Charlene Reynolds

When a UHN patient poses a danger to themselves or others and the situation could escalate beyond the abilities of present staff to manage, a Code White is initiated — a coordinated emergency response to safeguard individuals from violence at the point of care.

UHN recently formed an organization-wide committee, co-led by the Centre for Mental Health’s Dr. **Christian Schulz-Quach**, staff psychiatrist, and **Charlene Reynolds**, Clinical Director, to review incidences and improve Code White responses, management and training.

Code White’s have an immense emotional and psychological impact on patients and staff. While these complex situations occur throughout UHN, needs vary across sites and programs. High-incidence areas require enhanced support, such as panic

buttons, as well as increased security and psychiatry expertise.

To ensure timely interventions and establish clear roles and responsibilities, the committee participated in a large scale quality improvement project, which included conducting a needs assessment with 250+ members of Team UHN and identifying three priorities:

- Implementing a comprehensive training program tailored to sites and program.
- Standardize Code White protocols into a 16-step process.
- Explore establishing dedicated Code White teams at each site.

Implementing these priorities will enhance prevention, de-escalation and safety for both UHN patients and staff.

# Alternatives to Restraints

Staff Nurses Emphasize Trauma-Informed Approaches.

In a recent quality improvement project, two nurses — **Megan Smith** and **Rachel Yang** — highlight the range of options available instead of depending on physical restraints in mental health care.

“We wanted to promote alternative approaches that are the least traumatizing,” says Rachel. “Trauma-informed care is the most important aspect of mental health nursing.”

The resource created — *“Enhancing the Use of Alternative Approaches to Physical Restraints”* — covers a range of prevention strategies: from ways to build rapport with patients and enhance assessment skills, to grounding techniques and the benefits of daily behavioural activation therapy.

Megan and Rachel drew on their nursing experience and education and also brought in evidence-based components via research. Their resource was shared with Centre for Mental Health colleagues and posted on the unit department site.

“We thought creating this educational resource would be a great opportunity to support and empower our new nurses and let them know that there are other options,” says Megan.

Ms. Megan Smith and Ms. Rachel Yang



“To witness the outstanding work Rachel and Megan did on this project **makes me so proud to be a nurse at UHN.**”

– Ms. Aideen Carroll,  
Advance Practice  
Nurse Educator

# Steering the Future

UHN Psychologist Appointed to Provincial Leadership Roles.

Dr. Kathryn Trottier, Clinical Lead, Eating Disorders, is at the forefront of designing and developing the future of care in her field.

In October 2022, she was appointed the Provincial Clinical Lead for Eating Disorders at Ontario Health's Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence. The Centre of Excellence is building a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system for people with eating disorders in Ontario under the leadership of Dr. Trottier.

Prior to this appointment, she served as the co-chair of Ontario Health's Quality Standards Advisory Committee, helping to set the standard of care for eating disorders in Ontario. The [new quality standard](#), released in March 2023, empowers patients, caregivers and

healthcare professionals with a clearer understanding of what constitutes high quality eating disorders care.

This new standard will provide the foundation for the provincial program being developed by the Centre of Excellence, and will ensure that care across the province is accessible, standardized, equitable and based in the best evidence with a measurement framework to facilitate planning and performance monitoring.

Dr. Trottier's appointments highlight the active and transformative role played by the Centre for Mental Health in advancing eating disorder care in Ontario. As the province's largest program for adults with eating disorders, the Centre is uniquely positioned to lead the field in delivering high-quality care and driving quality improvement.

Dr. Kathryn Trottier



# From Struggle to Support

NEDIC Beneficiary Responds with Legacy Gift.



Each year, the [National Eating Disorder Information Center](#) (NEDIC) provides information, resources, referrals and in-the-moment support to thousands of people living in Canada who are affected by eating disorders – and 35 years ago, it set **Karen Manion** on her path to getting well.

In her mid-teens, Karen was healthy and active. Then she read an article promoting weight control methods, and fell into a dangerous pattern of bingeing and purging. Thanks to a referral to NEDIC from her Toronto doctor, Karen found help.

"NEDIC was the springboard that got me into the system," she says. "In those days there was no internet, no easy way to find help on your own."

