

HEADLINES



DAL PSYCHIATRY CELEBRATES 75TH ANNIVERSARY WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychiatry

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NEW DALHOUSIE COLLABORATION SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH

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This newsletter is published for the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University.
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HEAD LINES

Message from the Department Head



Dr. Vincent Agyapong.

Welcome to the first edition of Headlines in 2025. I hope you all enjoyed a restful break and time spent with loved ones.

We ended 2024 with celebrations of our department's [75th anniversary](#). Our annual holiday party also served as an anniversary celebration event where our anniversary video and publication were introduced. Engaging the community was an important way for us to mark the occasion, and we hosted [two public events](#). More information about these events is available in this issue of Headlines.

Special thanks to Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** for chairing the Anniversary Planning Committee, to Dr. **Lara Hazelton** for leading the development and editing of the [anniversary publication](#), and to Dr. **Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum** for leading the development of the [anniversary video](#). Thank you to everyone involved in the committee and these events. The committee's final report is available on the department's database if you are interested in learning more about the activities commemorating the 75th anniversary.

A major milestone in [supporting Indigenous mental health](#) was reached in early 2025 when the Department of Psychiatry signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society – Wije'winen Health Centre. The MOA outlines dedicated, sustainable psychiatric resources to be provided to the Wije'winen Health Centre. Thanks to this collaboration, the Indigenous community in Halifax will have more access to culturally-safe mental health care. More information about the collaboration is available in this issue of Headlines.

In fall 2024, we launched the [Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund](#), designed to support projects in clinical care, education, or research aiming to close gaps in serving and engaging equity-deserving populations in our community. Read about the first ever recipient of this fund, the DPRP President's Symposium, in this issue of Headlines.

Several department researchers were successful in obtaining departmental, local/provincial, and CIHR grants. Congratulations to Dr. **Ejemai Eboime**, Dr. **Malgorzata Rajda**, **Fakir Yunus**, Dr. **Keri-Leigh Cassidy**, Dr. **Raquel Dias**, Dr. **Barbara Pavlova**, **Steven Jackson**, Dr. **Linda Liebenburg**, Dr. **Mutiati Sulyman**, Dr. **Cinera States**, Dr. **Sanjana Sridharan**, **Temitayo Sodunke**, Dr. **Rudolf Uher**, Dr. **Lori Wozney**, and Dr. **Jill Chorney**.

We also congratulate the following members on their recent publications: Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick**, Dr. **Keri-Leigh Cassidy**, Dr. **Gail Eskes**, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**, Dr. **Kim Good**, **Owen Connolly**, **Mandy Eslinger**, Dr. **Cheryl Murphy**, Dr. **Lara Hazelton**, Dr. **Kathleen Singh**, Dr. **Terry Chisholm**, Dr. **Lori Wozney**,

Gloria Obuobi-Donkor, Dr. **Raquel Dias**, Dr. **Ejemai Eboime**, **Nick Murray**, and Dr. **Sandra Meier**.

Congratulations also go to the winners of the department's 34th annual Research Day: **Jibran Hagalwadi** (Best Presentation Award Undergraduate Student), **Ella Hodgson-Pageau** (Best Presentation Award Undergraduate Student), **Lorielle Dietze** (Best Presentation Award Graduate Student), and Dr. **Anthony Hinde** (Best Presentation Award Psychiatry Resident).

Department member research initiatives were also profiled by media and Dal News. View the research section of the newsletter to learn more about the incredible work coming from department members and the difference it will make in the lives of youth, adults, and elderly.

In January, our new Masters in Global Clinical Psychiatry program received Senate approval from Dalhousie University. Work is underway to prepare to welcome learners into this program as it continues through the remainder of the approval process.

CaRMs was also held in January and I want to say thank you to everyone involved in this important, annual recruitment initiative.

Our undergraduate education team has been working to incorporate Master of Physician Assistant students into our psychiatry undergraduate program. Thanks to all for their work in finding placements for these new learners.

On April 25, 2025, we will host our annual conference, W.O. McCormick Academic Day at the Atlantica Hotel Halifax. Please watch for

registration details. I hope you will be able to join us.

Our annual student writing competition, open to medical students, residents, and fellows in Canada, is accepting submissions. The competition closes on May 1, 2025 and the winning entries will be announced in a future issue of Headlines and will be posted on the department's website.

In February, we were pleased to welcome the Honourable Brian Comer, minister, and Kathleen Trott, deputy minister, Office of Addictions and Mental Health, to

our department to visit the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program. Our thanks to the minister and deputy minister for taking time to visit with us and learn more about the program.

We extend a warm welcome to the following new department members: **Dr. Emmanuel Babalola**, **Dr. Shazia Hashmi**, **Dr. Nathan Corbett**, **Gillian (Jill) Murphy**, and **Supriya D'Penha**.

We also wish to congratulate Dr. **Lori Wozney** for receiving the 2024 Robert Bortolussi Research Mentorship Award presented by IWK Health, Dr. **Kara Dempster** for being

chosen as Early Career Academic Excellence Awardee for the 2025 Congress of the Schizophrenia International Research Society, and Drs. **Celia Robichaud** and **Kate Stymiest** who received the Best Poster Award at the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 2024 conference.

Dr. Vincent Agyapong
Head, Department of Psychiatry,
Dalhousie University
Head, Department of Psychiatry,
NS Health Central Zone

In 2024 the Dalhousie University Department of Psychiatry celebrated its 75th anniversary.

Learn more about the department's history.



[View the department's 75th anniversary video.](#)

Dal Psychiatry celebrates 75th anniversary with community engagement

By Penney Miller, communications coordinator, Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University

In 2024, the Dal Department of Psychiatry [celebrated 75 years](#). To recognize this significant milestone, the department hosted two community engagement events — a public talk about new mental health services and a mental health mini-conference for front-line staff of community-based organizations serving people experiencing homelessness. The events were planned to align with the department's more recent commitment to, and advances in, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) and [social policy & advocacy](#).

Closing the gap: Expanding access to mental health care in Nova Scotia

On Nov. 30, 2024, the department, in collaboration with Mental Health and Addiction Programs at Nova Scotia Health Central Zone and IWK Health, hosted the public event “Closing the gap: Expanding access to mental healthcare in Nova Scotia” at the Halifax Central Library. Together, these groups have expanded access to mental health care for residents of Nova Scotia.

“In the past three years, we have focused efforts to close treatment gaps, and are expanding our clinical programs to meet the needs of different communities in Halifax and elsewhere around the province,” said Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, Department of Psychiatry head for Dal and NS Health Central Zone, as he addressed attendees.



On Nov. 30, 2024, the Dal Department of Psychiatry, in partnership with Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health, hosted “Closing the Gap: Expanding Access to Mental Health Care in Nova Scotia” at the Halifax Central Library to mark its 75th anniversary.

Presentations were made by psychiatrists and learners about the newest mental health services available for equity-deserving populations: the Transcultural Mental Health Program, Concurrent Addiction and Mental Disorders Program, Rapid Access and Stabilization Program, and the Neuropsychiatry Program. Nova Scotia Health Central Zone and IWK directors of Mental Health and Addictions were also available to answer questions.

“Providing more mental health care faster for Nova Scotians is a key goal of our department’s [Transformational Plan](#), and new clinical programs initiated as part

of this plan have expanded direct access to psychiatrists for residents of Nova Scotia.”

Dr. Agyapong also relayed the goal of the event was to have a two-way conversation and hear ideas about how we can all work together to deliver mental healthcare in a way that leaves no one behind.

Mental Health Mini-Conference

The department and North End Community Health Centre (NECHC), with support from the department’s Social Policy and Advocacy Initiatives Fund, hosted a mental health mini-conference on Dec. 7, 2024. The event was a learning opportunity for front-line staff of



Attendees heard a presentation about one-year outcomes of the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program.

community-based organizations serving people experiencing homelessness, with priority for non-health care professionals. These workers often interact with people with complex mental health needs but have limited formal training. Attendees included client case managers, shelter manager, supported housing workers, supportive housing manager, library support worker, shelter staff, and health centre manager.

Four psychiatrists volunteered their time to present to attendees on person-centred mental healthcare, motivational interviewing, and boundary-setting with the event concluding in an informal question-and-answer and discussion session over lunch.

“As a member of the Social Policy and Advocacy Committee, I know that people who are homeless and experience poverty comprise one of the equity-deserving groups we are trying to serve better,” says Dr. **Zenovia Ursuliak**, director of wellness for the Dal Department of Psychiatry, a psychiatrist, and one of the event organizers and presenters. “Over the last two years I have been

walking past tent encampments on University Avenue and South Park Street and listening to patients’ fears around housing security.”

“This event builds capacity in people who directly serve this equity-deserving group and the lunch provided also enabled the workers to attend this training as these workers may be facing food insecurity themselves.”

Becky Marval, manager, Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) and Chronic Disease Self-Management Educator -Diabetes, NECHC describes the event as a “very positive experience that provided much needed access to practical, evidence-based knowledge and strategies for front-line staff.”

