

# Faculty of Health Impact Report

2020-21





The Faculty of Health is committed to creating positive change for our students, our communities, and the world around us through teaching, research excellence, and partnerships.

KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

HEALTH STUDIES

NURSING

GLOBAL HEALTH

PSYCHOLOGY

NEUROSCIENCE

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

**COVID 19 IS JUST ONE** of many challenges in health and healthcare. The Canadian Institute of Health Information reports public healthcare expenditures in Canada almost doubled in the last 20 years AFTER adjusting for inflation. Much of the increase is among adults age 65+ who make up 18 per cent of the population but utilize 45 per cent of public-sector healthcare money. Spending is especially high for those over 80. However, aging is not a significant driver of healthcare costs per se. Rather, it is the increase in the number of people with non-communicable diseases such as cancer, dementia, heart disease, mental health challenges, and diabetes. Many blame aging for surging health costs because older adults are more likely to have one or more chronic conditions but getting older does not have to result in chronic illness. If we add life to years as we add years to life, population aging can be a good thing. The real challenge is to reduce the number of people who develop non-communicable conditions and then have to cope with them over many years. The health system needs more methods for preventing, monitoring and efficiently managing chronic conditions. We need more effective policies, programs, and services to enhance broad determinants of individual, community and global health such as housing, child development, recreation, greater equity in income and access to care, dignified supports for seniors, and slowing climate change, to name a few. We need a new generation of people equipped to undertake relevant research and to become informed and effective healthcare providers.

Keeping people healthier for longer by reducing health inequities, improving health and healthcare through the broad determinants of health is the foundation of the Faculty of Health at York. This Impact Report provides illustrations of how the Faculty of Health is doing this: from new approaches to seniors care and mental health, improving brain health, reducing health inequalities, designing new drugs for diabetes, to innovations in where and how we teach students, the impact of our alumni, and the community partners we are working with.

I hope you enjoy reading about our progress and impact.

Paul McDonald, PhD, FRSPH, FCAHS  
Professor and Dean, Faculty of Health

Amazing things happen when diverse communities work together to tackle world issues. When York University students apply their knowledge, they have the power to make things right.

Join us in creating positive change. [yorku.ca/rightthefuture](http://yorku.ca/rightthefuture)



# FACULTY OF HEALTH EXPERTS IN THE NEWS

Faculty of Health researchers are regularly sought for their expertise by news media locally, nationally and internationally.



**EREZ FREUD**  
**PSYCHOLOGY**

Psychology professor and neuroscientist Erez Freud's research focuses on the investigation of the cognitive and neural processes that mediate our ability to perceive the world around us and to interact with objects in our environment. His research that found masks change the way we process faces was especially timely during the COVID-19 pandemic and received worldwide media coverage including the **New York Times**, **CBC**, and the **Jerusalem Post**.

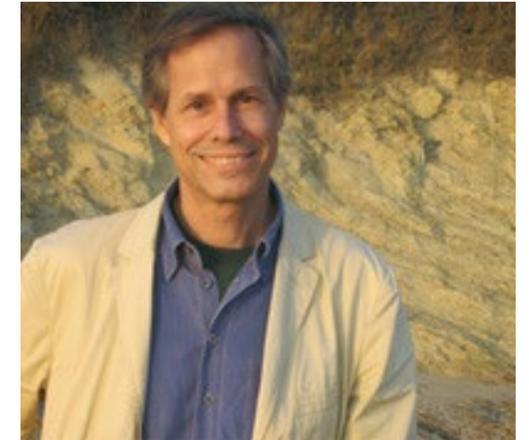


**TAMARA DALY**  
**HEALTH POLICY & MANAGEMENT**

To fix the crisis in long term care homes, we must de-commodify care for the direct benefit of residents, their families and frontline workers says Health Policy & Management Professor and Director of the York University Centre for Aging Research and Education (YU-CARE), Tamara Daly. Good-quality care involves treating residents and their families in ways that are not transactional and ensuring care workers have a living wage and job security. Her expertise has been cited in many media outlets including the **Toronto Star**, **CBC Radio**, **Global News**, and **Maclean's magazine**.

**PAUL RITVO**  
**KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE,  
PSYCHOLOGY**

Kinesiology & Health Science and Psychology Professor Paul Ritvo led a study with CAMH that evaluated online mindfulness-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT-M) for young adults with major depressive disorder. The clinical trial results showed a significant reduction in depression and anxiety among study participants and confirm that depression treatment can be significantly improved with online mindfulness-based CBT while overcoming geographic restrictions. His research findings were profiled in the **Financial Post** and **NOW magazine**.



**NAZILLA KHANLOU**  
**NURSING**

Women have suffered the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of its toll on mental and physical health. Nursing Professor and Office of Women's Health Research Chair in Mental Health, Nazilla Khanlou's community focused work on improving women's health outcomes, particularly for immigrant women, has received coverage in daily and academic media including the **Toronto Star**, **CityNews**, and **University Affairs**.

**JOEY CHENG**  
**PSYCHOLOGY**

Overconfidence can be contagious. Research from Psychology professor Joey Cheng suggests that if you have been exposed to an overconfident person, then you become more likely to overestimate your own relative standing. It's a tendency that could cause dangerously deluded thinking to spread through a team. Her research findings were featured in various media outlets including the **BBC News**, **Business Day**, and the **Harvard Business Review**.



Learn more: [health.yorku.ca/media](https://health.yorku.ca/media)

## FACULTY OF HEALTH RESEARCH

### Faculty of Health research at a glance

From world class vision research, to physical and mental health, to policy change local to global, our researchers are at the forefront of bold discoveries that advance health and health science.

**\$20  
MILLION** RESEARCH INCOME  
GENERATED BY  
FACULTY OF HEALTH  
RESEARCHERS  
ANNUALLY



#### 5 RESEARCH CENTRES & INSTITUTES

- Centre for Vision Research
- Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research
- LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research
- Muscle Health Research Centre
- York Centre for Aging Research and Education

York University ranked **#1**  
in citation impact in  
**NURSING & HEALTH  
PROFESSIONS** (SciVal, 2020-21)

**181** RESEARCHERS

**306** ACTIVE RESEARCH  
GRANTS

**90+** DOMESTIC AND  
INTERNATIONAL  
RESEARCH FUNDERS

**23** RESEARCH  
CHAIRS:

**15** YORK RESEARCH CHAIRS

**5** CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS

**2** ENDOWED CHAIRS  
The Helen Carswell Research Chair  
in Dementia Care  
The Dahdaleh Distinguished Chair in  
Global Governance & Legal Epidemiology

**1** ONTARIO WOMEN'S HEALTH  
COUNCIL (OWHC) CHAIR  
in Women's Mental Health Research

## How Narrative Fiction Shapes Our Social Skills

**RAYMOND MAR**  
PSYCHOLOGY

**TO ENDURE THE SOCIAL ISOLATION** of shutdowns and quarantines triggered by the pandemic, many of us have turned to movies, TV shows and novels—but how is this shaping the way we think and feel? It's a central question driving the research of Raymond Mar, a York psychology professor who studies the cognitive, social and emotional outcomes of consuming narrative fiction across different media.