Karen has been very open about her recovery. She has spent her life talking about her experience in order to destigmatize eating disorders and help others who find themselves in a similar situation.

When she started thinking about leaving a gift in her will, NEDIC was atop Karen's list. She hopes with her gift to support others struggling with eating disorders even after she's gone.



"I was so glad that **there was a resource like NEDIC** with programs in place to help me."

– Ms. Karen Manion,  
NEDIC Supporter  
& Legacy Donor

# Integrating Heart and Mind

Uncovering the Relationship Between Cardiac and Mental Health.



Ms. Galadriel Barrett Laffan and Dr. Dilip Koshy

A new pilot project is embedding mental health nurse practitioner Galadriel Barrett Laffan into the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre's Adult Congenital Cardiac Clinic, where she provides mental health support to the 1,000+ cardiac patients the clinic serves each year.

Using measurement-based screening tools, Galadriel identifies patients who require psychiatric support and directs them according to a stepped care model which provides different levels of care based on the severity of their condition.

"We know there is an interrelationship between cardiac disease and mental health — cardiovascular patients with depression and anxiety have higher mortality and morbidity rates and lengthier hospital stays," says Dr. Dilip Koshy, staff psychiatrist and project lead.

The next phases of the project will include expanding the service to other cardiac clinics as well as a research initiative that will combine data collected in the psychiatric sphere with biological data from the cardiac system and use artificial intelligence to try and identify associations between the two. (UHN's Techna Institute will play a crucial role in the project's AI-element.)

Outcomes are poorer for those with both mental and physical health conditions with life expectancy shortened by

**15-20 years.**

# Mental Health Assistance

Psychiatric Support for Outpatients with Physical Health Issues.

Dr. Melitta Mezody is a UHN cardiologist treating hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a disease related to excessive heart muscle growth. Many of her patients are young, and struggle with anxiety, depression and adjustment problems related to this lifelong illness.

She recently learned that they could be referred to UHN's new Mental Health in Medicine Clinic (MHIM) to receive psychiatric support. The clinic provides this service to all UHN outpatients experiencing mental health concerns while receiving treatment for a physical health illness.

One patient who suffered from palpitations found incredible relief after being connected with a psychiatrist. Her anxiety and depression subsided, allowing her to start a new job, and even have a second child.

"The help they get through the MHIM clinic is more than I can provide with my cardiac medications," says Dr. Mezody. "It's heartwarming for me to see how patients become more stable and their cardiac issues become much more manageable"

MHiM was opened in 2021 with a \$1-million gift from the Slight Family Foundation. The clinic supports more than 250 patients annually.



"I was shocked **how much improvement my patients made.** Phenomenal."

- Dr. Melitta Mezody, Peter Munk Cardiac Centre





# Seamless Care Model Success

Clinic's Achievement Propels Program-wide Transition.

UHN's Outpatient Mental Health clinic recently adopted a central intake referral model, aiming to enhance patient care and accessibility. Their success — in reducing patient wait times and streamlining treatment pathways — was invaluable in compelling the Centre for Mental Health to move forward implement a program-wide central intake process.

Dr. Michael Armanyous, Medical Lead, Outpatient Mental Health, expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the transition highlighting the reduction in time between accepting a referral and a patient seeing a psychiatrist to four weeks or less, meeting CPSO guidelines and the newly established HQO standards.

The integration of Epic, UHN's new health information system, played a vital role in

adopting this new care model helping improve triage and administrative efficiency.

By leveraging this technology, the clinic can promptly respond to patients and referring physicians, collaborate effectively with other UHN teams, and relieve pressure on other units when needed, resulting in a streamlined patient experience and improved care delivery.

"Feedback has been very positive with greater satisfaction reported by patients, clinicians, staff psychiatrists, and our enormously supportive administrative team," says Dr. Armanyous.

The program-wide implementation of the central referral intake model is scheduled for winter 2024.

Dr. Michael Armanyous



# Reshaping Addictions Care

Providing On-Call Expertise for Patients and Providers.



Dr. Jon Mong

The Substance Use Intervention Team (SUIT) is changing the way individuals struggling with substance use disorders (SUD) are cared for at UHN by providing hope and compassionate support.