“Feedback about the topics and presenters was entirely positive,” she says. “The respect that the psychiatrists demonstrated and the relevance to the work was heavily emphasized.”

Participants highlighted the importance of the psychiatrists’ education in supporting people experiencing homelessness, emphasizing the value of a person-centred, strengths-based approach that considers everyone’s unique experiences and needs. They noted that this perspective promotes ethical and equitable care, fostering more open and understanding interactions while reducing negative encounters.

“This knowledge translation initiative provided by our faculty will promote a sense of belonging and community between the



The Dal Department of Psychiatry and North End Community Health Centre (NECHC) hosted a mental health mini-conference on Dec. 7, 2024 for front-line staff of community-based organizations serving people experiencing homelessness.

Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry, NECHC staff and some partner agencies that MOSH interfaces with like shelters and harm reduction outreach programs,” says Dr. Ursuliak. “This feedback from a participant captures it, ‘It was meaningful ... to see several psychiatrists approach people struggling with mental health, disabilities, and using substances with such care and compassion.’”

Sample participant feedback:

“The kind of education these psychiatrists provide is essential in how we support people experiencing homelessness in our community by focusing on keeping it person-centred, strengths-based, and contextual to what each unique individual has been through and may need on their own terms. This is the way to support individuals without judgement and in an ethical, equitable way.”

“Future interactions with individuals can come from a more open and understanding angle allowing for less negative interactions overall.”

Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund

Funding is available for projects in clinical care, education, or research aiming to close gaps in serving and engaging equity-deserving populations in our community.

The Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund is available to all members of the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry including residents, fellows, AFP physicians, graduate students, research faculty, cross appointed and adjunct faculty, and administrative staff.

Apply by the first Friday of February of each year at Noon.

Email SPAC@dal.ca for application information.



DALHOUSIE
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Department of Psychiatry

Research Report

RESEARCH DAY AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to the 2024 Psychiatry Research Day award winners in the following presentation categories:

- Best Presentation Award Undergraduate Student: **Jibran Hagalwadi** and **Ella Hodgson-Pageau** (tie)
- Best Presentation Award Graduate Student: **Lorielle Dietze**
- Best Presentation Award Psychiatry Resident: **Dr. Anthony Hinde**

Our sincere thanks to all the presenters, judges, and event attendees.



Left to right: Jibran Hagalwadi, Dr. Phil Tibbo (Director of Research, Department of Psychiatry, and event chair), Ella Hodgson-Pageau, Lorielle Dietze, Dr. George Robertson (Interim Research Co-Director, Department of Psychiatry), and Dr. Ejemai Eboeime (Interim Research Co-Director, Department of Psychiatry). Missing from photo: Dr. Anthony Hinde.

GRANTS

Departmental research funding

Congratulations to spring 2024 DPRF recipients:

- **Dr. Ejemai Eboeime**
Exploring Multifactorial Barriers and Resources for Accessing Comprehensive and Equitable Mental Health Care for Newcomers in Nova Scotia (EMBRACE-NS)
- **Dr. Malgorzata Rajda & Fakir Yunus**
Development and validation of the Knowledge, Attitude, Belief, and Practice (KAB-P) questionnaire of insomnia in Canadian adults
- **Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy**
Randomized Controlled Trial of eCBT Group Treatment for Late-Life Depression

- **Dr. Mutiat Sulyman**
Examining Attitudes Towards Injectable Psychiatric Medications in Women Undergoing Acute Mental Healthcare
- **Dr. Raquel Dias**
Wellness4Rare: Stage One of a Phased Approach to Implementation of a Digital Mental Health Program for Rare Disease Communities
- **Dr. Barbara Pavlova & Steven Jackson**
Using Actigraphy and Speech Analysis to Measure Physical Activity and Perseverative Thinking in People with Mood Disorders

Due to the success of the spring 2024 DPRF, the fall 2024 DPRF round was cancelled.

External funding:

- **Dr. Ejemai Eboeime**, “Resettle-IDPs: Life-skills education and psychosocial resilience building for displaced Nigerians, Nigeria” Proof of Concept Grant, Grand Challenges Canada. [Learn more](#), listed under the “Life-saving information” section.
- **Dr. Ejemai Eboeime (PI)**, **Dr. Vincent Agyapong**, **Dr. Linda Liebenberg**, **Dr. Mutiat Sulyman**, **Dr. Cinera States**, **Dr. Sanjana Sridharan**, **Temitayo Sodunke**, and **Dr. Raquel Dias**, “Exploring Multifactorial Barriers and Resources for Accessing Care and Equity in Mental Health for Black Communities in Nova Scotia (EMBRACE-MHB).” New Health Investigator Grant, Research Nova Scotia. [Learn more about 2024/25 New Health Investigator Grant Recipients](#).

CIHR grants

- Drs. **Ejemai Eboeime** and **Vincent Agyapong**, “Rebuilding Emotional Stability and Strength Through Therapeutic and Life-Skills Education for Internally Displaced Adolescents and Early Adults in Nigeria (RESETTLE-IDAs): A Pragmatic Hybrid Type II effectiveness-implementation study,” CIHR Project Grant - Priority Announcement: Global Health Research
- Dr. **Rudolf Uher**, “Early identification of risk for major depressive and bipolar disorders from polygenic scores, family history, and developmental psychopathology,” CIHR Project Grant

PUBLICATIONS

- **Rudnick A.** Person-centered (mental health) care terminology: reforming psychiatry’s language. *Journal of Psychiatry Reform*, 12(3), 1-3, 2025. <https://journalofpsychiatryreform.com/2025/02/04/person-centered-mental-health-care-terminology-reforming-psychiatrys-language/>

RESEARCH IN THE MEDIA

- [Promising new treatment for older adults with depression and anxiety: Canadian study shows older adults experiencing depression, anxiety benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy tailored to their age group](#), Dal media release, Drs. **Keri-Leigh Cassidy** and **Gail Eskes**.
- [Mental health intervention program can help prevent substance-use disorders in teens, study shows](#) Dal News, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**
- [Cognitive behavioural program co-developed by Dalhousie University researcher yields promising results in preventing transition to substance use disorders in teenagers](#), Dal media release, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**
- [Intervention helps teens](#), CBC Information Morning with Emily Brass, Saint John, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**
- [New research says mental health program in high schools reduces drug disorders](#), Canadian Press article on Preventure, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**
- [Mental health supports reduced substance abuse: Study](#), Bell let’s talk CTV interview on Preventure program, Dr. **Sherry Stewart**
- [New Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health puts youth voices at the centre of research](#), Faculty of Medicine News, Dr. **Lori Wozney**
- [QEII Times: Donor-funded digital health tool supporting Nova Scotians](#), QEII Times, Drs. **Vincent Agyapong** and **Raquel Dias**

Dalhousie researchers receive \$7.5 million for projects that will improve mental health and addictions care for young people

Four Dalhousie faculty members have received \$7.5 million from Research Nova Scotia for two projects that will develop system-wide innovations for more supportive youth mental health and addictions care, and generate the resources needed for communities to come together and address local issues.

The teams received the funding through [Focused Research Investments \(FRI\)](#), a new RNS program designed to advance research that tackles the province's

most pressing issues and pursue discoveries that are timely, relevant and actionable for those who need it.

One of the projects is led by Dr. **Jill Chorney**, scientific lead for Mental Health and Addictions at IWK Health Centre and an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry; Dr. Jenny Baechler, a senior instructor in the Faculty of Management; and, Dr. **Lori Wozney**, newly appointed Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at

Dalhousie. Their research initiative known as [Unifying Networks to InnovaTE in Youth Mental Health \(UNITE\)](#) received \$6.5 million from RNS over six years.

[Read more from the Dal News story.](#)

Education Report

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

Welcome to our new representatives!

We are excited to welcome Dr. **Chelcie Soroka** as child & adolescent education lead and one of the UG Committee members.

2025 Summer Internship in Psychiatry (SIIP) preparations underway

Registration was open from Jan. 13 to Jan. 25, 2025. This one-week program is available to Med 1 students interested in exploring psychiatry. SIIP is held from May 26 to May 29, 2025. Both DMNS and DMNB students can register for this program.

2025-26 academic year for Med 3 students

Undergrad education is preparing for next academic year by starting the preparation for scheduling rotation for upcoming Med 3 students in 2025-26.

MPA program integrated into psychiatry undergraduate education

We successfully placed 22 Master of Physician Assistant (MPA) students within our units in HRM and distributed sites. This new two-year program at Dalhousie University began this year. During their second year, MPA students are expected to perform at the level of

new clinical clerks, with learning objectives aligned with those of third-year medical students. Their rotations are structured into four-week blocks.

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

Resident mid-year oral exams

The PGY 2, 3, and 4s completed their mid-year oral exams in person in December. Thank you to the dedicated group of faculty who regularly take time out of their week to act as examiners.