Historically, Mar says, research into the psychological impacts of stories have focused on their ability to entertain us. Through extensive research—using approaches from personality, cognitive and social psychology combined with

some neuroscience—Mar has discovered that when we become immersed in the lives of our favourite fictional characters, it influences how we understand and relate to other people.

“When we engage with stories, we are using the same cognitive processes to understand people in the real world,” says Mar, a recipient of the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award for outstanding research. “These imagined experiences have a wider impact than we have realized on a variety of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and actions. A story can be a coping mechanism—if we engage deeply, it can help us develop a perceived sense of closeness with a character,” Mar says. “For those who struggle to form and maintain relationships, fiction can serve as a useful tool.”



## Toward Compassionate Health Care for All

**AGNÈS BERTHELOT-RAFFARD**  
HEALTH POLICY & MANAGEMENT

**RACISM MANIFESTS ITSELF** in the health care system in many ways. Without realizing it, clinicians can internalize beliefs about Black, Indigenous and other people of colour that often result in unjust treatment. This in turn creates a climate of mistrust among racialized patients, preventing them from getting the help they need. Agnès Berthelot-Raffard is working to change this.

As founder of the Black Student's Mental Health Project, Berthelot-Raffard, assistant professor in the School of Health Policy & Management, is conducting a wide-ranging investigation into the experiences of Black university students, who experience elevated rates of anxiety and depression compared to non BIPOC students. Another of her large projects examines how Black women in Quebec experience racial bias in obstetrics and gynecology.

Berthelot-Raffard's research is groundbreaking as a great deal of existing health data on Black patients pertains only to Americans. "Our population is very different," she says, "in that 40 percent of Black people in Canada are immigrants. We are much more diverse in terms of origin and language."

A social ethicist by training, Berthelot-Raffard says that "even when I'm doing quantitative analysis, I'm still a philosopher. My research is shaped by one question: how do institutions shape the experiences of people who use them?"

The data she is currently collecting will help inform decision makers to pave the way toward a more compassionate system of health care for all. "I expect that transformation is possible," she says. "The fact that research like this is being funded is what gives me hope: ten years ago, it wouldn't have been possible."

## Exploring the missing pieces of the concussion recovery puzzle

**LAUREN SERGIO**  
KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

**APPROXIMATELY 200,000 CANADIANS** are diagnosed with a concussion each year, yet most research explores how they affect young male athletes. Neuroscientist Lauren Sergio of the School of Kinesiology & Health Science wants to expand concussion research to reflect the impacts on an overlooked demographic, one that comprises the majority of our population: adults ages 18 to 65.

"Unlike athletes, working-age adults trying to recover from concussions have responsibilities they can't abandon—employment, kids, housework—and yet, there is quite a gap in the literature on this population," says Sergio, the York Research Chair in Brain Health and Skilled Performance.

Another missing piece of this research puzzle, Sergio says, is an understanding of how sex-related differences affect our cognitive-motor integration (CMI), meaning our ability to think and move simultaneously, an essential skill for daily living. This is the enduring legacy of medical science literature being historically rooted in research on male physiology. However, we do know that the brain networks for CMI vary for males and females—Sergio is the first researcher to have demonstrated these differences.

Now, Sergio is examining the sex-related differences in the dynamics of concussion healing in a five-year study that this past spring received \$401,625 in funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. She is partnering with two other York Kinesiology & Health Science professors, and a University of Toronto psychology professor specializing in multisensory and aging, to conduct an interdisciplinary investigation that will include integrated sensory, motor and cognitive behavioural assessments as well as neurophysiological and hormonal measurements of participants.

The work will unfold partly at York's full-service MRI facility, and partly at Toronto Rehab's Challenging Environment



Photo courtesy of YFile.

Assessment Laboratory, an advanced simulation facility for testing mobility in functions such as driving or climbing stairs. Among the innovative modalities being used is virtual reality technology that engages participants in performing functions such as walking and grocery shopping.

Sergio hopes to generate evidence that can help kinesiologists, physiotherapists, neurologists and other rehabilitation professionals better tailor their treatment regimens for patients affected by concussions.

Says Sergio: "Working-age people, and especially women, are being underserved by the science, and clinicians wish they knew more, so it's important to get this knowledge out there."



# Overcoming The Brick Wall Of Hypoglycemia

**MICHAEL RIDDELL**  
KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INSULIN'S DISCOVERY

100 years ago cannot be overstated: the drug has given life to millions of people who otherwise would have died not long after a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes.

Although it's a lifesaving medication, insulin carries side effects. One of these is hypoglycemia – a dangerous condition in which a patient's blood sugar plummets, potentially resulting in life-threatening accidents, seizures or unconsciousness.

It's a condition that can be brought on by many things: exercise or missed meals are most common, but also stress and natural changes in the body. In fact, diabetes researcher Michael Riddell says there may be up to 50 factors that influence blood sugar levels and some of these factors appear to contribute to hypoglycemia. Although glucose monitors can identify the condition, they cannot change it. "We now see that on average people whose diabetes was thought to be well controlled are actually spending 10 to 15 percent of their time in hypoglycemia," says Riddell.

A leading expert on the relationships between diabetes, stress and exercise, Riddell is a professor in York's School of

Kinesiology & Health Science and a member of York's Muscle Health Research Centre. He is also a founding scientist with Zucara Therapeutics Inc. and is working closely with them to develop a drug that will prevent hypoglycemia in those with diabetes. Riddell received nearly \$415,000 in funding for the project from the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program and other funding sources. In addition, Zucara and York University have been awarded a Mitacs Accelerate Postdoctoral Fellowship grant, which will fund the development of a preclinical Type 2 diabetes model. Phase 1 trials of the drug, currently known as ZT-01, were completed in the summer of 2021, and it has moved on to the next stage in its development.

Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes himself at the age of 14, Riddell has led a life in which sports and exercise have always been important. For those with diabetes, as for all of us, exercise has enormous benefits – but as Riddell says, those benefits should not come at a cost. "It's our hope that patients will soon be able to live active lives, without constantly running into this brick wall of hypoglycemia."



# Only A Global, Coordinated Approach Will End The Covid-19 Pandemic

**OGHENOWEDE EYAWO**  
GLOBAL HEALTH  
KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

**AS A RESEARCHER** whose work lies at the intersection of epidemiology and population health, Oghenowede Eyawo has a warning to people in highly vaccinated countries who may believe the COVID-19 pandemic is coming to an end.

"This is a pandemic, not an epidemic," says the assistant professor of global health epidemiology in the School of Global Health and a faculty member in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science. "If we only solve it in the Global North, it will come back. We live in a globalized society where it takes less than 24 hours for anything to be shared. We won't be safe until the rest of the world is."

In the developing world, many countries have not been able to vaccinate more than five percent of their population, and in some of these countries, the rate is less than one percent. To fix this and increase supply and access to COVID-19 vaccines and essential diagnostics, Eyawo strongly advocates the waiving of patents on vaccines, as well as knowledge-sharing and the development of technological capacity to produce and distribute vaccines and other diagnostic tools in low- and middle-income country settings. "We need a global, coordinated approach to deal with COVID-19," he says, "and that's currently missing."

