

Sue Harris Research Fund Awards

The Sue Harris Research Fund was established in 2009 to honour the life and values of Dr. Sue Harris, a highly regarded family doctor and former Head of the Department of Family Practice at BC Women's Hospital. Criteria for the grant reflect her values which include:

- a commitment to full-spectrum family practice primary care
- a woman-centred focus
- collaborative care
- holistic approach
- respect for innovation, and
- commitment to supporting improvements in practice

The grant supports research that contributes to women's health within the discipline of family practice and is awarded annually. Two grants were awarded in 2010, and four were awarded in 2011.

2010 Winners

1) Title of Research: *Development and validation of a survey to assess the health care needs of women in rural British Columbia*

Investigators: Dr. Wendy Norman, Dr. Unjali Malhotra, Dr. Meghan Guy

Amount awarded: \$5,000

Women living in rural Canada have a higher all-cause mortality rate, a higher rate of cervical cancer mortality, teen pregnancies, domestic violence, and lower rates of Papanicolaou and mammography screening than their urban counterparts. Women in rural areas also have lower average income and education levels, making travel to access specialist services more burdensome. In 2004, while 21.1% of Canada's population lived rurally, only 16% of family physicians, and only 3% of obstetricians-gynecologists practiced there. These numbers are similar in British Columbia. A new, evidence based, objective directed enhanced skills in Specialized Women's Health residency program for rural Family Physicians was introduced at UBC in July 2010. This three month program is available for family physicians in practice or recent graduates. Previous programs have neither been explicitly evidence based, evaluated with structured objectives, nor have they assessed pre and post community needs nor satisfaction with the quality of enhanced family practice skills delivered. The goal of the study is to design and implement an evaluation process to determine, within the target community: the expectations and needs for specialized women's health services before a physician has completed the enhanced skills program training, which will complement the internal program evaluation already in place.

2) Title of Research: *Contraception satisfaction and effectiveness after abortion: A prospective cohort analysis*

Investigators: Dr. Jessica Chiles, Dr. Caroline Turner, Dr. Wendy Norman

Amount awarded: \$2,500

In Canada, in 2005, 96,815 induced abortions were performed and 35.5% of these were repeat abortions. This study aims to test the hypothesis that major causes for repeat unwanted pregnancies are dissatisfaction with birth control method, poor adherence to hormonal methods, and expulsion of IUD devices. The researchers' goal is to determine what factors affect continuation and adherence of contraception so that women have better information upon which to make their decisions about post-abortion contraception. Also, by determining the expulsion rate of the currently available IUD, it may be possible to advocate for the use of devices that have lower expulsion rates to prevent repeat abortions. This will be the first prospective study of the post-abortion expulsion rate of the Flexi-T 380, one of only three devices currently available in Canada.

2011 Winners

1) Title of Research: *Effects of ultrasound viewing frequency on maternal-fetal bonding and compliance.*

Investigators: Dr. Ron Abrahams and Dr. Zoe Hodgson

Amount awarded: \$5,000

BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre Fir Square Combined Care Unit program (Fir) is the first in Canada to care for substance-using women and substance-exposed newborns in a single unit. The current standard of practice on Fir is to offer fortnightly ultrasounds to inpatients. The physicians on Fir believe this to be the best way of ensuring maternal-infant bonding and of improving compliance in this substance-using population. However, this standard of care has never been formally evaluated. This research project aims to evaluate the effect of the frequency of the ultrasound schedule on maternal health behaviours and measures of compliance.

2) Title of Research: *Does group prenatal care improve outcomes for mothers and newborns?*

Investigators: Leslie Clough, Dr. Karen Buhler, Dr. Reneé Fernandez & Dr. Renee Hall

Amount awarded: \$5,000

Connecting Pregnancy is an innovative type of prenatal care providing health assessment, prenatal education, and peer support to women and their partners in a group structure. This program is provided at BC Women's Hospital (BCWH) by the Family Practice Maternity Service (FPMS) in collaboration with the Patient and Family Education program. The FPMS provides both traditional and group prenatal care. With its limited number of physicians, standardized early pregnancy, delivery, and post partum care, and the same environment for delivery, the FPMS provides an ideal setting within which to compare group prenatal care with traditional care. In the proposed prospective case-control study this program is evaluated for improved outcomes in patient satisfaction, rating of self-efficacy and for improved health outcomes for mother and baby compared to a similar patient population receiving traditional care.

3) Title of Research: *Community for the Pap: Predictors and Needs of Never and Under-Screened Queer Women.*

Investigators: Dr. Andrea Szewchuk, Dr. Betty Calam

Amount awarded: \$1,500

In Canada, women who have sex with women have lower rates of cervical screening uptake than women who engage in heterosexual behavior, despite being at increased risk for cervical neoplasia. Previous studies have identified screening barriers, including decreased perception of risk in both women and their care providers. Few studies, however, focus specifically on the experiences of women who are not accessing appropriate screening. This project will involve a mixed-methods community based participatory research approach to explore the issues associated with never and under-screening in queer women. A working group of key informants and community members will be recruited in order to identify key screening issues. Interviews with these collaborators will be used to create a survey which will be distributed to women online. Following, community forums will decide how results will be used and make suggestions for improved practice and screening in this group.

4) Title of Research: *Health Care Barriers of Women Seeking Refuge in Transitional Shelters.*

Investigator: Dr. Elena Paraskevopoulos, Dr. Rita McCracken, Dr. Colleen Kirkham, Dr. Anita Palepu, Dr. Betty Calam

Amount awarded: \$2,500

Everyday in Canada, approximately 4000 women and children seek refuge in shelters. Studies confirm that the lack of permanent residence and the usage of shelter facilities increase the risk of developing health problems and encountering barriers to care. While this population of women is often most at risk for health deterioration, it also faces the most difficulty finding health information, as well as preventative, acute and/or chronic care. The aim of this research project is to identify the barriers to care as perceived by women residing in transitional shelters and to demonstrate that women in housing crisis experience limitations to health care access. This study will explore women's perceptions of health access, barriers to care, and methods of improving the current system. In order to address these issues, focus group sessions will be held in women-focused transitional shelters throughout Vancouver.