Royal College exam

The Royal College Specialty Exam is scheduled for March 4, 2025 and May 14 to May 16, 2025. Many of our PGY-4 residents are writing this year and we wish them luck.

CaRMS

Interviews for our incoming cohort of psychiatry residents began in January. This year, we received an impressive total of 133 applications, and interviewed 72 applicants. Interviews continue to be conducted virtually, in keeping with the CaRMS process. Interviews were held on January 20, 21, 30 and 31.

We have nine seats for the incoming 2025 cohort. Match day is March 4, 2025.

Thank you to all the faculty, residents, and staff who participated.

AFC – sleep medicine program

The sleep medicine fellowship, offered jointly through the Departments of Psychiatry and Internal Medicine, is now designated as an accredited area of focused competence (AFC) by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Congratulations to Drs. **Margaret Rajda** and Deborah Morrison for their efforts in achieving this success.

Patient recruitment help needed

Each year, medical students and residents are given opportunities to develop and practice their interviewing skills to prepare and further educate them during their medical training. As we approach other busy oral exam season, we ask that all staff be aware of opportunities for their patients to take part. Patients often enjoy the experience and many of our regular patients consider it an integral part of their wellness.

How is the patient involved?

- A medical student or resident will conduct a psychiatric interview, either virtually or in-person
- One or two psychiatrists will observe the interview; medical trainees may also observe

- Participation in a session typically lasts one hour
- Most sessions are held at the Abbie J. Lane Building at the QEII with potential for other teaching sites in HRM
- Participants receive \$30 per session as an appreciation for their time and many choose to participate in more than one session at a time

Interested patient?

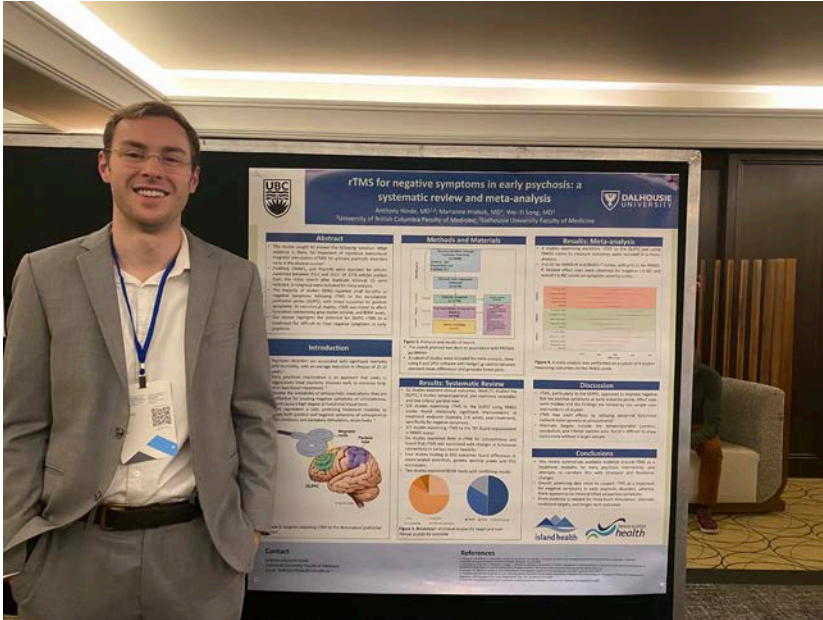
If you have a patient who would be interested in joining our volunteer patient program, they can contact **Petra Corkum** at **902-473-7122**, or by email at **Petra.Corkum@nshealth.ca**, or **Parisa Abdi Sabouhi** at **902-473-5633**, email **Parisa.AbdiSabouhi@nshealth.ca** who can answer any further questions the patient may have.

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, June 13, 2025

Our **end of year celebration** offers a time to celebrate our postgraduate learners, teachers and staff. This year, our celebration will be held at the Prince George Hotel on **Friday, June 13, 2025**.

Resident research spotlight



Dr. **Anthony Hinde** (PGY-2) presented his research *rTMS for negative symptoms in early psychosis: a systematic review and meta analysis* at the CPA in Montreal this fall.

PSYCHIATRY GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

Masters in Global Clinical Psychiatry

The new Masters in Global Clinical Psychiatry was approved by the University Senate on **January 13, 2025**.

MEDICAL EDUCATION NEWS

Medical education publications:

- MacLeod T, **Good K, Connolly O, Esliger M, Murphy C, Hazelton L** (2024). Exploring Perceived Bias at Psychiatry Grand Rounds. *Academic psychiatry : the journal of the American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training and the Association for Academic Psychiatry*, 48(6), 659-660. [Letter to the Editor - Published] PubMed ID: 39198377.
- Hickey CM, Levinson AJ, **Singh K, Esliger M, Chisholm T, Murphy C** (2024). An Online Curriculum for Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Residents. *Academic Psychiatry*. [Case Report - Published] PubMed ID: 39367279.

Have you published medical education scholarship?

Send the citation to **Mandy.Esliger@nshealth.ca** to have it included in a future issue of Headlines.

SAVE THE DATE

W.O. McCORMICK ACADEMIC DAY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Friday, April 25, 2025

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. **times approximate*
Atlantica Hotel Halifax (in person)

Topic: Trauma and Related Disorders

Watch for registration details.

Division of **Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. **Chelcie Soroka** was appointed the undergraduate education coordinator for the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for a five-year term, effective December 1, 2024.

The IWK Mental Health & Addictions program held a World Café on January 17, where the program's new strategic plan was officially launched. The event was well attended by CAP faculty members, who joined their MH&A colleagues in discussing themes of the plan and contributing ideas and actions to help move the plan forward.



World Café.

Awards/recognition

Congratulations to Dr. **Selene Etches** on receiving the Department of Psychiatry's 2024 Educator of the Year Award.

Congratulations to Dr. **José Mejía** on receiving the Department of Psychiatry's 2024 Dr. Larry Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award.

Congratulations to Dr. **Lori Wozney** on receiving the 2024 Robert Bortolussi Mentorship Award, presented by IWK Health.

CAP PRESENTATIONS

Dr. **Lourdes Soto-Moreno**, along with Sharon Clark, advanced practice leader, IWK Mental Health & Addictions, did a presentation for the IWK Board of Directors on the Children's Intensive Services redesign project on November 1, 2024.

Dr. **Sabina Abidi**, along with Laura Carnegy, MN, RN, delivered the keynote address entitled "Adapting EPI services for Children and Youth" at the Canadian Consortium for Early Intervention in Psychosis National Conference on November 29, 2024.

Dr. **Selene Etches** presented "Identifying and Treating Catatonia in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders: A Case Series" at Dalhousie Department of Pediatrics Grand Rounds on December 4, 2024.

Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** co-presented with Maureen Brennan, director of Mental Health & Addictions, IWK Health, "Mental Health Ecosystem and Intensive Services" to the IWK Foundation team on December 6, 2024.

Dr. **Kyle Godden** (PGY-6 Child and Adolescent Psychiatry) co-presented with Dr. Dax Bourcier (Pediatric Neurology Fellow) "Walking Two Paths: An interdisciplinary approach to functional neurological disorders (FNDs) for the general pediatrician" at Dalhousie Department of Pediatric Grand Rounds on December 11, 2024.

Dr. **Sabina Abidi**, along with Laura Carnegy, MN, RN, presented to PCTEL (NSH provincial centre for training education and learning) "The benefits of early detection and intervention for youth with psychosis" on December 11, 2024.

CAP EDUCATION

Nova Scotia CAP retreat

A retreat of all Nova Scotia child and adolescent psychiatrists was held on November 15. The hybrid retreat was well attended both in-person and virtually. Presentations included:

- Managing Psychiatric Emergencies on Call (e.g. Dystonia, NMS, Catatonia, Delirium, Serotonin Syndrome, Anticholinergic Toxidrome) presented by Dr. **Sarah Fancy**
- Revisiting CBME: IWK 2024 presented by Dr. **Mark Bosma** and Dr. **Cheryl Murphy**



CAP Journal Club.

CAP Journal Club

Journal Club was held on November 19 with CAP resident Dr. **Kyle Godden** leading discussion about climate change and its effects on youth mental health.

CAP RESEARCH

CAP research highlight

Congratulations to Drs. **Celia Robichaud, Kate Stymiest** and colleagues who were awarded “Best Poster Award” at the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (CACAP) 2024 conference for their research project: “A Changing Landscape: Educational Needs of Canadian Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists.”

With an increased reliance on virtual delivery of continuing medical education (CME) since the COVID-19 pandemic, this education-focused research looked to compare results from a 2019 Learning Needs Assessment survey by the CACAP Education Committee to clinical learning needs post-COVID.

To accomplish this, members of the committee were asked to identify: (1) areas which they would personally like to learn more, (2) clinical dilemmas in practice, (3) how they consume CME, and (4) whether the COVID-19 pandemic has changed said consumption of CME. Responses were interpreted through thematic analysis and compared to the 2019 results.