This innovative service launched in 2023 provides on-call assistance to hospitalized individuals struggling with opioids and alcohol, whether in the Emergency Department or any inpatient unit.

Each year UHN sees between 4,000 to 5,000 unique patients who require addictions support. These patients grapple with a multitude of challenges, including chronic illnesses, concurrent medical disorders and the distressing stigma associated with addiction.

SUIT's team of physicians offers assessment, counseling, and medication

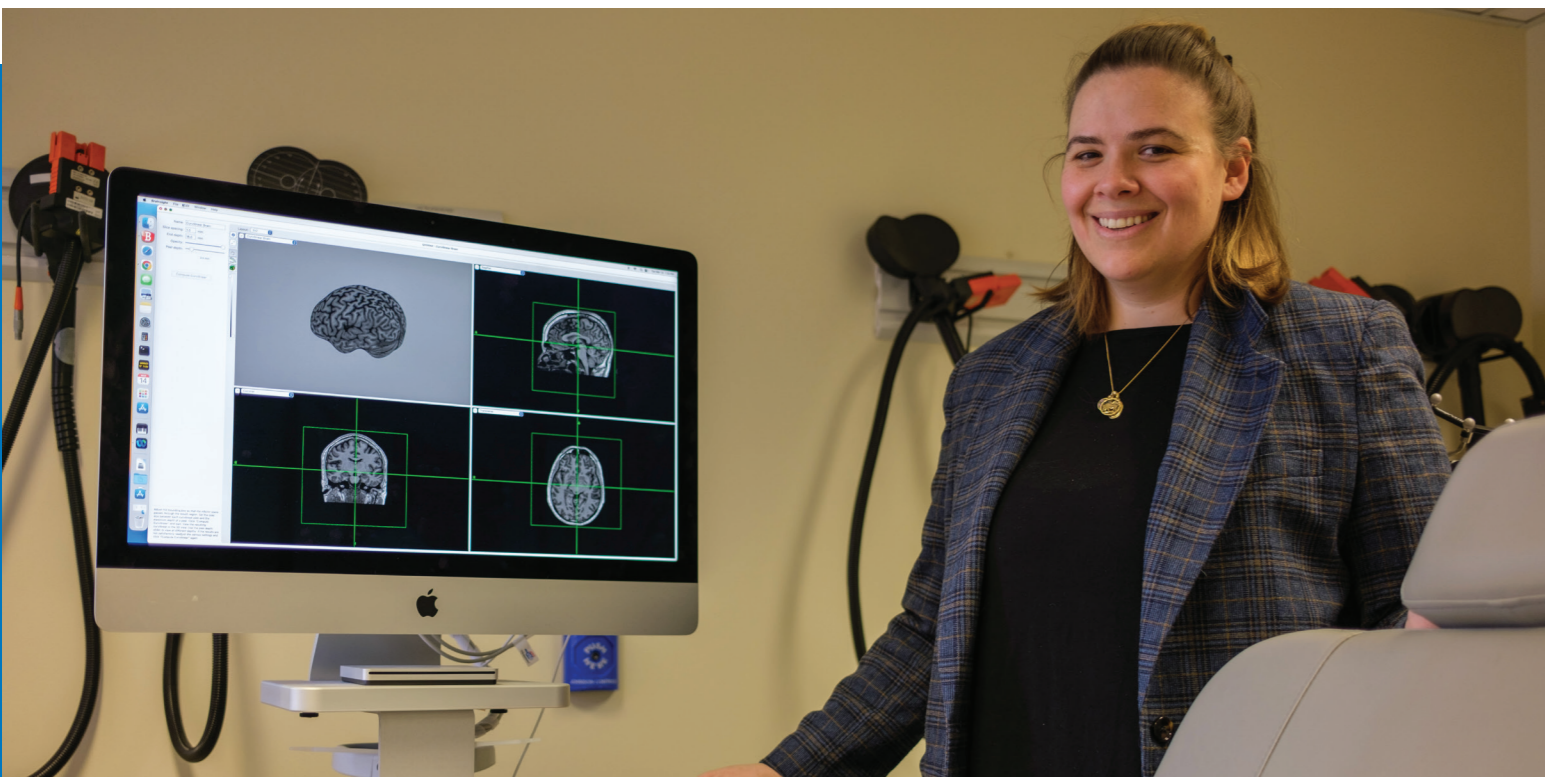
recommendations and facilitate referrals to community resources. By doing so, they strive to ensure that patients never have to choose between addressing acute medical concerns or enduring agonizing withdrawal symptoms on their own — a predicament that drives many to leave the hospital prematurely.