While Eyawo is currently researching the spread and burden of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa, he has spent his career tracking the progress of many other communicable diseases, including pandemics such



Photo courtesy of YFile.

as HIV/AIDS that remain a major health problem in many populations around the world. Improving socio-economic conditions and addressing the underlying social determinants of health that continues to drive disease transmission and burden, he believes, will be key to solving such problems.

Says Eyawo: "the goal of my research is to improve our understanding of the many different intersecting issues that affect the health of marginalized populations in Canada, as well as around the world – and to use that information to develop solutions that can help us deal with these challenges."



# Making HIV/AIDS Health Care More Accessible To Indigenous Peoples

**SEAN HILLIER**  
**HEALTH POLICY & MANAGEMENT**

**HISTORICAL OPPRESSION** and its lingering impacts have caused numerous health inequities among Indigenous Peoples in Canada. One area where this is particularly and painfully clear: Indigenous Peoples face a disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS infections, with a prevalence rate that is twice as high as in the general population.

Health Policy & Management assistant professor Sean Hillier, a member of the Qalipu First Nation, York Research Chair in Indigenous Health Policy & One Health, and Associate Director of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages at York, has researched the social, cultural and justice aspects of how First Nations people access HIV/AIDS health-care services in Ontario. Collaborating with Ryerson University and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Hillier interviewed 29 HIV positive First Nations people using the open-ended approach of traditional Indigenous storytelling to learn their first-hand experiences of colonial trauma, and how the intersection of racism and HIV stigma affects how they access confidential, localized, culturally competent care.

The conversations led to the development of 29 recommendations for the federal and provincial governments as well as Indigenous communities and HIV/AIDS organizations. In large part, they call on the federal government to increase funding for locally available HIV/AIDS care, treatment, programs, services and education, and better address pervasive social issues in Indigenous communities such as poverty, youth suicide and inadequate housing, education and a lack of clean drinking water. Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, “Decolonising the HIV Care Cascade” was published in November 2020 in the International Journal of Indigenous Health.

“The HIV care system is steeped in a Western medical paradigm of health that, at its foundation, doesn’t take into account the significant systemic barriers Indigenous Peoples face in accessing testing, getting into care and maintaining viral suppression,” says Hillier. “Fundamentally, we are looking at issues of access and funding, and these recommendations are vital to fully understanding and combatting them.”

As a special advisor on Indigenous resurgence to the Dean of Health, Hillier is also a part of the Faculty’s broader effort to advance Indigenous scholarship and decolonize curriculum across all programs. He engages in similar work for the university at large in his role as chair of the Indigenous Council.

“I’m working to help York make progress with prioritizing Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing within the academy. We can build a greater capacity to attract and retain Indigenous scholars, which in turn will help bring in more Indigenous learners.”

## FACULTY OF HEALTH AWARDS & RECOGNITION

### Faculty of Health awards and recognition at a glance

Our faculty are recognized locally and globally for their expertise, excellence, and impact in research, teaching, and community engagement.



#### 2021 PRESIDENT'S RESEARCH AWARDS

**Rebecca Bassett-Gunter**  
(Kinesiology & Health Science)

**Debra Pepler**  
(Psychology)

**Christopher Perry**  
(Kinesiology & Health Science)



#### 2021 DEAN'S AWARDS

**Mathieu Poirier**  
(Global Health)  
Dean's Award for Excellence in  
Educational Leadership, Pedagogical  
and/or Curricular Innovation

**Julie Conder**  
(Psychology)  
Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching

**Adrian Viens**  
(Global Health)  
Dean's Award for Excellence in Service  
& Engagement Impact Award

**Amy Muise**  
(Psychology)  
Dean's Award for Excellence in Research

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FACULTY MEMBERS FROM THE  
FACULTY OF HEALTH APPEARED  
ON THE 2020 STANFORD  
UNIVERSITY LIST OF THE  
TOP TWO PERCENT OF CITED  
RESEARCHERS IN THE WORLD

**Joseph Baker** (Kinesiology & Health Science)

**Ellen Bialystok** (Psychology)

**Douglas Crawford** (Psychology)

**Caroline Davis** (Kinesiology & Health Science)

**James Elder** (Psychology)

**Gordon Flett** (Psychology)

**Sherry Grace** (Kinesiology & Health Science)

**Leslie Greenberg** (Psychology, Emeritus)

**Walter Heinrichs** (Psychology)

**David Hood** (Kinesiology & Health Science)

**Joel Katz** (Psychology)

**Joel Lexchin** (Health Policy & Management, Emeritus)

**Raymond Mar** (Psychology)

**Gail Mitchell** (Nursing, Emeritus)

**Debra Pepler** (Psychology)

**Shahirose Premji** (Nursing)

**Dennis Raphael** (Health Policy & Management)

**David Regan** (Psychology, Emeritus)

**Michael Riddell** (Kinesiology & Health Science)

**Harvey Skinner** (Psychology & Global Health)

**Rose Steele** (Nursing)



Psychology Distinguished Research Professor Debra Pepler received the Order of Canada in 2020 for her innovative, community-based research on social issues involving children and youth, which has changed the way psychologists study bullying.



Nursing Professor and Director of York's School of Nursing, Shahirose Premji, was named a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Nursing in 2021.

# FACULTY OF HEALTH TEACHING & STUDENT SUCCESS

## Faculty of Health teaching and student success at a glance

Our faculty teachers are passionate about the subjects they teach and as active researchers in their fields, they bring new insights into the classroom that inspire excellence in their students.



**217**  
full-time  
faculty



**Largest and most  
diverse  
course selection**  
in Psychology and  
Kinesiology & Health  
Science of any  
university in Canada

### 6 UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Global Health
- Health Studies  
(Policy, Management, Informatics)
- Kinesiology & Health Science
- Neuroscience
- Nursing
- Psychology



### KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

Consistently ranked among the **top 3** Kinesiology programs in Canada.

(Shanghai Rankings and Times Higher Education)



### GLOBAL HEALTH

One of York's "Standout Programs" (Maclean's Magazine)



### PSYCHOLOGY

Among the **top 10** Psychology programs in Canada.

(Ranked 5th by QS World University Rankings and 6th by Maclean's Program Rankings)



### CRITICAL DISABILITY STUDIES (MA, PhD)

The only graduate program of its kind in Canada and the only PhD in Critical Disability Studies

## Pandemic Problem-Solving Beyond Borders

**MATHIEU POIRIER**  
GLOBAL HEALTH

**FOR HIS SECOND-YEAR** Global Health Policy course, Mathieu Poirier, a Global Health professor and York Research Chair in Global Health Equity, sought to engage his students in creative and collaborative problem-solving with their international peers. To do so, he turned to York International's Globally Networked Learning (GNL), a suite of technologies and supports enabling research collaboration with universities worldwide.

For six weeks, Poirier's students partnered with public health students at Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania and Hochschule Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany to analyze and compare each country's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Working in groups of 10 to 12, with each group representing two of the participating countries, the students analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of their countries' pandemic response. For example, they looked at

the deployment of health and welfare programs, disruptions to education systems, and the impact of media coverage. Together, they dissected the similarities and differences between the countries and developed a policy brief and accompanying podcast.