The 2019, pre-COVID survey identified pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy as areas of learning interest for committee members, and cost of travel and lack of virtual options as clinical dilemmas. Consistent with the previous survey, the current survey showed

committee members (n=58) were most interested in learning more about pharmacology, therapy, neurodevelopmental disorders and substance use, with the most significant challenge faced in treating patients being access to services.

In conclusion, while the present survey demonstrated the significant role virtual CME now plays in the delivery of continuing medical education, the learning needs and clinical challenges in the practice of Canadian Child Psychiatry are shown to remain relatively unchanged.

CAP publications

LaMarre, A., **Wozney, L.**, Obeid, N., Kumar, S., Jones, S., Dimitropoulos, G., & Couturier, J. (2024). Peer mentors' experiences of delivering peer support for individuals with eating disorders: giving back and supporting processes of change. *Eating Disorders*, 1-15 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10640266.2024.2420419>

Jacob, J., **Wozney, L.**, Oddli, H.W. Duncan, C., Chorney, J., Emberly, D., Law, D., Clark, S., Heien, S., Boulos, L., & Cooper, M. (2024). Goal-oriented practices in youth mental

health and wellbeing settings: A scoping review and thematic analysis of empirical evidence. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 00, 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12564>

Obuobi-Donkor G, Shalaby R, Agyapong B, **Raquel da Luz D**, **Eboreime E**, **Wozney L**, **Agyapong VIO**. Evaluating the 3-month post-intervention impact of a supportive text message program on mental health outcomes during the 2023

wildfires in Alberta and Nova Scotia, Canada. *Front Public Health*. 2024;12:1452872. Published 2024 Dec 18.

A. Boruah, M. Cormier, **N.E. Murray**, **S. Marin-Dragu**, J. Saad Hossne, S. Li, M. Muzamil, **A. Bagnell**, R. Orji, **S.H. Stewart** and **S. M. Meier**. The moderating role of social media motives in the relationship between screen usage and cybervictimization. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 2025-02-01, Volume 160, Article 107239

Section of Acute, Consultation, and Emergency Psychiatry

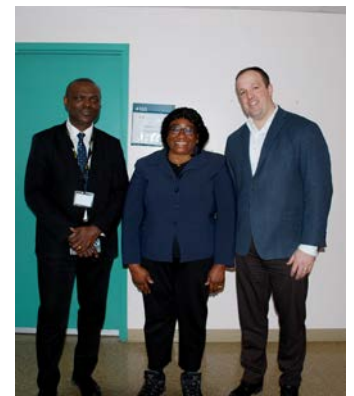
On Feb. 12, 2025, we were pleased to welcome the Honourable Brian Comer, minister, and Kathleen Trott, deputy minister, Office of Addictions and Mental Health, to our department to visit the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program.

In 2024, the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program (RASP) accounted for 25% of completed Central Intakes

From Jan. 1, 2024 to Dec. 31, 2024 — 1486 assessments were booked at RASP. In the same period 5797 intakes were completed at Central Intake, meaning 25% of completed intakes are being booked at RASP.



From left to right: The Honourable Brian Comer, Dr. Jason Morrison, and Dr. Vincent Agyapong.



From left to right: Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Dr. Ngozi Ezeanzio, and the Honourable Brian Comer.



From left to right: Huanhong Xie, Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, the Honourable Brian Comer, Dr. Sanjana Sridharan, and Kathleen Trott.

Section of Geriatric Psychiatry

Presentations:

- Dr. **Amy Gough** presented at the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia Conference in Digby on October 19, 2024. The topic was: Late Life Depression & Dementia: An Overview of Common Presentations and Approach to Management.
- Dr. **Ian MacKay** did a presentation on BPSD (Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia) in Long Term Care for Eastern Zone LTC providers on November 6, 2024. He also did a presentation on the “3 D’s (Depression, Dementia, and Delirium)” for Police from Amherst, Truro and New Glasgow in Truro on November 19, 2024 as part of the Crisis Intervention Team training they receive. He has presented on this topic several times a year for the last five years in various locations including Amherst, New Glasgow, Truro and Dartmouth. Finally, he did a talk on Depression in Seniors for the Northern Zone Family Medicine residents on August 9, 2024.
- Dr. **Mark Bosma** and Dr. **Cheryl Murphy** presented “Sound the Alarm: The Silent Epidemic of Elder Abuse” at joint Psychiatry/ Geriatric Medicine Clinical Academic Rounds on January 6, 2025.
- Geriatric Psychiatry Web Education Series:
 - Mary Stanley RN and Sarah Krieger-Frost RN MN presented on Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia: Non-Pharmacological Approaches on December 5.
 - Dr. Maia von Matzahn presented on Delirium in the Elderly on January 9.

Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Program

The Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Program is delighted to announce that Dr. **Alec Watts** has successfully matched to our program through CaRMS. Dr. Watts will commence his specialized training in the field of geriatric psychiatry in the fall of 2025.

The residency program continues its quality improvement initiatives, and has started planning for their regular external review, which will occur in the spring of 2026.

Dr. **Winnifred Twum** is completing her last month of the International Fellowship in Geriatric Psychiatry. The program will meet with her prior to her departure for an exit interview, and engage in an evaluation of the fellowship.

One Person **One Record**

OPOR-CIS Implementation update: Mental Health and Addictions

To ensure alignment with the provincial operations of Mental Health and Addictions (MHA) services, the One Person One Record (OPOR) Program team, in consultation with MHA OPOR Subject Matter Experts and Senior Leadership, have established the

following Clinical Information System (CIS) implementation plan, designed to meet the specific needs and considerations of MHA.

It is important to note acute care sites with MHA programming and inpatient units will go-live with their sites. For example, while the Abbie

J. Lane site delivers mental health programming, they will go-live with Wave 3 Central Zone sites. To better accommodate provincial programs like Correctional Health Services, their implementation of the new CIS isn't tied to a site or zone.

Mental Health and Addictions: OPOR-CIS Roadmap (Provincial Programs)

OPOR-CIS Implementation Timeline	MHA-Specific Implementation Details	Timeline Rationale
Go-Live Wave 1 August 2025	IWK Health Mental Health & Addictions	Aligning with rest of IWK Health Go-Live implementation.
Go-Live Wave 2 November 2025	Provincial Crisis Line/988, Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team	Managed as a provincial program, using STAR/PHS, One Content. Go-live at same time as MHA intake.
	Correctional Health Services	Managed as a provincial program, built under ECFH, all sites across Nova Scotia using STAR/PHS. Go-live with ECFH.
	Operational Stress Injury	Managed as a provincial program, using STAR/PHS. Register to Nova Scotia Hospital. Go-live with Nova Scotia Hospital.
	MHA Intake (including AOW)	MHA Intake and Adolescent Outreach Workers (AOW) both facilitate intakes from across Nova Scotia and need access to the CIS early and before STAR/PHS retires.
	Forensic Sexual Behaviour	Managed as a provincial program using STAR/PHS. Go-live together, before STAR/PHS is retired.
Go-Live Wave 3 February 2026	DWI/AIIP	Managed as a provincial program, using STAR/PHS. Virtual format and built out under QEII. Go-Live with QEII.
	Clinical Virtual Care Team (CVCT)	Managed as a provincial program, using Meditech and STAR/PHS. Go-live before STAR/PHS is retired.
Go-Live Waves 2 – 6 November 2025 – November 2026	Early Psychosis, Eating Disorders, CMHA, etc.	Go-live with respective zone and facilities.
	Remaining MHA Outpatient Teams	Go-live with respective zone and facilities.
	MHA Inpatient Units	Go-live with respective zone and facilities.

Preparing for go-live:

The OPOR Education & Learning team has developed a comprehensive training program for future users of the OPOR-CIS, including content tailored to meet the needs of different roles and workflows across the healthcare system. Completion of training is mandatory for all future users of the OPOR-CIS (e.g., physicians, non-providers, and employees), starting with online, asynchronous modules. We look forward to sharing more detailed information regarding training in the coming months.

OPOR-CIS implementation timeline:

- **Go-Live Wave 1 – August 2025:** *IWK Health (provincial)*
- **Go-Live Wave 2 – November 2025:** *Dartmouth General Hospital, Musquodoboit Valley Memorial Hospital, Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital, Twin Oaks Memorial Hospital, East Coast Forensic Hospital (ECFH), Nova Scotia Hospital, and Central Zone Lab and Radiology.*
- **Go-Live Wave 3 – February 2026:** *QEII, Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre, Cobequid Community Health Centre, Bayers Lake Community Outpatient Centre, Hants Community Hospital, and all remaining Nova Scotia Health Central Zone sites.*
- **Go-Live Wave 4 – May 2026:** *Nova Scotia Health Eastern Zone*
- **Go-Live Wave 5 – August 2026:** *Nova Scotia Health Western Zone*
- **Go-Live Wave 6 – November 2026:** *Nova Scotia Health Northern Zone*

Novari Health Technology and OPOR

Novari Health Technology applications will integrate with the new CIS for referral and waitlist management across IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health. This will contribute to providing a coordinated system for providers and patients.