"It is a simple and basic thing to say, but we need to have empathy and respect for these patients and make sure we give them the best care that we can" says Dr. Jon Mong, UHN physician and SUIT team member.

Beyond supporting patients, SUIT also plays a vital role educating healthcare professionals across UHN who have questions or need guidance on different care approaches for patients who use substances.

# Transforming Treatment

An Improved Understanding of Brain Stimulation.



Dr. Daphne Voineskos

Dr. **Daphne Voineskos**, Medical Lead of the rTMS Clinic in the Poul Hansen Family Centre for Depression, led a [study](#) on individuals treated for major depressive disorder with Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS), a treatment that targets magnetic pulses to stimulate or inhibit brain activity.

Although rTMS is effective for some with treatment-resistant depression, showing a response rate of 50%, it is unclear why some respond and others do not.

The study, co-authored with **Rebecca Strafella**, attempted to better understand this mystery, analyzing changes in brain activity during and after rTMS treatment. They focused on two neurophysiological biomarkers, known as the N100 and N45

signals. Results showed that patients who improved after treatment had a weaker N100 signal and a stronger N45 signal.

Interestingly, as patient's depression decreased, their N100 and N45 signals increasingly resembled those of healthy individuals. The study also found that the N100 signal could predict how well someone would respond to rTMS.

"Our findings reveal a robust way to identify patients that will benefit from rTMS," says Dr. Voineskos.

"These insights could lead to improved clinical protocols that avoid the frustration that comes with current trial and error approaches for the treatment of depression," she adds.

# Sharing Knowledge, Skills

Connecting Our Work with Patients and Providers.

The Poul Hansen Family Centre for Depression uses virtual platforms to showcase their team's expertise and ongoing research through patient and provider-focused events.

Our Friends and Family Day, held each spring, connects patients, families, and care providers, providing a deeper understanding of depression and practical strategies to enhance their own care. The free event featured an insightful talk on emotional balance techniques by a trio of mental health clinicians as well as insights on the journey of a caregiver from Family Support Worker Lydia Rajpat.

Our provider-focused event, Clinical Advances in Depression Care, held in the fall, attracted more than 100 healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, and allied health workers. It showcased nine presentations from our team on a broad spectrum of topics, including advances in biological treatments, various psychotherapeutic approaches, and care models for patients with co-occurring mental and physical health concerns.

Through these collaborative events, the Poul Hansen Family Centre for Depression fosters knowledge exchange, skill development, and enhances the overall understanding and treatment of depression.



# Anxiety in Seniors

Researcher Leads Creation of National Guidelines.



Dr. Andrea Iaboni

A Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health (CCSMH) project, funded by a \$2.5 million grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada, will fill a gap in seniors' mental health by creating the first-ever comprehensive anxiety disorder guidelines for older adults.

National guidelines exist for depression and dementia, but not anxiety, in spite of surveys indicating 10-20% of Canadian seniors have clinically important anxiety symptoms.

"Anxiety can be a complex issue and treatment goes beyond prescribing a pill or psychotherapy," says Dr. **Andrea Iaboni**, UHN's Medical Lead, Seniors' Mental Health, who is co-leading the team of experts developing evidence-based guidance on how healthcare providers can approach assessing and treating anxiety.

Due to age-related stigma, underreporting, and an overlap with physical health concerns, anxiety disorders are less frequently recognized or diagnosed in seniors.

The group is aiming to complete the guidelines by the fall, with information and clinical tools to be shared with healthcare providers by March 2024. A partnership with Anxiety Canada will help broaden the project's reach.

"Anxiety disorder guidelines for older adults **haven't been developed anywhere internationally before.**"

– Dr. Andrea Iaboni  
Medical Lead  
Seniors' Mental Health

# Leveraging Technology

Wristband Data Informs Patient Safety and Effective Care.

Researchers at Toronto Rehab's Specialized Dementia Unit (SDU) are harnessing the power of wearable technology to improve psychiatric care for older adults.