The GNL assignment, to which Poirier assigned a third of the course grade, earned a 90 per cent overall satisfaction rating from his students, with feedback lauding how the project illuminated the integrated nature of health policy decision-making, and allowed for a more holistic and inclusive understanding of the international response to the pandemic.

Says Poirier: "Even though there were different political, cultural and language characteristics, the experience of learning with and from residents from other countries about their approaches to this shared problem produced a richer sense of what can be done during this pandemic."



Jessica Vorstermans at Black Creek Community Farm.

# Rethinking Health Through Indigenous Health Knowledge

## JESSICA VORSTERMANS HEALTH POLICY & MANAGEMENT

### PARTNERING WITH INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS

to engage in land-based experiential learning, Health Policy & Management assistant professor Jessica Vorstermans works to deepen and decolonize thinking about health, care and wellness among students in her first-year Health on the Frontlines course.

This past spring, Vorstermans secured a Faculty of Health Funds for Innovation in Teaching grant to partner with Sweet Grass Roots Collective, a local group working to re-Indigenize urban spaces through earthwork, art, media and storytelling. Collective leaders Joce Two Crows Tremblay and Jennifer LaFontaine facilitate hands-on learning experiences, in person and virtually,

covering Indigenous ontologies and approaches to health, wellness, rights and land.

“We are working to understand how colonialism has been the central process in organizing education, health, really our whole world,” says Vorstermans, who teaches in the Health Studies undergraduate program and at the graduate level. “As a settler scholar, it is important that I make space for Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing, which encompass more holistic ways of doing health and wellness. It is my work to make this space; to build reciprocal relationships with Indigenous educators and to do the work of meaningful engagement with Indigenous knowledges.”

Vorstermans and her undergraduate students met for a land-based learning session among the maple trees at Black Creek Community Farm on September 28th, 2021 where Sweet Grass Roots Collective stewards the land, including a Three-Sisters Medicine Garden. Jennifer LaFontaine of the Collective provided students with the opportunity to taste sweetwater (which is used in ceremony), braid sweetgrass and bundle sage.

Vorstermans says that in their subsequent reflection assignments, the students noted how meaningful it was to reconsider their own relationships with the land. Many students reflected on ways colonization has severed our relationship to land; framing land as dirty and full of germs, something that makes us sick. They offered stories of relationships to land and other non-human relations that were deeply meaningful to them, relationships steeped in care and reciprocity, relationships that kept them healthy and well. She says students’ responses to the learning experience varied according to their social locations, with many students taking up ways colonization has shaped their own relationship to themselves and impacts on their mental and physical health.

“This was a way for me to invite students to critically analyze who holds knowledge in health, how the system has been designed to care for certain bodies in



Painted rock, medicine garden at Black Creek Community Farm.

certain ways, and how some peoples and knowledge have been marginalized,” says Vorstermans, who has arranged similar interactive land-based learning experiences for students in her Health Equity & Human Rights graduate course. “If we truly want to decolonize curriculum, we need to center more radical teaching and learning that acknowledges the wisdom of Indigenous knowledge and traditions.”

Jennifer LaFontaine of the Sweet Grass Roots Collective leads a session of Jessica Vorstermans’ class in the forest at Black Creek Community Farm.



# Using Technology To Continue Hands On Learning

**MAGDALENA WOJTOWICZ**  
**HEATHER PRIME**  
**PSYCHOLOGY**



My Virtual Child – introduction to the program. Image courtesy of Pearson Education Inc.

**BY MENTORING CHILDREN** in the community, students of psychology assistant professors Heather Prime and Magdalena Wojtowicz in Atypical Development (PSYCH 4460), can observe first-hand how children learn and grow in their school environment.

In pre-pandemic times, the students were placed in partner elementary schools close to York, where they worked with a range of children as educational mentors, supporting them with homework, project development, and participation in social activities.

During the pandemic, however, continuing the program's hands-on component was a challenge as schools were locked down, and online mentorship was logistically and ethically impossible. So Prime and Wojtowicz took a bold step by giving students the opportunity to mentor virtual children.

*My Virtual Child* is an interactive, web-based simulation that allows students to “raise” a child in avatar form from birth to the age of 18. Each avatar comes equipped with its own host of characteristics, including genetic predispositions, temperaments, and physical, mental and social development. These background characteristics are responsive to the input that students give so that students have some control over the journey their child takes. There are also random events, as in real life, that students have no control over.

“They’re making real decisions that affect the development of the child,” says Prime, a practicing clinical psychologist. “Online, we had weekly discussion posts where students would reflect on what the choices they made would look like in reality.”

Working with virtual children had obvious drawbacks such as the lost opportunity to mentor children in their natural environments. But Prime says there were advantages too: “In a regular classroom, students don’t necessarily see mental health challenges at the forefront.”

Fortunately, Prime and Wojtowicz’s connections with community schools have been well-maintained for future iterations of PSYCH 4460. In the meantime, their students have been able to gain valuable experience through technology -- watching in real time how mentorship can affect the growth and development of a child, especially those with extra challenges.



Photos L-R: Heather Prime and Magdalena Wojtowicz

# Breaking Out Of The Breakout Room: Escape Rooms as a Teaching Tool

**KRISTINE PEDERNAL**  
**NURSING**



Image courtesy of Kristine Pedernal and used with permission.



**BEFORE THE PANDEMIC**, Kristine Pedernal enjoyed visiting escape rooms as a form of entertainment. But the assistant professor of nursing never thought she’d one day be using them as a teaching tool.

The fourth-year course on client-centered acute care she teaches normally involves hands-on, small group work with actual and simulated patients. Like many instructors, Pedernal pivoted to teaching online in 2020, sending her students to breakout rooms to discuss concepts after the virtual simulation debrief.

One day, she thought: “They’re probably sick of the breakout rooms. What if I asked them to break out of the breakout room?”

Escape rooms ask participants to solve a series of puzzles based on clues; the solutions allow them to “unlock” the room they are in, enabling them

to progress to another. Having learned that virtual escape rooms were already being used in elementary education, Pedernal decided to retool the concept for her own students. She devised a series of puzzles requiring students to cooperatively find solutions to patient problems.

The activity was designed as a creative end of term review, and “gave me the opportunity to really think outside the box and come up with a way to make the most of the virtual environment”, says Pedernal.

A self-described “techie” with a strong background in digital storytelling, Pedernal has now developed another escape room for a leadership course and plans on others. “We have the technology, and we should use it to our advantage,” she says. “As long as I have a screen and a computer, I can make it happen.”

## FACULTY OF HEALTH STUDENTS & ALUMNI

### Faculty of Health students and alumni at a glance

Our students and alumni proudly build on their education by demonstrating excellence and a passion for change in their careers and in their community engagement locally, nationally and internationally.



**10,368**  
undergraduate  
students



**606**  
graduate  
students



**1,769**  
undergraduate  
international  
students



**30,000+**  
alumni  
\*since the creation of the  
Faculty of Health in 2006

## Advancing Global Health Solutions Through Rigorous Policy Research

**RANJANA NAGI**  
ALUMNA, GLOBAL HEALTH

**WELL BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** struck, Ranjana Nagi was supporting crucial policy research on transnational health threats.