The OPOR-CIS will have many functionalities. In some cases, the functions are designed and built by additional vendors such as Novari. To support the provincial CIS and management of patient information, Novari's referral and waitlist management systems will interface with the CIS and other existing systems like Ocean eReferrals. This integration is intended to augment and complement these systems, not duplicate efforts. Implementation of Novari solutions with the OPOR-CIS will happen in line with the CIS implementation schedule. The Novari eRequest module will support mental health and addictions referrals.

Over the next few weeks, Subject Matter Experts from across IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health will be engaged in designing the configuration and how Novari will work with the CIS and other existing systems to enhance patient care. The configuration design sessions will further develop the functionality of Novari within the OPOR-CIS.

A revolutionary program for training law enforcement in crisis management for individuals with emotional disturbances

Submitted by: Dr. Bianca Lauria-Horner

In the early 2000s, a pivotal conversation unfolded between the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, illuminating a pressing gap in the training of law enforcement personnel. As society faced increasing incidents involving Emotionally Disturbed Persons, it became clear that a specialized training program was essential for first responders—often the first to arrive at challenging scenes. The aim? To equip them with the skills and confidence to recognize EDPs and effectively de-escalate potentially volatile situations.

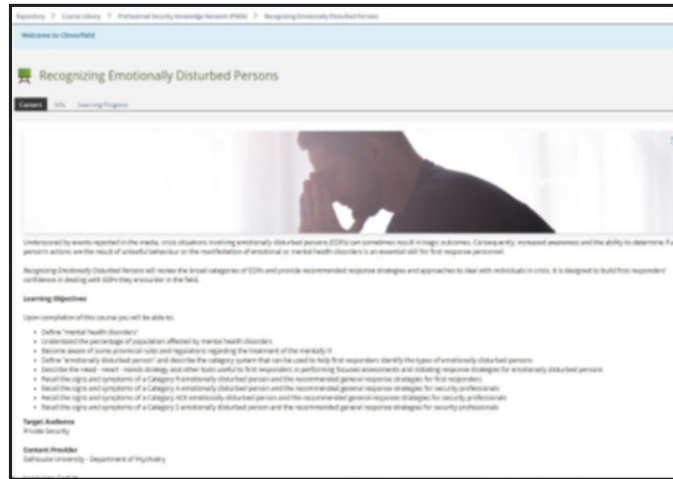
This innovative program was developed with the support of key collaborators, including the National Crime Prevention Centre, through the Mobilization Community Program grant and corporate contributions from Delta Hotels and Pfizer. This group of co-sponsors funded a transformative training program to improve law enforcement's interactions with individuals in emotional crisis.

In February 2003, a significant gathering took place, bringing together senior law enforcement officials and first responders from across Nova Scotia. This immersive discussion shed light on the gaps in training and sparked a sense of urgency: local officers lacked formal education in managing EDP situations. A dedicated project team emerged with a strong commitment to change, consisting of subject matter experts like Drs. Brad Kelln, Scott Theriault, Bianca Lauria-Horner, and representatives

from police and victim services. The mission was to identify critical learning needs and design a comprehensive one-day workshop focused on real-world applications.

Fast-forward to 2008, and the pilot training workshop made its debut across multiple sites in Nova Scotia. The findings were compelling. Participants showed a remarkable improvement in their understanding and ability to recognize, categorize, and engage with Emotionally Disturbed Persons. This success story didn't end there.

In a remarkable partnership with the Canadian Police Knowledge Network, known for its expertise in online training, Dalhousie University Department of Psychiatry successfully transformed the workshop content into a virtual self-learning model available in English and French. Since its launch in 2010, this online resource has become a cornerstone for law enforcement and security personnel across Canada and beyond, providing vital skills and strategies to those working on the front lines.



Professional Security Guard Training.

Today, these online courses continue to resonate with law enforcement agencies, proving not only to be popular but essential in fostering safer communities through better-informed responses to emotionally distressed individuals. This initiative stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing the complex challenges of our time, ensuring that first responders are equipped to handle crises with compassion and understanding.



Law Enforcement Training.

Meet community partners of the Mental Health and Addictions Program Public Advisory Group



Members of the Public Advisory Group in November 2024.

Building meaningful relationships with community partners and people with lived experience is important for healthcare systems as we address the needs of patients and their caregivers. The Nova Scotia Health Central Zone Mental

Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) has a Public Advisory Group (PAG) which includes representatives of community not-for-profit organizations. These organizations do ground-breaking work supporting patients with

diverse needs at the community and individual levels. Patients and their caregivers in Nova Scotia have more support and receive better care because of the important partnerships and collaborations.

Meet some of the community partners represented on the MHAP Public Advisory Group.



Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Halifax-Dartmouth Branch

Vision

“Mentally healthy people in a healthy community.”

Mission:

We are a local leader and champion for mental health, supporting the

resilience and recovery/well-being of people living with mental illness and mental health concerns through our social connection programs, and through the provision of information, resources, and advocacy in a space that is inclusive, safe, and respectful. We strive to create an

environment of hope, to reduce stigma, and to promote mental health for all.

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s “Framework for Support” has informed our programming for over three

decades with the goal of ensuring people live fulfilling lives in the community.

We fulfill our mission by:

- Creating environments that foster trust and a sense of belonging
- Delivering social connection programs for adults living with mental illness and mental health concerns
- Collaborating with other organizations on mental health initiatives
- Providing information about mental health resources within the community

- Building capacity for individuals to be active and fulfilled citizens in the community – to feel acceptance, recognition, and a sense of contribution
- Reducing stigma by raising awareness

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Halifax-Dartmouth is part of the CMHA Federation. This means we are a collective of organizations bound together by a brand and mission yet independently operated and funded to serve the specific needs of our respective communities. We support the CMHA National Vision “A Canada where mental health is a universal human right.”

Visit our website for more information: www.cmhalifaxdartmouth.ca or call 902 455-5445.



Healthy Minds Cooperative

Healthy Minds Cooperative (HMC) is a nonprofit, charitable co-operative with the vision of an improved quality of life for individuals living with mental health challenges (including addiction) and their families. We are people living with mental illness and mental health challenges, their supportive others, and people who champion our cause (often mental health service providers).

Established in 2005 out of an identified need for greater engagement, influence, and self-determination by individuals with lived or living experience in mental health and addictions programs/ systems within the former Capital District Health Authority, our

primary goal is to enact positive change by sharing our unique perspectives and experiences. We do this in partnership with NS Health (Central Zone) through our Citizen Engagement program where we support patient and family advisors to sit on Mental Health and Addictions Quality Teams within Central Zone, and on provincial committees and working groups, as needed.

As peers with lived experience of mental health and addictions, we support one another through peer-based social programs, support groups, workshops & learning opportunities to support wellness and recovery, and strategic initiatives to address systemic

gaps and challenges in mental health supports in the community; currently we are creating space for conversations and capacity building within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Together, we work to build our individual and collective capacity to live well within our communities.

We welcome opportunities to share our unique perspective and knowledge with initiatives big and small to improve awareness, enhance learning, and impact positive change.

Osberg Community Health

Representing First Voice: Insights and Advocacy

As a dedicated member of the Public Advisory Group, I bring the perspective of "first voice," ensuring that the lived experiences of individuals directly impacted by our work are authentically represented. This role empowers me to highlight the gaps and opportunities within mental health and community programming, advocating for approaches that are evidence-based and tailored to the needs of diverse populations.

In my contributions to PAG, I emphasize the importance of

participant-centred programming, transparency in service delivery, and accountability. A recent concern I raised involved ensuring that programs mandated for vulnerable populations are both effective and appropriate, with oversight mechanisms to protect those they serve. These discussions resonate with broader issues of systemic accountability and the need for clarity in program intentions and outcomes.

Beyond advocacy, I collaborate with peers to co-create innovative solutions. For instance, initiatives like the *Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery* workshops

demonstrate how holistic, peer-driven approaches can bridge gaps in mental health support while fostering empowerment and resilience.

Representing the community in this capacity means engaging in dialogue that is both critical and compassionate, aiming to uplift voices often unheard. Together, we strive to shape systems that not only address immediate needs but also build pathways toward equitable, sustainable change.



The Marguerite Centre

The Marguerite Centre is a trauma-informed, long-term abstinence based residential program for women, focusing on the healing of mind, body, and spirit. We believe in the right for women to recover from their addictions in a safe residential setting where their unique needs will be met, their issues addressed, and their voices heard. Our programs are woman-centered and holistic in nature, empowering women to understand their addiction(s) and trauma issue(s) and to create their own path to recovery, healing and health. Each resident works collaboratively with us to determine her length of stay (on average 3-5 months), goal setting, and smooth transition back into her chosen community. Staff deliver 25 hours a week of structured, evidence-based, evaluated, classroom programming utilizing

client centered and peer-led facilitation strategies. Our programs include foundational programs such as Beyond Trauma, Guilt, Shame and Grief, Addiction Education & Relapse Prevention, Communication Skills, as well as themed programs such as Financial Literacy, Self Esteem, Healthy Relationships, Employment and Vocational, and Leisure.