Patients in the unit — older adults with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia — tend to wander widely and can sometimes intrude into the private rooms of others. Monitoring their mobility has always been a high priority.

A new study fits patients with wristbands that transmit real-time location data allowing nurses to track patients' movements from a central source. This technology helps the SDU locate patients efficiently and intervene in potentially risky situations before they escalate. The wearable technology also helps researchers understand how patients interact with their environment, how and where they spend their time, and other patterns of behaviour.

"We are using the data collected by these wristbands to measure individual patterns of behaviour over time," says Dr. Iaboni.

By analyzing the data, the team can assess how patients respond to interventions and adapt their strategies accordingly.

Understanding how physical environments affect quality of life can **have a lasting impact on dementia care.**



# In the Spotlight

Discover a Few of Our Standouts in the Education Sphere.

The Centre for Mental Health is a hub of activity providing clinical placements and training for an array of learners. More than a quarter of the University of Toronto's post-graduate psychiatry residents receive training here.

## THE RESIDENT

Dr. **Hamad Alkhenaini** is a fourth-year resident at the Centre for Mental Health driven by an interest in the intricate connection between mental and physical health.

Initially torn between pursuing emergency medicine or emergency psychiatry, his career path took a definitive turn when he encountered a patient whose stroke-like symptoms defied the expected brain imaging results, leading to a surprising diagnosis.

"It was a remarkable realization of the complexity that psychiatrists confront and the captivating nature of the human brain."

His career goal is to work with medically complex populations, prioritizing a comprehensive understanding of each individual's story and lived experiences.

## MEDICAL SCHOOL GRADUATE

During her fourth year of medical school, Dr. **Keziah Magor** had the opportunity to complete an elective at UHN in Consultation-Liaison psychiatry. It was a new and challenging experience. It was also crucial in her decision to pursue psychiatry during her residency, which starts this summer at the University of Toronto.

"Senior residents and staff psychiatrists provided me with valuable one-on-one feedback and were open about their experiences in psychiatry," she says, citing the mentorship experience at UHN as pivotal in her choice.

During her residency, Dr. Magor will focus on caring for patients in the most acute stages of mental illness, concentrating on inpatient or emergency psychiatry.

## INTERNATIONAL FELLOW

Dr. **Rami Ahmad** is the Centre for Mental Health's first international fellow since program operations restarted after a COVID-related hiatus.

Trained in Saudi Arabia, he chose UHN for its renowned Consultation-Liaison (C-L) program, which focuses on the assessment and treatment of psychiatric disorders in medically ill patients.

He arrived in 2022 for a two-year term, and is supervised by Dr. Noha Abdel Gawad with the opportunity of working with different experts in the field.

His ambition is to establish a C-L clinic and a fellowship training program back in Saudi Arabia. He notes, "there is high interest in C-L among Saudi learners, but a shortage of people to train them."

## TEACHING LEADERS

Medical students at the University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine recognized Drs. **Christian Schulz-Quach** and **Michelle Sukhu** for the quality of their teaching. Both received the MD Program Teaching Award for Excellence, which recognizes those that earned Teaching Evaluation Scores in the top 10%.

"To win this award a second year in a row is still just as humbling, and to know that I am continuing to have a meaningful impact on their educational experience here at UHN," says Dr. Sukhu.

"Receiving recognition from our learners during this time of enormous challenges is deeply meaningful," says Dr. Schulz-Quach, who also received the Robin Hunter Postgraduate Teaching Award and Allen B. Tennen Award.



# Innovative Hub

Leading a New Approach to Mental Health Training.

Over the past year, the Centre for Mental Health in collaboration with the Michener Institute for Education developed the Mental Health Academy, an education hub uniquely focused on integrating physical and mental health as well as innovative therapies.

The Academy was established to address competency gaps and emphasize the importance of holistic patient care that integrates mental and physical well-being. Recognizing the critical need for specialized education, the Academy offers a range of evidence-based courses to equip healthcare professionals with the necessary tools to navigate the complex landscape of mental health care.

One of the flagship programs is the Mental Health Nursing certificate. Mental health nursing is a highly specialized field that demands not only medical expertise, but also a compassionate and empathetic approach to patients dealing with emotional and psychological issues. It remains surprising that many nurses go through their entire training with minimal instruction in the field of mental health care.

