

June 22

## **Combined \$54.5M gift creates a brighter future for children and women**

*Largest single donation to the University of Alberta means better health outcomes*

(Edmonton) - The sound of footsteps ascending the stairs heralds six-year-old triplets David, Ryan and Liam Ennis. They spill into the living room laughing and it's hard to believe that one of them had open-heart surgery as an infant — with a heart the size of a pea.

During pregnancy, the boys' mother, Tanya, was enrolled in a clinical trial funded by the Women and Children's Health Research Institute and led by Dr. Lisa Hornberger, director of the Fetal and Neonatal Cardiology Program at the Stollery Children's Hospital, as part of a study at the Lois Hole Hospital for Women. Hornberger, a researcher with the Women and Children's Health Research Institute, discovered the congenital heart condition in Liam when Tanya was still in her first trimester.

The Women and Children's Health Research Institute, housed at the University of Alberta, is a decade-long partnership between the University of Alberta and Alberta Health Services, and the only organization in Canada dedicated to the full spectrum of women's, children's and perinatal health — areas of research that have traditionally been underfunded.

Now this research, care and treatment partnership will continue for at least another 10 years, thanks to a historic gift. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation is giving \$40 million to the Women and Children's Health Research Institute, the largest gift in the University of Alberta's history. The Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation is giving an additional \$14.5 million for a total boost to the institute of \$54.5 million.

University of Alberta President David Turpin said the gifts represent a major investment and milestone in women's and children's health, research and innovation in Canada.

"This historic investment not only supports the work of University of Alberta research and improves the health of women and children — mothers and sisters, sons and daughters — it holds the power to change entire family stories," said Turpin. "The U of A is extremely grateful to the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation, the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and their visionary donors for helping us lead this transformation with our partners, Alberta Health Services."

### **The power of partnership**

The Ennis triplets tell us a lot about the feedback loop of discovery: scientists apply their findings to the treatment of patients, then use what they learn to inform their research. It's a process that leads to better health outcomes for women and children.

Collaboration between many partners, including the Lois Hole Hospital for Women and the Stollery Children’s Hospital, makes this approach possible, said Verna Yiu, Alberta Health Services President and CEO.

“The Women and Children’s Health Research Institute is an example of how bringing people and organizations together makes a big difference for patients, their families and our communities,” said Yiu. “The knowledge, understanding and advances made possible by this transformative gift will have an undeniable impact on the lives of women and children, not just in our province, but nationally and internationally. Health systems that embed research have better outcomes; AHS is one of those systems.”

“You can draw a straight line between the investments our donors make in innovation and discovery, and the enhancements to the quality of life for kids across Western Canada,” said Mike House, President and CEO of the Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation. “This \$40-million gift will be a catalyst for innovation and discovery in kids’ health, and will inspire the next generation of health professionals as we continue to tap into the university’s critical mass of experts to further build Alberta’s knowledge economy.”

“We believe that building the best women’s hospital is rooted in research,” said Andrew Otway, President and CEO of the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation. “Our foundation, which supports the Lois Hole Hospital for Women, is very proud to support the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute with this \$14.5-million gift, and we are grateful to our donors who support the power of research in the health of women of all ages and in all stages of life.”

### **A brighter future through research**

“Research saves lives, improves outcomes and gives hope,” said Dr. Sandra Davidge, director of the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute. “We support research that addresses the unique health needs of women and children, helping ensure care and treatment is developed and designed specifically around those needs.”

The gift from the hospital foundations will be used to propel women’s and children’s health research in three ways, Davidge said.

- Approximately one-third will be allocated to peer-reviewed grants. These grants are researcher-driven, and the peer-review is a method for ensuring excellence.
- Another third of the gift will be dedicated to research catalysts, including recruiting international-calibre researchers. This part of the budget also leverages other grants with matching funds.
- The last third will help the institute serve as an incubator for health research. It subsidizes an expert research support team that includes nurses, coordinators, biostatisticians, data management staff, knowledge translation, patient engagement, qualitative research and more, enabling research to get off the ground sooner.

## **Making a difference now**

Liam Ennis and his family are an example of how having an institute focusing on women's and children's health is making a difference, Davidge said. "Research is the basis for better health care," she said, "and the institute is helping to organize, grow and sustain that capacity."

Liam Ennis was born with one of the world's top pediatric cardiologists already following him. He received surgery a few months later and, now six years old, he's thriving. He's just one patient to have benefitted from investment in research.

Davidge describes the Women and Children's Health Research Institute as a successful partnership. "There is a perfect storm of goodwill towards women's and children's health in this community," Davidge said. "Because of the vision of our partners, Edmontonians and Albertans have access to some of the most current research and treatment in the world. It's gratifying to be part of this wonderful partnership."

To learn more and see a video of the Ennis family, visit [uab.ca/brighterfuture](http://uab.ca/brighterfuture)

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## **MEDIA BACKGROUNDER**

### **\$54.5M gift propels research benefiting women and children**

The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation are giving \$54.5 million over 10 years to the Women and Children's Health Research Institute at the University of Alberta.

- \$40 million from the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation represents donors from across western Canada, and on its own is the largest single gift in the university's history
- \$14.5 million from Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation donors

The Women and Children's Health Research Institute (WCHRI), a partnership between Alberta Health Services and the University of Alberta, was established in 2006 to help close the gap in research focusing on women and children.

- 70 per cent of medicines prescribed to children have not been tested for use in children
- Treatments that are safe for adults can be ineffective and even dangerous for children
- Research shows many serious chronic health conditions begin early, including in pregnancy
- Women have unique health needs and their physiology means they experience illnesses differently and metabolize medicines differently than men

The Women and Children's Health Research Institute is the only institute in Canada to tackle all three closely related areas of women's, children's and perinatal health.

- More than 450 leading researchers, clinicians, academics and health care professionals and service providers belong to the institute
- Institute members work in 12 University of Alberta faculties bringing a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling complex health issues.

The \$40 million gift from the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation is the biggest philanthropic donation in the University of Alberta's history. Combined with the \$14.5 from the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation to total \$54.5 million, the gift will be invested in three areas:

- funding research in all aspects of women and children's health from earliest development through every stage of the life-cycle.
- recruiting leading researchers and training the next generation of researchers to strengthen capacity
- providing research services such as data management and patient recruitment to help research advance faster

Examples of research by the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute include:

- Treating heart disease in newborns
- Evaluating weight management interventions for parents of children with obesity
- Personalizing chemotherapy treatment in breast cancer
- Determining the causes of childhood asthma
- Treating incontinence in women

**About the Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation:**

The Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation is committed to transforming children’s health care by funding excellence at the Stollery Children’s Hospital. Excellence comes in many forms: specialized equipment; sub-specialty education to train the brightest medical minds; research to discover new treatments and cures; and specialized pediatric programs that improve family-centred care, and patient and family outcomes at the Stollery. For more information visit [stollerykids.com](http://stollerykids.com) and follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

**About the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation:**

The Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation improves the health of Albertans by building passionate community support for the Royal Alexandra Hospital. It is through the Foundation that donor dollars are able to enhance care and save lives at the Royal Alexandra Hospital and its medical centres of excellence: the Lois Hole Hospital for Women, CK Hui Heart Centre, Eye Institute of Alberta and Orthopedic Surgery Centre. To learn more about the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation visit [royalalex.org](http://royalalex.org) and [loisholehospital.com](http://loisholehospital.com).

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