We are a collaborative partner in the formal health care system. Our staff provide non-clinical support and life skills coaching 24/7. We are intended to be a step on the continuum of care – assisting women to understand their overall health. By acting as navigators of the health care system

and connectors to primary care we support each woman's individual mental health care plan.

The Marguerite Centre has been a member of the Public Advisory Group since 2014, with the Executive Director, Lisa Mullin, Chairing since 2015.



Halifax Thunderbirds and QEII Foundation team up to transform mental health care in Nova Scotia

On Dec. 5, 2024, the Halifax Thunderbirds [announced](#) a new partnership with the QEII Foundation, which will directly support mental health initiatives at the QEII Health Sciences Centre. This exciting collaboration, launching during the 2024-25 Thunderbirds season, is part of the QEII Foundation's \$100-million [We Are campaign](#), the largest healthcare fundraising campaign in Atlantic Canadian history. The partnership will help renovate the QEII's Abbie J. Lane gymnasium to enhance facilities for mental health patients, making a lasting impact for Nova Scotians.

"We are honoured to partner with the QEII Foundation to help improve mental health services in Nova Scotia," said Thunderbirds' President & CEO, John Catalano. "As a team, we're committed to supporting causes that have a direct and positive impact on our community. The renovation of the Abbie J. Lane gymnasium is a prime example, and we look forward to playing our part in the We Are campaign to ensure world-class care for all Nova Scotians."

Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, Head of Psychiatry for Dal and NSH Central Zone, explained how this partnership will make a meaningful difference for inpatients and their health outcomes.

"Our patients requiring inpatient treatment spend an average of 40 days at the Abbie J. Lane and, in some cases, are not able to leave the facility. This is why participating in structured exercise programs and group interaction is essential for patients who are at a higher risk of feelings of isolation and loneliness," he said.

"During a patient's stay, physical activity and recreation in a structured, safe environment offer many benefits for their overall health.



Left to right: Suzanne Fougere, Susan Mullin, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Gord Cooper, Matt White and John Catalano.

From improving their physical, social and emotional well-being to better cognitive functioning, exercise is an important part of their care plan. With proper access and engagement, exercise and movement can ease symptoms of depression and anxiety, decrease stress, improve sleep, and enhance self-confidence."

The QEII's Abbie J. Lane is home to mental health and addictions programs and services, meeting the needs of both inpatients and outpatients accessing mental health treatment. The gym is crucial for each patient's health and well-being. With the support of partners and donors like the Thunderbirds and its fans, the QEII Foundation is on a mission to [transform and modernize the gym](#) — creating a more functional, multi-purpose space enhanced with safety features, new group-focused equipment and games.

As part of this exciting partnership, the Thunderbirds will raise funds throughout the 2024-25 season via multiple events, including

Thunderbirds' 50/50 draws at every home game, the Marvel Night jersey raffle on February 15, 2025, and various other initiatives. The proceeds will support the renovation of the gymnasium, providing mental health patients with a more supportive environment for their recovery and wellness.

"This partnership is a tremendous opportunity for the QEII Foundation to raise awareness and funds for mental health care in Nova Scotia, and we deeply appreciate the Thunderbirds' commitment to our community," said Susan Mullin, President & CEO, QEII Foundation. "Their support for mental health initiatives will truly make a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians."

Learn more:

- [Halifax Thunderbirds and QEII Foundation team up to transform mental health care in Nova Scotia | QEII Foundation](#)
- [VIDEO: Teaming up with the Halifax Thunderbirds to transform mental health care. QEII Foundation](#)

New Dalhousie collaboration supports Indigenous mental health

By Penney Miller, communications coordinator, Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University

The Indigenous community in Halifax will have more access to culturally-safe mental health care thanks to a collaboration between the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society - Wije'winen Health Centre and the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University and Nova Scotia Health Central Zone.

The partnership was formalized in early 2025 with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA outlines dedicated, sustainable psychiatric resources to be provided to the Wije'winen Health Centre. The centre is the first primary care clinic to serve the urban Indigenous population in Kijipuktuk (Halifax).

“Mental health is a fundamental pillar of overall health,” says Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, head of Psychiatry for Dal and NS Health Central Zone. “Yet, in many communities, including Indigenous communities, there are significant gaps in access to appropriate, culturally-sensitive mental health services. These gaps have, for far too long, left many individuals and families without the care and support they deserve. This partnership is an exciting step toward bridging that gap.”

Shaping a structural approach

The Indigenous Mental Health Program will include the Wije'winen Health Centre's principles of etuaptmumk (two-eyed seeing) and netukulimk (interconnectedness).

“This Memorandum of Agreement represents an important milestone in the relationship between the



Representatives from the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society - Wije'winen Health Centre and the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University and Nova Scotia Health Central Zone announced a new partnership in early January.

urban Indigenous community in Halifax, and the Department of Psychiatry,” says Dr. Brent Young, Wije'winen Health Centre's clinical lead.

“We know that colonialism fuels mental health inequities among Indigenous people, and structural approaches such as this one are part of a broader approach to dismantling structural anti-Indigenous racism in Canada. Through this agreement, the urban Indigenous community will have access to dedicated psychiatric resources via Wije'winen Health Centre, and we will have the ability to shape a psychiatric care service

that is culturally safe and relevant for Indigenous people.”

Psychiatric care delivered at the centre is part of the Department of Psychiatry's Transcultural Mental Health Program, established to provide accessible, culturally-competent, culturally-safe, and collaborative mental health care for African Nova Scotians, Newcomers, and Indigenous people in Nova Scotia.

“Formal arrangements like the MOA are so important because they signal our willingness to enter into true partnership that honors the sovereignty of Indigenous people



and have us working alongside them to improve mental health,” says Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, associate dean, serving and engaging society in Dal’s Faculty of Medicine.

Listening and learning

Initial discussion about a MOA began in 2023 following the one-year anniversary of the Wije’winen Health Centre.

“Since the opening of the Weji’winen in July 2022, I’ve had the honour of serving as a diplomatic interface between our department and urban Indigenous community,” says Dr.

Keri-Leigh Cassidy, a psychiatrist and director of social policy & advocacy for Dal’s Department of Psychiatry. “It’s been a privilege to listen and learn from Indigenous people.”

A new academic pillar in the Department of Psychiatry, social policy and advocacy’s mandate involves closing gaps in including, serving and engaging equity-deserving groups. Dr. Cassidy and the Social Policy and Advocacy Committee developed a strategy and five guiding principles, which Indigenous knowledge directly informed, she says.

The committee’s membership also includes an Indigenous Elder — a first in the history of the Department of Psychiatry.

“Two-eyed seeing” is also one of five guiding principles of the department’s social policy and advocacy strategy. The others relate to the Indigenous concept of netukulimk or interconnectedness. They are: “do no harm,” “nothing about us without us,” “people first with kindness,” and “strength-based.”

Dr. Cassidy views the signing of the MOA as an important first step on the department’s path toward Truth and Reconciliation, and as an ongoing commitment to co-create the program together.

For example, based on feedback from Indigenous people with lived-experience, she says, psychiatrist Dr. **Alex Whynot** has co-developed the “Two-Eyed Seeing Psychiatric Assessment” to guide non-Indigenous psychiatrists in the Transcultural Mental Health Program to provide culturally-safe psychiatric assessments.

The work of Dr. **Cinera States**, the first psychiatrist to offer consultations through the program, has received the praise of the community, says Dr. Cassidy, feedback which she considers to be the most important measure of success.

A trusted partner

Since becoming department head in 2021, Dr. Agyapong has implemented new mental health services, such as the Transcultural Mental Health Program, designed to close treatment gaps for equity-deserving groups. Addressing health inequalities is a collective responsibility and should be done through innovative programs, he says.

Dr. Cassidy acknowledges adhering to the five guiding principles of the social policy and advocacy strategy is key to the department becoming a more trusted partner with community.

“By providing psychiatric services to the Wije’winen Health Centre Clinic, we are not just offering clinical expertise — we are opening a door to a culturally-competent, compassionate, and community-centered approach to mental health care,” says Dr. Agyapong.

“We recognize that mental health does not exist in a vacuum, and we must understand and honour the unique challenges faced by Indigenous individuals, families, and communities when providing care.”

DPRA President's Symposium first to receive funding from Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund

On Wednesday, August 21, 2024, the second annual DPRA (Dalhousie Psychiatry Resident Association) President's Symposium was held. This is a resident-led initiative to enrich our program's education around social determinants of health by having community organizations and people with lived experience around the intersection between mental illness and various social factors. By partnering with community organizations, the aim is to deepen the resident body's knowledge of what resources and organizations exist in our community, and foster further collaboration and understanding between the residents and these organizations. The inaugural symposium was spearheaded in 2023 by residents Dr. **Alison Toron**, and Dr. **Alex Whynot**.