Other offerings include Foundations of Psychedelic Psychotherapy, a cutting-edge training program to educate health professionals interested in this emerging area. And Situational Awareness and Verbal De-escalation workshops, designed to empower frontline professionals to manage escalating or threatening situations by employing effective strategies that will prevent harm to themselves, patients and clients.

In addition to its educational offerings, the Mental Health Academy actively promotes public education initiatives, hosting events on depression care and the treatment for patients with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI), and creating a training module shared across UHN for treating patients with substance use disorders.

Looking ahead, the Mental Health Academy plans to expand its course offerings, catering to the evolving needs of healthcare professionals. With its commitment to evidence-based educational programming, the Academy aims to raise awareness and reduce stigma surrounding mental health.

# Empowering Nurses

First Graduates of Mental Health Nursing Program.



*Ms. Vesna Manevska*

The first cohort to complete the Centre for Mental Health's new [Mental Health Nursing Certificate Program](#) this past winter included among the graduates **Vesna Manevska**, a staff nurse in the Inpatient Unit.

When Vesna completed her nursing degree at Humber College in April 2022, her education in mental health-specific nursing was restricted to a one-month placement she attended twice a week.

"It wasn't that comprehensive," says Vesna, who joined UHN last fall. It's one of the reasons she jumped at the opportunity to enroll in the program.

The 10-week course is geared towards nurses seeking to deepen their understanding of best practices in mental health care. It is delivered via online

modules and weekly virtual sessions.

"Because this is my first nursing job, I really wanted to advance my skills and knowledge about mental health," she says. "I wanted to cut out the guess work and learn effective strategies to work with different diagnoses and the populations we help at UHN."

Course material covers the therapeutic relationship with patients, suicide risk and mental health assessment, as well as how to apply best practices for patients with a range of mental health conditions.

"Because of this course I feel much more reassured going to work," says Vesna. "It reinforced how collaborative this work is across different professions and how valuable it can be to hear different approaches."



# Leading the Field

UHN at the Forefront of Psychedelic Research.

Psychedelic drugs have been held up as a potential breakthrough treatment for a range of mental illnesses, with their benefits promoted by everyone from celebrities to venture capitalists.

But medical research on their efficacy is still in the preliminary stage.

UHN researchers are working to remedy that and achieved a significant milestone recently by obtaining two \$1 million grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

These grants were part of a special competition to study the therapeutic potential of psilocybin (the active compound in “magic mushrooms”) in combination with psychotherapy.

“It’s a testimony to the quality of work at

UHN that we secured two of the possible three grants available,” says Dr. Susan Abbey, Program Medical Director, Centre for Mental Health.

“We are taking the lead in this exciting new field with our teams pioneering research methodology and advancing patient safety protocols.”

The research teams aim to investigate the effects of psilocybin on end-of-life care for patients with advanced cancer (led by Drs. **Sarah Hales, Emma Hapke and Daniel Rosenbaum**) and treatment-resistant depression (led by Dr. **Joshua Rosenblat**), contributing to the advancement of patient safety protocols and research methodology in this emerging field.

Clinical trials are scheduled to commence in early 2024.

*Drs. Sarah Hales and Joshua Rosenblat*



# Innovative Research

Unique Lines of Inquiry Explored by UHN Psychiatrists.

## SUICIDE'S IMPACT

Clinician-Researcher Dr. **Zainab Furqan** was co-author of a study that explored the impact of patient suicide on psychiatrists.

“We know that losing a patient to suicide has a major impact on psychiatrists, with many calling it the most significant event of their careers,” says Dr. Furqan.

Research revealed that psychiatrists often experience guilt and self-doubt after such an event, compromising their ability to assess suicide risk. Up to 80% of psychiatrists will have a patient die by suicide at some point in their career, but many receive no training on how to cope. The authors’ recommend urgent changes, including pre-emptive training that identifies practical strategies for supporting colleagues and grieving families after a patient suicide. [> learn more](#)



## HEALTH AND HUMANITIES

Dr. **Suze Berkhout**, a Clinician-Investigator, co-leads *The Frictions of Futurity in Transplant Medicine Project*, which brings together the diverse perspectives of artists, researchers, academics, healthcare providers, transplant recipients and their support persons.