Following her 2018 graduation from the Global Health undergraduate program, Nagi joined York's renowned Global Strategy Lab as a Research Fellow to contribute to the Lab's work on designing laws, policies and institutions that address transnational health crises.

With published research in prominent journals last year, Nagi applied the expertise she gained as an undergraduate in research methods, policy, and ethics. She has also benefitted from the skillful mentorship and extensive experience of Global Health Professor and Director of the Global Strategy Lab, Steven Hoffman.

With the COVID-19 pandemic underscoring the globally interconnected nature of health, Nagi's ongoing research at the Lab is more relevant than ever. She has contributed to studies on subjects such as government policy options to tackle rising antimicrobial resistance; celebrities' impacts on public health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours; as well as the role of the chief medical officer of health in Canada.

"Problems such as pandemics, antimicrobial resistance or climate change require global, cross-sectoral action—it's not enough for one or a handful of countries to do something," says Nagi, who last year completed an MSc in International Health Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science. "I want to continue making an impact on evidence-informed policymaking and make the world a healthier place for everyone."





### HANAA AMEER ALUMNA, HEALTH STUDIES

As a health data analyst—first as a practicum student, then as an employee—Hanaa Ameer collaborated with a fellow student to survey patients and their families about their experiences with everything from staff responsiveness to privacy to food to religious accommodations.

From what she'd learned in her Health Management training, that focused on health organization decision-making and system performance, she provided Toronto Grace Health Centre with insights on key trends and recommendations to improve operations.

For Ameer, the project was “the perfect mix of sector knowledge, technical skills and a social justice thrust.” She built on that training by delivering an award-winning presentation to the Canadian International Model United Nations Organization on how the World Health Organization can better respond to emergencies in vulnerable regions.

Last June, Ameer received the Murray G. Ross Award, one of York's highest honours for graduates, recognizing scholarship and outstanding participation in undergraduate student life.

“I've enjoyed some great opportunities to put my learning into practice,” Ameer says, “and gained so many skills to make a difference in the world.”



### HARSHMEET RAKHRA ALUMNA, PSYCHOLOGY

A clinical research analyst with the University Health Network at Toronto General Hospital, Harshmeet Rakhra (BA '15) has collaborated with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre to conduct research on monitoring and detecting early deterioration of people with COVID-19. “The research goal is to use real-time remote home-based patient monitoring to detect which patients with COVID-19 are at risk of deterioration that may require hospitalization, while simultaneously providing reassurance to worried patients as they continue to self-isolate.”

The anticipated outcome? Get more clinicians on their phones to provide virtual care to patients diagnosed with COVID-19 and help health-care professionals develop a better understanding of the progression of COVID-19.

She is currently working on a clinical trial in Ontario, COVIDFree@Home, which uses a mobile app to enable patients diagnosed with COVID-19 but not in need of medical attention to record their symptoms and stay in touch with their physicians from the comfort of their home. “This service has successfully followed hundreds of patients from diagnosis to symptom resolution,” she says.

*This story, edited for length, and photo originally appeared in the Winter 2021 issue of The York University Magazine.*



### FARZAD REFAHI ALUMNUS, KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

The unsung heroes of the pandemic, respiratory therapists are the specialists whose job it is to keep patients breathing, assisted or unassisted, during a health emergency. Farzad Refahi (BSc '08) is one.

As a licensed RT, Refahi can administer respiratory medications and assist patients in breathing using ventilators in intensive care units and emergency departments. He can work in operating rooms to ensure a patient's airway is protected and breathing is optimized, and in diagnostic laboratories to assess the presence and severity of respiratory disorders. Lab work especially interests him, which in 2017 led Refahi to join Markham Stouffville Hospital as the organization's first full-time RT in its Pulmonary Function Lab. Having risen through the ranks, Refahi, at age 35, is today the lab's lead technical specialist.

During the first wave of the pandemic, Refahi was deployed to the Acute Care side of the hospital, where he worked for one long five-month stretch. “This is what we signed up for as clinicians,” he says.

*Edited for length, this story and photo originally appeared in the Winter 2021 issue of The York University Magazine.  
Story by Deirdre Kelly. Photography by Mike Ford.*



### ANGELINA BATAc ALUMNA, NURSING

At the beginning of the pandemic, Angelina Batac, a registered nurse in the Intensive Care Unit at Cortellucci Vaughn Hospital, admits that the atmosphere could be overwhelming at times. “We didn't know how to control this infection, but now we understand so much more about how to keep everyone safe.”

Batac's desire to be a nurse was sparked when her own father experienced a heart attack; as a trained lifeguard, she was able to recognize his signs and symptoms.

While at York, Batac received many awards for her leadership, including the Faculty of Health's 2019-20 Silver Medal for Outstanding Leadership. Among other initiatives, she co-founded and served as President of the Nursing Student Tutoring, Ambassadorship and Mentorship Programs (NSTAMP) to provide free mentorship and tutoring to new and current nursing students.

“It's very helpful for them to know people when they get there, so they can start building their community,” she says, adding that community support is something at which York excels. “I am truly grateful for all the connections I've made along my educational journey at York.”

# Faculty of Health Awards 2020-21

Every year the Faculty of Health proudly recognizes outstanding students for academic and leadership excellence.

## Lily D'Urzo Scholarship

- Mohammadhadi Mostofinejad
- Mathuran Ravishankar
- Peter Tsarev

## Frances and Frederic Robinson Undergraduate Nursing Award

- Jenny Bao Ngoc Nguyen
- Sharif Opoku
- Katrina Prestidge
- Sumeya Haji-Dhore

## Silver Medal for Outstanding Leadership

- Yasmin Dini
- Nida Hashimi

## Stella T. Corfield Award in Aging

- Mathusana Gnanasegaram

## Silver Medal for Academic Merit

- Amirarsalan Rahimian

## Skinner Agents of Change Leadership Award

- Hisham Hassan
- Michael Thornton
- Genelle Pollydore
- Baithat Adeyinka

## Gold Medal for Academic Excellence and Outstanding Leadership

- Rumia Owaisi
- Ryan Cortez

# 2021 Robert J. Tiffin Student Leadership Awards



**FIVE FACULTY OF HEALTH STUDENTS** were honoured with the 2021 Robert J. Tiffin Student Leadership Award, which recognizes students' leadership at the University and their contributions to the growth, development and vitality of the York community.

**1. Bri Darboh** is a doctoral student in clinical neuropsychology in the Faculty of Health and an MBA student at the Schulich School of Business. She has held many advocacy roles, including doctoral student representative, Black Students in Psychology (BSIP) graduate student representative, member of the Diversity Committee and peer mentor in the Autism Mentorship Program. She is also a student affiliate at the Canadian Psychological Association, the Ontario Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association. Throughout her time at York University, Darboh has also created several new workshops, planned events and participated in student groups.

**2. Amin Hatamnejad** is pursuing a bachelor of science in the Kinesiology and Health Science program in the Faculty of Health. He has held a variety of roles within the Kinesiology and Health Science Student Organization, including president. He helped to transition the program fully online amid the pandemic and created two new chapters: Discover You and the Alumni Network (YUKSAN). Hatamnejad has also worked as a leadership coach, course representative co-ordinator and orientation co-ordinator at both Calumet and Stong Colleges, and has served as a student senator and a president's ambassador.