This year's symposium was headed by residents Dr. **Talia Bond**, and Dr. **Cameron Taylor**, with the support of

residents Dr. **Jasmyn Cunningham**, and Dr. **Joe Saunders**. At the symposium in August, the residents had the opportunity to learn from and about the following community organizations: the Brotherhood of Nova Scotia, with speaker Preston Trench; the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, with speakers Kendall and Paulina; COAST, with Dr. **Mutiati Sulyman**; and the Halifax Lancers, where the residents participated in an Equine Supported Wellness Workshop. The feedback from the resident participants was overwhelmingly positive this year, with several participants already brainstorming for next year's symposium.

This year's symposium was also made possible by being the first ever recipients of the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry Social Policy and Advocacy Initiatives Fund. The additional funding for the second annual symposium

was much appreciated, and helped provide the organizations involved with honorariums for their valuable time. The 2025 DPRA President's Symposium is being planned for August of this year.

For more information about the Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund, contact SPAC@dal.ca

Save the **Date**

 **DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**
Department of Psychiatry

SUMMER CELEBRATION

Sunday, July 20, 2025 | 1:30 to 8 p.m.
St. Mary's Boat Club, Halifax, NS

Watch for more details. This event is for all members of the Department of Psychiatry.

Department News

Rapid Access and Stabilization Program referenced in CMHA's State of Mental Health in Canada 2024 report

The Canadian Mental Health Association's report "The State of Mental Health in Canada 2024" references the NS Health and Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry Rapid Access and Stabilization

Program as contributing to addressing wait-time challenges. The reference can be found on page 79 of the report.

[Read the report.](#)

Global mental health guest lecture: Youth mental health and early intervention: A global exigency that calls for global exchange

The department was honoured to host Dr. Srividya Iyer who delivered the third lecture in the [Dalhousie Global Mental Health Guest Lecture Series](#) on Dec. 6, 2024. Dr. Iyer is a psychologist, Canada Research Chair in Youth, Mental Health and Learning Health Systems (Tier 1), a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University, and a Researcher with the Douglas Research Centre. Her lecture was titled "Youth mental health and early intervention: A global exigency that calls for global exchange." Our thanks to Dr. Iyer and all who attended.

With opportunities for hybrid attendance, the Global Mental Health Guest Lecture Series allows opportunities to hear from experts and global leaders in the field of mental health. Watch for details about upcoming lectures. [Learn more about the lecture series.](#)



Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia RBC Holiday Black Tie Gala – Nov. 30, 2024

The department was well represented at the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia's RBC Holiday Black Tie Gala which took place on Nov. 30, 2024. The event raises funds for local mental health programs and initiatives across Nova Scotia.

[RBC Holiday Black Tie Gala launches season of giving – Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia](#)



New faculty welcome dinner

In December 2024, the department hosted a welcome dinner for four new faculty members: Drs. **Kate Stymiest**, **Natasa Zatezalo**, **Christine McClelland**, and **Lori Wozney**. Welcome to the faculty!



Left to right: Drs. Kate Stymiest, Vincent Agyapong, Christine McClelland, Mahmoud Awara, Natasa Zatezalo, Lori Wozney, Chelcie Soroka, and Alexa Bagnell.

Strategic planning executive retreat – Dec. 13, 2024

On Dec. 13, 2024, members of the department executive and staff gathered for a strategic planning retreat to begin envisioning a new plan which will include the gains of the Transformational Plan and extend the global influence and leadership of the department



Psychiatry residents and postgraduate meeting - Jan. 8, 2025

On Jan. 8, 2025, Dr. Barbar Haroon, associate dean, postgraduate medical education in the Faculty of Medicine, met with psychiatry residents.



FACULTY & STAFF CHANGES

Arrivals

- Dr. **Emmanuel Babalola** joined the department as an assistant professor effective December 2, 2024. Dr. Babalola will be working in community mental health clinics, Dartmouth and Cole Harbour. Dr. Babalola can be reached at **emmanuel.babalola@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Shazia Hashmi** joined the department as an assistant professor effective December 9, 2024. Dr. Hashmi will be working in the community mental health clinic, Dartmouth. Dr. Hashmi can be reached at **shazia.hashmi@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Nathan Corbett** joined as an assistant professor effective December 15, 2024. Dr. Corbett is working in the Valley Regional Hospital, western zone, and can be reached at **nathan.corbett@nshealth.ca**
- **Gillian (Jill) Murphy** joined as an adjunct faculty effective January 5, 2025 on a limited term appointment, and can be reached at **jkmurphy@stfx.ca**

- **Supriya D'Penha** joined as administrative manager, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry effective Feb. 10, 2025. Supriya can be reached at Supriya.DPenha@iwk.nshealth.ca

Welcome to you all!

Departure

- **Dr. Mary Ann Hudec** retired from the department effective December 31, 2024.

We wish you well!

Meet a new department member: Dr. Emmanuel Babalola



Dr. Emmanuel Babalola.

What led you to decide to join the Department of Psychiatry?

The tripartite mission of Dalhousie University aligns with my goal and vision, which is a commitment to research excellence, providing quality mental health care while supporting high quality medical education.

What are you most excited about your new work role or about living in NS?

The opportunity to work with colleagues at the Department of Psychiatry Dalhousie University while contributing my extensive knowledge in providing mental health care and academic

excellence in high- and low-income settings.

Personal interests

I enjoy playing and watching soccer and having a good meal with friends.

Outside of work, what matters most to you in life?

Impacting hope and strengthening people's resilience in the face of adversities.

Bio

Dr Babalola is currently an assistant professor of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University and staff psychiatrist with Nova Scotia Health.

He is a trained psychiatrist with specialization in Adult Mental Health. He is fellow of the West African College of Physicians, Fellow of the National Postgraduate College of Nigeria and Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in United Kingdom.

Dr. Babalola is an alumnus of University of Glasgow United Kingdom, where he completed his MSc in Global Mental Health.

He has received several awards including the prestigious Chevening Scholarship awarded by the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2015, the World Health Organization/ International Society of Addiction Medicine fellowship award in 2013

and the Best Resident Doctor award at the Neuropsychiatric Hospital Abeokuta Nigeria in 2010.

Dr. Babalola was a clinical examiner for the Integrated Structured Clinical Examination for Cardiff and Swansea Medical schools and also for the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria.

During his professional career in Nigeria, He worked extensively with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime UNODC as master trainer for the TREATNET program and also for the Universal Treatment Curriculum for the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program in Nigeria.

Dr. Babalola was part of the expert committee that developed a Pain Management Guideline for Nigeria. He was also part of the resource persons supporting Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health with the Nigeria Epidemiological Network on Drug Use.

He has published several papers in peer reviewed journals and his research interests include occupational mental health, transcultural and addiction psychiatry, and global mental health.

AWARDS & HONOURS

Dr. Lori Wozney receives the 2024 Robert Bortolussi Research Mentorship Award presented by IWK Health

Dr. **Lori Wozney** is the winner of the 2024 Robert Bortolussi Research Mentorship Award.

Dr. Wozney consistently embodies our core values, fostering a culture of health and safety, while nurturing an inclusive and supportive work environment. Her commitment to mentorship extends beyond professional development; she genuinely invests in the personal growth of her mentees. As a mentor, she goes above and beyond to foster an inclusive, accessible and constructive environment,

demonstrating her commitment to each team member's professional and personal success while expertly balancing the remarkable number of projects she supports.

Dr. Robert Bortolussi is known to many as a pediatrician and infectious disease specialist, and throughout his career, he has been an outstanding model of mentoring for numerous researchers.

Congratulations Dr. Wozney!

Dr. Kara Dempster chosen as an Early Career Academic Excellence Awardee for the 2025 Congress of the Schizophrenia International Research Society

Dr. **Kara Dempster** has been chosen as an Early Career Academic Excellence Awardee for the 2025 Congress of the Schizophrenia International Research Society.

The Early Career Award program is intended to sponsor individuals who have, through their research, teaching or clinical activities, demonstrated a professional and scientific interest in the field of schizophrenia research.

Congratulations Dr. Dempster!

EXTRA MILE AWARD

Do you have a colleague who deserves to be recognized for going “the extra mile?”
Consider nominating them for the Extra Mile Award!

The Department of Psychiatry’s Extra Mile Award recognizes exceptional contributions by faculty and staff who have truly gone “the extra mile” in service to the department by advancing its mission in the areas of education, research, clinical care, and advocacy.

LEARN MORE & MAKE A NOMINATION [HERE](#).

Recognizing our administrative staff

Do you know a Dalhousie University Psychiatry administrative employee who deserves to be recognized for their extra efforts?

Let us know by filling out the form on the homepage of dalpsychiatry.ca.

