

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **Alberta health organizations come together to renew funding and expand program for Cross-Provincial Chair in Women's Mental Research**

Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and University of Calgary Faculty of Nursing have announced their new agreement to jointly renew the second term of Alberta's first pan-provincial nursing research chair, with the program set to receive \$1 million over an additional five years.

**EDMONTON, AB**—The Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation in Edmonton and the University of Calgary, Faculty of Nursing are proud to announce their continued partnership to once again provide support and fund research into women's mental health, with the goal of helping women and families not just in Alberta but across the country.

Originally formed in 2016, the focus of the chair and its first term was on perinatal mental health, looking at the outcomes upon long-term health of pregnant and postpartum women as well as the health of their children. The focus of the second term is expanding to now cover the full life course for women and continue building upon the hugely successful launch of the HOPE Digital Mental Health Platform—an online screening, e-referral, e-therapy, and educational tool created by chair holder Dr. Dawn Kingston and her team.

Designed to help women self-manage their mental health, the HOPE platform has already served over 3,500 women and aims to provide more accessible, affordable mental health care for all. Dr. Kingston describes HOPE as a “digital backbone” that can support and extend (with no intention to replace) the mental health support system. The tool uses sophisticated technology to provide personalized risk and symptom screening, education, therapy and “next step” recommendations. In the process it lowers costs, helps patients to access help in a more timely fashion, and frees up crucial time for psychiatrists and psychologists to address the most complex mental health needs.

The program will be renewed for \$1 million over an additional five years, and the chair will henceforth be known as the Lois Hole Hospital for Women Cross-Provincial Chair in Women's Mental Health Research (formerly the Lois Hole Hospital for Women Cross-Provincial Chair in Perinatal Mental Health).

“We look forward to this next five years of partnership and continued success in the advancement of research and interventions in women's health that are accessible, innovative, and life-changing to all women,” said Sharlene Rutherford, President and CEO of the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and Alberta Women's Health Foundation.

Dr. Sandra Davidson, dean and professor of the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Nursing, expressed, “UCalgary Nursing is thrilled to continue our partnership with the Lois Hole Hospital for Women in our mutual goal to improve the health of women in Alberta! We are also delighted with the launch of the Alberta Women’s Health Foundation. I have every confidence that the renewal of the LHHW Cross-Provincial Chair in Women’s Mental Health Research will have a substantial and positive impact on the Foundation’s program of research.”

Chair holder Dr. Dawn Kingston is a highly respected researcher, as well as professor and certified coach, who has been working in the perinatal mental health area for more than fifteen years. Alongside her role as the Lois Hole Hospital for Women Cross-Provincial Chair in Women’s Mental Health Research, she is also a CIHR New Investigator, after having received the prestigious national New Investigator Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. She has been commended by fellow academics and physicians around the globe for her success in research, her collaboration, and her compassion.

For the many achievements of the first term and potential for the future, Dr. Kingston largely credits her team, as well as many others—the 3,500+ women who have used and trusted the HOPE platform, the clinicians who have provided feedback, the WCHRI team, and all those who have provided support along the way, namely UCalgary Nursing and the foundations, which includes the new Alberta Women’s Health Foundation.

New mother Aliasha Arsenault has become a major advocate for the HOPE platform.

Arsenault was six months pregnant with her son and struggling with her mental health when she began using the HOPE app. She described it as an invaluable tool, stating that for her ‘it honestly changed everything.’ Thanks to the many life changes it helped her make, she says she started enjoying spending time with other people again, began feeling a lot more like herself, and was ‘not hiding anymore.’

It’s a platform she plans to use as long as she can, believing people everywhere need more education on how to assess their own mental health and that everyone should take advantage of such a platform.

She also believes the platform has long term potential to help women and families, saying it will “create a dialogue in our culture that helps people start asking each other about mental health and embracing mental health discussions.”

## Media Contacts

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**Dr. Dawn Kingston** (Chair holder and lead researcher) and **Aliesha Arsenault** (patient and HOPE advocate) can be available for comment. Please contact Kirby and Karen to coordinate.

## About the University of Calgary

The University of Calgary is a global intellectual hub located in Canada's most enterprising city. In this spirited, high-quality learning environment, students will thrive in programs made rich by research, hands-on experiences and entrepreneurial thinking. By 2022, we will be recognized as one of Canada's top five research universities, fully engaging the communities we both serve and lead.

*For more information, visit [ucalgary.ca](http://ucalgary.ca). Stay up to date with University of Calgary news headlines on Twitter [@UCalgary](https://twitter.com/UCalgary). For details on faculties and how to reach experts go to our media centre at [ucalgary.ca/news/media](http://ucalgary.ca/news/media)*

## About the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation

Established in 1984, the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation is committed to supporting improved health care outcomes for the hundreds of thousands of people who seek treatment at the Royal Alexandra Hospital every year. The Foundation funds ground-breaking education, cutting-edge research, next-generation technologies and facility enhancements. It also supports a growing number of specialized centres of health care excellence located at the Royal Alexandra Hospital campus, including the Lois Hole Hospital for Women, the CK Hui Heart Centre, the Orthopedic Surgery Centre and the Eye Institute of Alberta.

*Stay up to date with RAHF news at [royalalex.org](http://royalalex.org). Follow us on Twitter and Instagram [@RAHFfoundation](https://twitter.com/RAHFfoundation) and [@LoisHoleHosp](https://twitter.com/LoisHoleHosp)*

## About the Alberta Women's Health Foundation

Alberta Women's Health Foundation (AWHF) is a pan-provincial healthcare charity supporting the advancement of care and research in women's health. The AWHF was launched by the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation as an extension of its mission in women's health in 2020. This charitable health brand seeks to meet the increasing need for funding related to women's health initiatives and seeks to close gaps that exist in women's health knowledge, research, and care through the development of meaningful partnerships across public, private, and philanthropic sectors. In addition to individual and foundation support, AWHF will seek partnerships with Alberta-based companies and corporations whose community investment and cause marketing dollars align with the mission of improving the health of women and families in our province.

*For more information, visit [albertawomenshealthfoundation.org](http://albertawomenshealthfoundation.org). Stay up to date with AWHF and our campaign to #RefocusTheResearch by following us on Twitter [@abwomenshealth](https://twitter.com/abwomenshealth) and Instagram [@abwomenshealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/abwomenshealthfoundation)*

***Improving the health of Albertans by building passionate community support for the Royal Alexandra Hospital.***

[www.royalalex.org](http://www.royalalex.org)

## **About the Women and Children's Health Research Institute**

The Women and Children's Health Research Institute (WCHRI) supports research excellence dedicated to improving the health and lives of women and children. WCHRI was founded in 2006 as a partnership between the University of Alberta and Alberta Health Services, with core funding from the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and the Alberta Women's Health Foundation. Our membership is made up of over 500 leading researchers who are passionately committed to women and children's health and well-being.

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