**3. Jean-Marc Moke**, a psychology student in the Faculty of Health, is dedicated to improving the lives of Black students at York University through his many leadership roles on campus. He is a co-founder and president of the BSIP and a member of the Department of Psychology Undergraduate Studies Committee. He sat on both Calumet and Stong Colleges' Student Success Councils and is a volunteer with York University's Black Student Alliance. Moke also contributed to the development of York's Anti-Black Racism Framework and is currently working on establishing a proprietary mentorship program for Black psychology students at York.

**4. Mahafarid (Fara) Seddigh**, a psychology and law and society student in the Faculty of Health, has held various roles with the Undergraduate Psychology Student Association, including being promoted to co-president after serving as vice-president of student success and as a peer tutoring co-ordinator. She founded LetsStopAIDS at York, the local chapter of a youth HIV charity. She is currently a Daughters of the Vote Delegate for Equal Voice and a member of the Richmond Hill Constituency Youth Council.

**5. Simi Sahota**, a psychology and business student in the Faculty of Health, has been dedicated to helping others reach their full potential. Her success as a Peer-Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) leader led to faculty inviting her to co-present about PASS at York's 2019 Teaching in Focus Conference. She has also been a leadership coach, and as project lead of the Financial Wellness Project, she leads a team of research assistants, script writers and video editors.

*Story content courtesy of YFile.*

## FACULTY OF HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

### Faculty of Health partnerships at a glance

There is no ivory tower approach to learning, teaching and research in York's Faculty of Health. We believe that community based teaching and research is key to a richer learning and research experience. Our community partners, including agencies, hospitals and community centres, value and benefit from the ideas, enthusiasm and expertise of our faculty and students.

**30+**  
formal research  
partnerships

Active research  
collaborations  
in more than  
**30**  
countries



#### LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

(just a few of many examples)

- Doctors Without Borders Canada
- University Health Network
- Hospital for Sick Children
- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- Driftwood Community Centre
- CAMH
- Mackenzie Health
- Ontario HIV Treatment Network
- Sweet Grass Roots Collective
- Toronto Rehabilitation Institute
- Wellesley Institute
- Women's College Hospital
- York Region Children's Aid Society

#### GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

(just a few of many examples)

- World Health Organization
- Inter-American Dialogue
- University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ghana
- Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
- Hochschule Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany
- Universidad Técnica Nacional de Costa Rica

# Applying Scientific Rigour To Global Health Governance

**STEVEN J. HOFFMAN**  
GLOBAL HEALTH

**FOCUSED ON ADVISING** the world's governments and public health organizations, York's Global Strategy Lab (GSL), led by Director Steven J. Hoffman, conducts collaborative interdisciplinary research that is shaped by the team's expertise in epidemiology, ethics, health policy, international relations, law, medicine, political science, sociology and statistics. Hoffman and his colleagues partner with governments, civil society organizations and international agencies to assess and advise on new strategies for improving global health. The lab is unique worldwide in using a scientific approach to designing laws, policies and institutions that work to make the world a healthier place for everyone.

Hoffman's deep expertise in responding to multifaceted health challenges is bolstered by his mentorship of students in global health, law and political science. His previous work in the United Nations (UN) system and his role as scientific director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Population and Public Health made him a natural choice to lead the development of the UN Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery.

Over just 10 weeks, Hoffman led 270 researchers, research funders, policymakers, civil society leaders and UN officials in prioritizing what knowledge would be needed to stimulate a better pandemic recovery that would result in a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable future. The resulting 128-page report, published in November 2020, outlines 25 research priorities for achieving progress in health systems, social protections, economic programs, multilateral collaboration and social cohesion.

"It's a co-benefits framework for building back from COVID-19 in a way that ensures societies are more resilient to future disasters while also achieving equity gains and a more sustainable planet," says Hoffman, the Dahdaleh Distinguished Chair in Global Governance & Legal Epidemiology at York.

Hoffman has brought his expertise to other global health initiatives. As a member of the Inter-American Dialogue's



Health Task Force, he helped assess the region's COVID-19 response and conceptualize new regional cooperation models. In November 2020, his lab was designated as the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre on Global Governance of Antimicrobial Resistance.

"With every project, we take a systematic approach to generating knowledge and mobilizing it to solve big global health challenges," says Hoffman. "We work on the tough stuff because that is where the Global Strategy Lab's intensely interdisciplinary approach can have outsized impacts on improving health around the world."

# A New Partnership To Protect Children In Care

**JENNIFER CONNOLLY**  
PSYCHOLOGY

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A GLOBAL PROBLEM

that has garnered significant international and national attention over the past two decades. More than 50 per cent of human trafficking involves sexual exploitation and youths under the age of 18 are significantly over-represented in the sex trade. Highly vulnerable to recruitment for sexual exploitation are girls involved in the child welfare system. Efforts to prevent sex trafficking of underage girls in child welfare is a significant concern of the Ontario government and of the province's Children's Aid Societies. These prevention efforts are benefitting from an innovative partnership led by Professor and Psychology Department Chair Jennifer Connolly.

Connolly is collaborating with community CAS partners to assist teen girls involved with the child welfare system who may be particularly vulnerable to the luring and recruitment strategies of traffickers. The goal is to provide them with early screening and intervention services to avoid their entrapment in the province's growing human trafficking trade.

"We now know it's important to have a model of therapeutic care that can help these young people change their pathway so they can find other ways to form relationships, be successful and engage in their communities," says Connolly, who researches the promotion of resilience among adolescents and young adults who have experienced adversity in their lives.

Building on the findings of a systematic literature review, Connolly and graduate student Kyla MacDonald have partnered with York Region Children's Aid Society, Simcoe Muskoka Child Youth and Family Services, and Dnaagdawenmag BinnooJiiyag Child and Family Services to: identify the warning signs of sex trafficking; implement "Start with the Youth", a model of care that is centred on youths who are showing warning signs; provide specialized training to their caregivers; and implement wraparound therapeutic supports tailored to the specific needs of each youth.

A key element of this project has been the creation of a screening tool that social workers in the child welfare system can use to learn about the warning signs of a youth being trafficked and shine a spotlight on vulnerable youths. Connolly is working with service providers in CAS agencies, workers in homeless shelters, clinicians who provide therapy to trafficked youths as well as survivors of trafficking in order to fully understand the warning signs and provide evidence-based next steps.

"This research is important because it responds to the needs of community organizations who have been saying these are the things we're worried about and want to change," says Connolly. "We're trying to address socially important issues using community-based research and practice to protect these youth and promote their resilience."

*The photo for this story originally appeared in the Winter 2021 issue of The York University Magazine. Photo credit: Mike Ford*



# ASCEND Project Strengthens Nursing Education In Ghana

**JACQUELINE CHOINIÈRE & CHRISTINE KURTZ LANDY  
NURSING**

**THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION** predicts that by 2030 the world will face a shortage of around 8 million trained nurses. The shortage of trained health care professionals could be devastating for Africa – a continent that bears 25 per cent of the global disease burden but employs only 1.3 per cent of global health care providers.