Dr. Agyapong and department managers in the Department of Psychiatry have launched a new employee appreciation program that will recognize employees regularly for their contribution to the academic, research, and clinical work of the department.

This is a great way to recognize staff who make sure services are staffed, learners feel supported, research is productive, and budgets are balanced.

Questions or issues with the form?

Contact jen.brown@nshealth.ca



Medical Humanities



Student Writing Competition 2025

Do you enjoy writing?

Medical students and residents are invited to submit reflective essays, prose, poetry, plays, or graphic novellas exploring the intersection of mental health and the humanities to the **Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry Annual Student Writing Competition**. Other forms of creative writing may also be accepted.

One entry in each category (medical student, postgraduate trainee) will be selected to receive a cash prize. *

*Awards in each category may not be given each year depending on the number and/or quality of the submissions.

Contest Rules

Who is eligible? Medical students, residents, and fellows at Canadian medical schools.

Maximum word count: 2,000 words

Deadline: This year's deadline is **May 1, 2025**. Winners will be announced in fall 2025.

Entries can be sent as PDF attachments to the Department of Psychiatry Medical Humanities Coordinator, Dr. Leigh Meldrum, at Psych.Education@dal.ca. Please indicate in your email whether you are a medical student or a resident/fellow.

To ensure confidentiality is maintained, patients and anyone else described in essays, stories, or poems **must be fictional or composite characters (with the exception of the narrator him/herself).*

For complete contest rules, please visit: <https://medicine.dal.ca/departments/department-sites/psychiatry/education/medical-humanities/writing-competition.html>

Winning

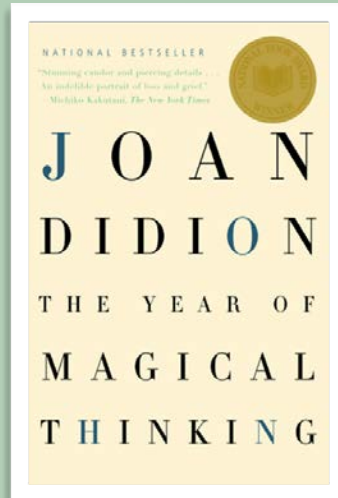
Winning entries will be published in the Department of Psychiatry newsletter, *Headlines*, and on the **Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry website**.

Tel: 902-473-2470 | Psych.Education@dal.ca



MEDICAL HUMANITIES / Winter 2025

Medical Humanities Book Club



March 5, 2025 @ 7 pm - 8:30 pm
Virtual Meeting (Zoom link to be provided)



Movie Night @ Abbie J. Lane

Join your colleagues for an evening of film and discussion
April 9, 2025 @ 6 pm
AJLB, Room 4074

Film has yet to be finalized, so all suggestions are welcome. Send your picks to:
margaret.meldrum@nshealth.ca or
abigale.maclellan@nshealth.ca

Humanities conference in Halifax / March 2025

Creating Space 15:
THE POWER OF THE HUMANITIES TO DECOLONIZE HEALTHCARE
Presented by the *Canadian Association for Health Humanities*

Saturday March 29 - Sunday March 30
Halifax, Nova Scotia

More information can be found at www.cahh.ca/creating-space-15



For more information on the Department of Psychiatry Medical Humanities program, please contact Dr. Leigh Meldrum, Medical Humanities Coordinator, at margaret.meldrum@nshealth.ca.

Holiday party and 75th anniversary celebration



The holiday party included an anniversary cake-cutting ceremony. Back row, Left to right: Drs. Sanjana Sridharan, Phil Tibbo, Mahmoud Awara, and Risk Kronfli. Front row, Left to right: Dr. Alexa Bagnell, Dr. Lara Hazelton, Dean David Anderson, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Dr. Christy Bussey, Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy, Dr. Mutiat Sulyman, Huanhong Xie, and Dr. Zenovia Ursuliak. Photos by Bruce Bottomley.

The Department of Psychiatry hosted its holiday party on Dec. 6, 2024 at the Atlantica Hotel. The event also celebrated the [department's 75th anniversary](#) with over 100 attendees gathering to celebrate the season and this special occasion.

As in the past, we asked attendees to provide a donation to a worthy cause. This year, the selected charity was the Healthy Minds Cooperative.

A toast to 75 years

Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, department head, welcomed everyone to the event, reflecting on the department's rich history and its

progress. He led everyone in a toast to 75 years and then invited Dr. David Anderson, dean, Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Christy Bussey, medical executive director, NS Health Central Zone, and members of the Department of Psychiatry's Executive Committee to join him in an anniversary cake-cutting ceremony.

Dr. David Anderson, dean of the Faculty of Medicine, provided opening remarks about the department's 75th anniversary.

Dr. **Cameron Taylor**, PGY-4 resident, was our MC for the evening, introducing each speaker and providing information updates to attendees.



75th anniversary celebrations

After dinner, Drs. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick**, **Lara Hazelton**, and **Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum** were invited to the stage to share some ways in which the department has been recognizing its 75th anniversary.

Dr. Rudnick, as committee chair, provided an overview of the work of the Anniversary Planning Committee and its scope.

Dr. Hazelton, who led the development and was editor of a publication to mark the 75th anniversary, introduced the publication to attendees. The [75th anniversary publication](#) is a follow-up to the book edited by Dr. Patrick Flynn to mark the department's 50th anniversary. Dr. Flynn's book covered the first 50 years of the department's history (1949 to 1999), with the second publication covering the subsequent 25 years (1999 to 2024).

The 75th anniversary publication titled "Commemorating the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry's 75th Anniversary: A Historical Retrospective 1999–2024" was a compilation of reflections from past and current department heads, members, and poems. Copies of the booklet were available to event attendees.

Dr. Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum, medical humanities coordinator, who led the development of a video to commemorate the department's 75-year history, introduced and played [the video](#) for attendees.

An anniversary balloon frame was set up at the back of the Guild Hall where the event was held for people to take photos. Each party was invited to take a copy of the anniversary publication and a gift bag containing a mug and pen displaying the department's anniversary logo.

Service milestone recognitions

The department recognized members who have reached various service milestones — 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 or more years of service. Congratulations to Drs. **Mahmoud Awara**, **José Mejía**, **Meagan MacNeil**, and **Yury Stubeda** for 10 years of service; to Drs. **Tanya**



Department members were recognized for reaching various service milestones at the holiday party. Left to right: Drs. Jason Morrison, Risk Kronfli, Mark Bosma, Meagan MacNeil, Christy Bussey, Vincent Agyapong, Sanjana Sridharan, and Mahmoud Awara.

Tulipan, **Jason Morrison**, **Curt Peters**, and **Aaron Keshen** for 15 years of service; to Dr. **Risk Kronfli** for 25 years of service; and to Dr. **Grainne Neilson** for 30+ years of service.

Our thanks to Drs. **Sanjana Sridharan**, **Mark Bosma**, **Mahmoud Awara**, and **Christy Bussey** who helped present certificates to those in attendance.

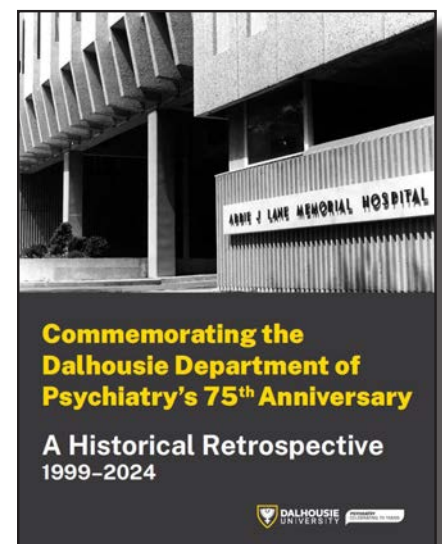
A new award

Drs. **Sherry Stewart**, graduate program coordinator, and **Kim Good**, associate coordinator, were invited to announce two new awards for students in the Psychiatry Research graduate programs: The Benjamin Rusak Graduate Student Award (Masters) will be awarded annually to the strongest MSc student in the Psychiatry Research Graduate Program, and the Patrick McGrath Graduate Student Award (Doctoral) will be awarded annually to the strongest PhD student in the Psychiatry Research Graduate Program. Both awards will be presented at the department's annual year-end celebration in June.

DJ, dance, and gingerbread houses

Following the scheduled portion of the event, attendees were invited to hit the dance floor and take photos at our anniversary balloon photo frame. Gingerbread house kits were also available for each table to assemble a gingerbread house.

Our special thanks to Dr. Cameron Taylor for volunteering to be our MC, all the event speakers, attendees, and to Bruce Bottomley for the photos.





**Holiday Party
2024**

HEADLINES **SUBMISSIONS**

Headlines provides a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and items of general interest to the faculty, fellows, students, and staff of the Department of Psychiatry.

The next issue of **Headlines** will be distributed in **April 2025**.

Please send all submissions to **Penney.Miller@nshealth.ca**



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Department of Psychiatry