“Participants not only create, but deconstruct and challenge knowledge surrounding transplantation through their artistic practice,” says Dr. Berkhout.

Year-round events showcase digital stories created by long-term transplant recipients, providing a deeper understanding of the transplantation experience. Conversations address topics such as quality of life pre- and post- transplantation and justice concerns related to organ failure, long waitlists and supply-demand issues.



# Innovating Together

Collaborating with UHN Foundation to Drive Change.

The creation of the Transformation Office in 2021 marked a pivotal moment in propelling progressive change throughout the Centre for Mental Health.

Its core mission is to bring together strategy, philanthropy, hospital operations and medical teams, helping to realize UHN's vision of seamlessly integrating physical and mental healthcare. This is achieved through the cultivation of high-performing structures and teams dedicated to facilitating innovative projects that propel the advancement of mental healthcare, research and educational initiatives. The Transformation Office is currently supporting more than a dozen projects across the Centre

To support growth within the Centre for Mental Health, the Transformation Office:

- Works in partnership with UHN Foundation to match grateful patients and new donor prospects with the Centre's established funding priorities.
- Adopts accountable philanthropy

principles to foster positive relationships with all stakeholders and orient organizational activity around defined purposes, milestones and financial management.

- Follows implementation science and change management principles to ensure initiatives are delivered in a high quality manner and formally evaluated to demonstrate impact and outcomes for patients, providers and funders.

This year, in partnership with the UHN Foundation, the Centre secured several significant donations that facilitated the launch of new projects or expansion of existing initiatives:

## National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC)

Supported with a \$2M donation from the Slight Family Foundation to strategically plan and expand its instant chat service, translate resources into new languages and create new resources in partnership with racialized communities.



## Mental Health and Chronic Pain

Through a \$500K gift from the ELPIS Foundation, we will enhance understanding and skills among healthcare workers about the pervasive mental health challenges among patients enduring chronic pain.

## Psychedelic Psychotherapy Education

A \$250K gift from Leonard Latchman will help expand UHN's offerings in the area, including the Foundation of Psychedelic Psychotherapy offered through the Michener Institute of Education.

The Transformation Office plays a pivotal role in bolstering the Centre's philanthropic endeavors.

Looking ahead, the Office is poised to leverage its network of dedicated supporters and seasoned experts to spearhead an ambitious \$80M campaign. This campaign will serve as a catalyst for propelling UHN's mental health program to new heights, enabling groundbreaking advancements in patient care, research and education.

## Transformation Office Team



Dr. Susan Abbey  
Psychiatrist-in-Chief



Mr. Matthew Kelsey  
Director, Transformation,  
Partnerships & Medical Excellence



Ms. Rebekah Valenti  
Campaign Director, Major Gifts  
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Mr. James Davies  
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Ms. Emma Scott  
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Projects & Medical  
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Planning & Strategy

## Disclaimers

All data are accurate as of March 31, 2023. Financial data are reported for the 2023 fiscal year ending on March 31, 2023.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA provided by University Health Network's Decision Support and Ontario Mental Health Reporting System (OMHRS).

STAFF & TRAINEE DATA provided by UHN People & Culture.

RESEARCHER DATA at the Centre for Mental Health includes researchers appointed by the Centre and those aligned with the Centre. Centre-appointed and -aligned researchers are included in the Centre's funding and publication data. PUBLICATION DATA compiled by the Centre for Mental Health. Publications include articles, reviews and proceedings papers in journals; those authored by more than one Centre for Mental Health researcher are included once in the program's total number of publications. FINANCIAL DATA

provided by UHN Finance. PRODUCTION CREDITS This report is published and designed by UHN's Centre for Mental Health. Elements of this report were prepared by UHN Public Affairs & Communications.

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## Donations

To support the Centre for Mental Health, please contact the UHN Foundation. Email: [foundation@uhn.ca](mailto:foundation@uhn.ca); Telephone: 416-340-3935;

Toll-free donation hotline: 1-877-846-4483 (UHN-GIVE);

Website: [www.uhnfoundation.ca](http://www.uhnfoundation.ca)