Collaboration is key to solving the nursing shortage crisis. This year saw the start of a new partnership that will strengthen education, research and care in Ghana, while promoting knowledge and research initiatives within York's Faculty of Health. Known as Advancing Scholarship and Capacity for Emerging

Nursing Doctorates (ASCEND), it represents an agreement between York University's School of Nursing and the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) based in Ho, Ghana. Jacqueline Choiniere, graduate program director in the School of Nursing and her colleague in the School of Nursing, associate professor Christine Kurtz Landy, are the York leads for the project.

Under the agreement, six master's prepared faculty members from UHAS will be supported to pursue a PhD in Nursing over a period of seven years. During their program, they will also have the opportunity to collaborate in research initiatives, some of which



Photos L-R: Jacqueline Choiniere and Christine Kurtz Landy



have already begun. This will set the stage for UHAS to eventually have adequate numbers of PhD-prepared faculty to establish their own doctoral program.

While the partnership will build capacity in Ghana, "It's important to stress that it's of mutual benefit," says Choiniere. "Both UHAS and York are committed to fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as access to inclusive and equitable quality education." In addition, students experience a richer exploration of key concepts, given their different contexts and social locations.

Equipping nurses with the very best education is critical to improve health and well-being globally says Choiniere. "All nurses are intimately involved with the entire continuum of health and care. This partnership lays the foundation for collaboration and knowledge exchange that will promote sustainable solutions and quality care in the global health arena."

Photo L-R: Emmanuel B.A. Prempeh, Assistant Registrar and School Officer, School of Nursing & Midwifery (SONAM); York School of Nursing Professor Christine Kurtz Landy; Professor Ernestina Donkor, Dean, SONAM; Julie Hard, Manager, International Relations, York's Faculty of Health; Irene Attachie, faculty member, SONAM and York PhD student; York School of Nursing Professor Emerita Beryl Pilkington; Prof Robert Alhassan, Acting Dean, International Programs, University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), Ghana; Japiong Milipaak, faculty member, SONAM and York PhD student.

# Unlocking the mystery of chronic fatigue syndrome and long COVID

**HEATHER EDGELL**  
KINESIOLOGY & HEALTH SCIENCE

## THE ORIGINS OF CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

— also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis — remain surrounded in mystery. Symptoms of ME/CFS include musculoskeletal pain, difficulty concentrating, fatigue and depression. Women who have the condition outnumber men by a ratio of four to one.

In the wake of the SARS epidemic in 2003, up to thirty percent of SARS survivors experienced very similar symptoms. And the same may be true of those who've had COVID-19, regardless of the severity of their infection.

In early 2022, Heather Edgell will embark on a year-long project to investigate the pathophysiology of long COVID. An associate professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science, Edgell is a specialist in women's cardiovascular health. In collaboration with the University Health Network and Women's College Hospital, she will conduct tests to compare both cardiovascular and autonomic nervous system responses in a cohort

comprising healthy, long COVID, and ME/CFS patients. "These kinds of tests may be able to tell us if patients are at risk for coronary artery disease or more serious cardiac events later on," says Edgell.

Working with Kinesiology & Health Science professor Lauren Sergio, the York Research Chair in Brain Health & Skilled Performance, another project will involve measuring brain blood flow and cognitive function in Edgell's lab at York to determine if a special breathing protocol in both projects can decrease the "brain fog" associated with ME/CFS and long COVID.

Ultimately, Edgell's work has the potential to improve the quality of life for those still grappling with life-altering COVID symptoms a year after their initial recovery. It could also help the thousands of people who have lived with ME/CFS for much longer: "We're going to describe some changes in chronic fatigue syndrome that haven't been looked at before," she says.

# Transborder Filmmaking Collaborative Documents Challenges Facing Global South

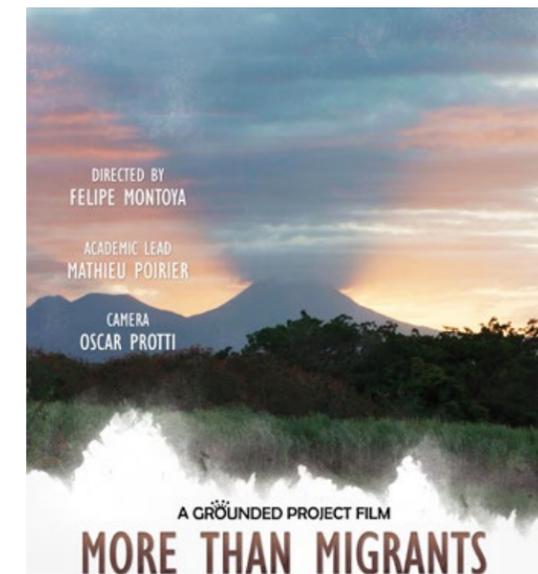
**MATHIEU POIRIER**  
GLOBAL HEALTH

**AS THE GLOBAL SOUTH** continues to suffer disproportionately from climate change and its health and social impacts, a situation that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we can gain important new insights and ideas from the Grounded Project.

The Grounded Project is a new documentary film series raising awareness about environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation, health and human well-being in rural Costa Rica. The initiative is led by a transdisciplinary partnership involving York's Faculty of Health, York International, York Libraries and York's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change's (EUC) Las Nubes project, which is working to protect the region's rich biological, ecological and social heritage.

The film was supported by Global Health Professor Mathieu Poirier's fourth-year practicum students who, prevented from traveling because of the pandemic, instead used York's suite of Globally Networked Learning tools and supports to collaborate with teachers and learners in Costa Rica. Together with Director and York EUC Professor Felipe Montoya, they helped craft a documentary highlighting lived experiences of poverty, discrimination, health hazards caused by ecological harm, and resilience.

"Having students and faculty from that region communicate what the participants were alluding to, what the colloquialisms meant, made it easier to reflect their meanings and experiences," Poirier says. "This kind of virtual exchange allowed my students to have an international experience while being 'grounded' at home."



Mathieu Poirier

The second meaning behind the project's name, Poirier notes, is that it is rooted in a grounded theory, an inductive qualitative research method where new theories emerge from—rather than shape—collected data. This organic approach resonates powerfully in the series' first film, *More than Migrants*, as nine people in a rural region of the Central American country share their first-hand perspectives of overcoming challenges to build a new home with dignity and a sense of wellbeing.

"These are personal stories of loss and hardship that demonstrate the impact of ineffective government policies and, particularly, the social determinants of health for the global population," Poirier says. "This emotional content communicates these major and systemic issues in a way that comes across powerfully on film."

## FACULTY OF HEALTH LOOKING FORWARD

### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES IN YORK REGION

**THE RAPID GROWTH** of York Region, combined with the impact of the pandemic, has highlighted the need for York's Faculty of Health to build upon its strong relationships with those providing health care in the region. Its new Memorandum of Understanding with Mackenzie Health is an exciting step in this direction.

With two full-service hospitals and a network of community-based services, Mackenzie Health serves more than half a million people in York Region and beyond. The new partnership with York will enhance training, research, and innovation for students, faculty researchers and staff.

"It's a way to bring together clinicians, researchers and students in a collaborative ecosphere, both building capacity in our emerging workforce, and enhancing the skills of other professionals," says Chris Ardern, Associate Dean, Research and Innovation in the Faculty of Health.

