
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Sept. 22, 2022

Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation

UBC research leads the way to more effective mental-health treatments

VANCOUVER – The University of British Columbia (UBC) is taking steps to improve mental-health and addiction treatments with support from the BC Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF).

“B.C.’s greatest asset is our people, and that’s why we continue to invest in infrastructure and research that will keep British Columbians healthy and safe,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation. “The University of British Columbia is a research powerhouse with students and researchers leading the way with new and innovative solutions across fields, such as mental health and wellness, that will improve the lives of people throughout B.C.”

The Government of B.C. is supporting research at post-secondary institutions with more than \$560,000 to help lead the way to more effective mental-health treatments through the BCKDF.

Students and faculty at UBC are using the equipment funded by the BCKDF to conduct research with real-world implications, from child and youth mental health, concussions, sexuality and well-being, and treatment for opioid-use disorder.

For example, UBC researcher Eugenia Oviedo-Joekes is the first in Canada to be named as Tier 1 Canada research chair in person-centred care in addictions and public health and is being supported by \$125,000 from the BCKDF to buy equipment for this research. The research will improve the health of people living with opioid-use disorder by optimizing the uptake and effectiveness of innovative new treatments.

“We are pleased to have received funding through the BC Knowledge Development Fund to further our research in addictions and public health,” Oviedo-Joekes said. “By extending person-centred addiction research we are strengthening B.C.’s capabilities and development of programs that best meet the unique needs of individuals and improve their health outcomes.”

Funding from the BCKDF has also supported research infrastructure for the following projects at UBC:

- Samantha Dawson received \$238,819 for the Sexuality and Well-being (SWell) Laboratory.
- Noah Silverberg received \$125,000 for persistent symptoms after concussion: psychological mechanisms and treatment.
- Anne Gadermann received \$80,000 for a programmatic data platform for bio-eco-social population-level research on child and youth mental health in B.C.

The BCKDF is a contributor to the objectives of the StrongerBC Economic Plan. It helps rebuild

and grow the economy by improving B.C.'s productivity and competitiveness. Other benefits include potential commercialization, spin-offs and patents, as well as discoveries that directly affect the lives of British Columbians in medicine and the management of the environment.

By investing in research infrastructure projects, the B.C. government is continuing to support post-secondary institutions to build toward a more innovative, sustainable, and inclusive future.

Quotes:

Santa J. Ono, president and vice-chancellor, UBC –

“Investing in and prioritizing mental health has been a key commitment at UBC, whether it’s been on our campuses or in B.C. communities. This funding from the BC Knowledge Development Fund will allow UBC researchers to access the infrastructure they need to further work in areas, such as child and youth mental health, sexual health, brain injury and treatments for opioid-use disorder, furthering B.C.’s capacity to create a healthier future.”

Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training –

“By investing in knowledge development, we’re able to make important research infrastructure opportunities come to life. This research has the chance to make a difference in the lives of British Columbians and address serious challenges faced by our province, including supporting mental-health treatments. Through this funding, researchers are well-positioned with the right equipment to help us create a stronger, healthier B.C.”

Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions –

“This research infrastructure will better the lives of people who need mental-health and addictions treatments. Connecting research and practice is one of the ways that we are building a comprehensive system of mental-health and substance-use care for people from the ground up.”

Quick Facts:

- The BCKDF has awarded more than \$850 million to almost 1,600 research infrastructure projects since the program’s inception in 1998.
- Since 2017, the fund has awarded more than \$200 million to nearly 400 research infrastructure projects to support specific research activities, leveraging close to \$550 million invested in research infrastructure in the province.
- BCKDF funding span sectors, such as health and life sciences, nuclear physics, medicine, genomics, biotechnologies, clean tech, agrifoods, energy and mines, environment and climate change, and forestry.
- The BCKDF shares project funding with other funding partners, including the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

Learn More:

To learn more about the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/technology-innovation/bckdf>

For information about additional BCKDF announcements, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022JERI0059-001382>

To learn more about the University of British Columbia research department, visit:

<https://research.ubc.ca/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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BC Knowledge Development Fund mental health projects at UBC

Sexuality and Well-being (SWell) Laboratory

Sexual dysfunction, which includes distressing problems with desire, arousal, orgasm and pain, is among the most prevalent of all psychiatric disorders and affects between 28% and 40% of women and 18% to 30% of men in Canada. The SWell lab aims to identify novel cognitive and emotional mechanisms associated with the onset and persistence of sexual dysfunction. These factors will inform the development of psychologically based empirically supported interventions. SWell lab trainees will gain access to one-of-a-kind psychophysiology and observation research infrastructure. In the long term, health-care providers in B.C. will have better capacity to assess and treat sexual dysfunction.

The BC Knowledge Development Fund awarded \$238,819 to the project.

Canada research chair in person-centred care in addictions and public health

The research program is in the multidisciplinary and multi-level area of public health and addictions, focusing on innovation in treatments for opioid-use disorder. The goal of the research program is to inform the development of programs that best meet the unique needs of each client in order to optimize health outcomes. The project will build an advanced data infrastructure that will enable performing this dynamic research.

By extending and embedding person-centred addiction research capacity, B.C.'s capabilities are strengthened in conducting interdisciplinary research in this field that leads to effective policy development.

The BC Knowledge Development Fund awarded \$125,000 to the project.

Persistent symptoms after concussion: Psychological mechanisms and treatment

How people cope with headaches, fatigue, forgetfulness and other symptoms after concussion powerfully influences their recovery. The Coping with Neurological Symptoms (CNS) Lab studies why people often cope in counterproductive ways, how their beliefs and actions affect their brain health symptoms, and what psychological treatments can help. The funded infrastructure will enable the CNS Lab to directly measure brain activity and leverage telehealth technology. CNS Lab discoveries can improve daily functioning and quality of life in Canadians who sustain a concussion or who otherwise experience brain-health symptoms that are not fully explained by neurological disease.

The BC Knowledge Development Fund awarded \$125,000 to the project.

A programmatic data platform for bio-eco-social population-level research on child and youth mental health in B.C.

The funded infrastructure will help to build a programmatic child development data platform in B.C. This data platform will:

- develop a programmatic child development data platform that will support a rich research program on the well-being of B.C.'s children and youth; and
- develop metadata and documentation for high-quality research in population-level child and youth data throughout B.C.

This approach will facilitate innovative, cost-effective, timely and high-quality collaborative research that will serve as a springboard to improving collective understanding of the mental health of children and youth in B.C.

The BC Knowledge Development Fund awarded \$80,000 to the project.

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