Examples of this capacity-building include work-study placements for rehabilitation science and nursing students and enhanced clinical experience for those working in the field of mental health. With an aging population in the region and increasing diversity, ongoing research needs to be done to best serve the local population.



Chris Ardern, Associate Dean, Research and Innovation

Ardern says health analytics will be one of several key areas in which both institutions will pool their knowledge. "One strength we have here at York is expertise in health intelligence – taking increasing amounts of health data from patients and analyzing it through a clinical and health equity lens that can also inform policy," says Ardern.

In every area of health care, "COVID-19 has really taught us that we need to step outside of our silos and work collaboratively," says Ardern. "The Memorandum of Understanding is a way to build community, provide new networks and develop new integrations."

### SUPPORTING A SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS

**SINCE THE BEGINNING** of the pandemic, York University has been navigating through the uncharted waters of a rapidly changing pandemic environment, marked not just by a never before seen coronavirus and its mutations but by complex government directives and unprecedented impacts on personal behaviours.

Since January of this year Parissa Safai, Special Advisor to the President for Academic Continuity Planning and COVID-19 Response, has been working with a team of experts and leaders across York's campuses to ensure a safe return to campus.

"Pivoting the University to go remote in 2020 was extraordinarily difficult. Bringing the campuses back to life in a measured, thoughtful and safe way is even harder," says Safai, an associate professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science. She adds, "SARS-CoV-2 is a biological phenomenon. But a pandemic and supporting the return to campuses amid a pandemic are social phenomena. That is why I always try to hold students, staff, faculty, and instructors at the heart of all of the planning and COVID response. It gets very tricky at times given the full range of emotions, expectations, concerns and desires in our university community."

York has implemented a Vaccination Mandate for the 2021 to 2022 academic year such that, as of October 19, only those who are fully vaccinated or have an approved exemption are permitted to access campus. In addition, a host of other safeguards have been put in place: these include hospital-grade ventilation systems; a rapid testing program; a robust case-contact management protocol; daily screening for those accessing campuses; physical distancing measures where required;



Parissa Safai, Special Advisor to the President for Academic Continuity Planning and COVID-19 Response

and a requirement for all to wear a mask or face covering while indoors on campus.

Safai says that one-third of York classes are currently being held in person in fall, a figure that will increase for the winter term. "Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been some level of campus activity, which over the course of time has increased," Safai says. "Through this time, there has yet to be a COVID-19 outbreak on campus. We won't be complacent or let our guard down, but the fact remains that to date our actions have had the desired results. We're ready to welcome more of our community back."

# EXPANDING SHERMAN TO EXPAND INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH RESEARCH



**YORK'S FACULTY OF HEALTH** is on track to expand its capacity for more interdisciplinary research collaboration through the planned expansion of the Sherman Health Sciences Research Centre.

Approved in 2018, the plan will significantly increase the size of the 50,000-sq.-ft. Sherman Centre, which opened in 2010 and currently houses researchers involved in vision research, neuro-imaging, the treatment of brain related injury and diseases, bio-mechanics, and motor control. The \$46 million renovation will accommodate faculty members, graduate students, visiting scholars, and research staff by adding a new wing of three floors totaling 45,000 square feet adjacent to the north side of the existing building.

The expansion will create space for five research clusters: an interdisciplinary neuroscience team; a Centre and Clinic for Neuropsychology Assessment and Neurorehabilitation; a Centre for Sport, Health and Concussions; an interdisciplinary team for biomechanics, injury and motor control; and a Centre for Physical Activity Sciences. A mix of clinic, lab, meeting, and office spaces, including "collision zones" for cross-cluster idea sharing, will allow faculty members with intersecting research specialties to pursue more ambitious projects.

"Co-locating various disciplines in these clusters will allow for more opportunities for researchers to intersect and bounce ideas off of each other," says Paul McDonald, Faculty of Health Dean.

The expanded Sherman Centre will fulfil York's commitment to the terms of the Canada First Excellence Research Fund grant it received in 2016 for its VISTA project examining visual neuroscience and computer vision with functional magnetic resonance imaging technology and a high-density electroencephalography system. These and other sophisticated technologies and spaces—a rehabilitation research clinic, a tumbling room and an electronically shielded Faraday room—will become more accessible to more researchers when the building is complete in late 2023.

With its gold-standard interdisciplinary model, leading-edge facilities and proximity to the Pioneer Village subway station, the new Sherman Centre will appeal to scholars in numerous research disciplines.

Says McDonald: "This expansion into a world-class facility will allow us to recruit the best scientists, so we can add critical mass to our existing areas of expertise and further raise our game by adding additional research areas."



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS

**THE FACULTY OF HEALTH** is very pleased to welcome our newest faculty members. Our new colleagues will build on the Faculty's reputation for excellence and impact in research, teaching and community partnerships.

- 1 **Tali Boritz**  
Psychology
- 7 **Liya Ma**  
Psychology
- 2 **Susan Chinworth**  
Kinesiology & Health Science
- 8 **Nicole Muir**  
Psychology
- 3 **Antony Chum**  
Kinesiology & Health Science
- 9 **Lara Pierce**  
Psychology
- 4 **Karl Erickson**  
Kinesiology & Health Science
- 10 **Cindel White**  
Psychology
- 5 **Kathleen Fallon**  
Global Health
- 11 **Cathy (Xijuan) Zhang**  
Psychology
- 6 **Larkin Lamarche**  
Kinesiology & Health Science



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

**A WARM WELCOME** to our newest staff members in the Faculty of Health. Our staff provide crucial support for our students and faculty that is instrumental to their success.

- 1 Mary Amalathas**  
Undergraduate Program Assistant,  
Department of Psychology
- Brianna Baird (photo not available)**  
Administrative Assistant to the Chair,  
Department of Psychology
- 2 Melesa Beharry**  
Operations Manager,  
Department of Psychology
- 3 Finnick Byrdine**  
Program Secretary,  
School of Health Policy & Management

- 4 Adam Charnaw**  
Centre Coordinator,  
Muscle Health Research Centre  
& YU-CARE
- 5 Chris Flood**  
Facilities Coordinator,  
Dean's Office
- 6 Frances Koulougliotis**  
Administrative Assistant,  
School of Kinesiology & Health Science
- 7 Christina Lau**  
Undergraduate Program Secretary,  
Department of Psychology

- 8 Jerusha Lederman**  
Research Officer,  
Research Support Office
- 9 Abdulkhader Mohammed**  
Student Success Programs Assistant,  
Calumet & Stong Colleges
- 10 Alison Ozog**  
Recruitment & Liaison Officer,  
Dean's Office
- 11 Selena Spencer**  
Undergraduate Administrative Assistant,  
Department of Psychology

- 12 Bayley Tepperman**  
Student Success Coordinator,  
Calumet & Stong Colleges
- 13 Verle Thompson**  
Development Coordinator,  
Dean's Office
- 14 April J. Walker**  
Student Success Coordinator,  
Calumet & Stong Colleges
- 15 Laura Walton**  
Technology Resource Centre Coordinator,  
Department of Psychology



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FUTURE™**