

Research Canada UPDATE

News For Parliamentarians on Canadian Health Research

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Special Research Canada Member Issue

December 6, 2018

March of Dimes Canada

Canada's Largest Organization for People with Physical Disabilities



Canada's Largest Organization for People with Physical Disabilities

March of Dimes Canada (MODC) was founded in 1951, with a mission to fund research towards developing a vaccine to stop the spread of polio. This mission was achieved within five years of the organization being founded and the mission was refocused to support polio survivors. Over the years, the range of their services and the population of people with disabilities they serve have better expanded to include Canadians of all ages and most disabilities.

For more information about their programs and services go to: www.marchofdimes.ca.

Upcoming Event

Parliamentary Health Research Caucus

Veterans' Health and Health Research in Canada

February 20, 2019

Ottawa, Ontario



[More Information](#)

Recent Event

MODC has long recognized the far-reaching benefits of research for those they serve and has continued to prioritize research over the years. In 1994, the Paul Martin Sr. Biomedical and Rehabilitation Research Fund was established and the Jonas Salk Award was created to acknowledge lifetime achievements in these fields by Canadian researchers. In 2014, a major decision was made to endow the March of Dimes Paul J.J. Martin Early Career Professorship to advance research in community reintegration for people with brain trauma in the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of Toronto (UofT).

[Click here](#) for more information about their research program.

Transforming Community Research through Partnerships



Dr. Mickey Milner, former Chair, Jonas Salk Award Committee with a participant at MODC's Knowledge and Translation Day, held in partnership with the Stroke Foundation Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery.

MODC advances research through a partnership approach with the research community. Partnerships between service organizations and academia ensure research reflects the lived experiences of service users and providers, and supports the translation of knowledge into practice and policy. This type of partnership has

Parliamentary Health
Research Caucus

The Case for a *Made in Canada* Paediatric Medicines and Clinical Trials Luncheon

December 4, 2018



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benefits for both the research community and service organizations. As a “living lab” service organizations provide researchers with access to research participants and staff expertise to ensure research is grounded in practice. At the same time, this type of partnership enables service organizations to fulfill their quality goals by enabling the generation of evidence to inform the development and improvement of programs.

The Impact of a Unique Non-Profit-University Partnership

The creation of the Early Career Professorship was the catalyst for MODC forging strong partnerships with University of Toronto faculty and students in the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. To date, over \$3 million in grant funding has been acquired. Together, they engaged in 21 research studies over the past years furthering research related to stroke recovery, aging with a disability, work integration, the use of technology to assist people with disabilities, housing and peer support. It has allowed faculty and students to produce evidence-based research to enhance and improve existing MODC programs and services, and identified additional collaborative opportunities locally and nationally.

MODC has a strong commitment to quality improvement based on evidence, and their Research and Quality Department leads the organization’s efforts in program evaluation and research. This department helps program staff clearly define, capture, and communicate the real value of program offerings. Combining ongoing internal evaluation processes and the knowledge gained from their research partners is a big leap resulting in increased production and translation of internationally important research. When non-profits and universities work together to push the frontiers of knowledge, they become a powerful engine for innovation.

Left to Right: Dr. Susan Rappolt, University of Toronto; Dr. Mickey Milner, MODC; Andria Spindel, MODC; Jerry Lucas, MODC; Blair Roblin, MODC; Dr. Catharine Whiteside, University of Toronto; Deborah Pal, MODC



Partnerships to Generate Evidence and Inform Policy



MODC co-hosted a panel featuring AGE-WELL researchers on Equitable Access to Assistive Technology at the June 2018 United Nations Conference of the State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

MODC is committed to generating and using evidence to inform policy. One such example is MODC's partnership with AGE-WELL NCE (Aging Gracefully across Environments using Technology to Support Wellness, Engagement and Long Life Network of Centres of Excellence, Incorporated). MODC helped design a project with researchers Dr. Rosalie Wang (University of Toronto) and Dr. Michael Wilson (McMaster Health Forum) to produce the most comprehensive scan of Canadian programs that fund assistive devices and technology. The scan highlights the complexity, fragmentation and overlapping of programs. It also shows inequities and disparities



in assistive technology access. MODC is now using this evidence to advocate for policy changes to make assistive technology more accessible. Dr. Wang shares how this partnership has been mutually beneficial: "through this partnership we have benefited tremendously in our scientific, knowledge mobilization, and personnel training endeavors. We value the extensive knowledge and expertise of MODC staff and the network of stakeholder connections and knowledge dissemination channels afforded by a longstanding national charity organization, as well as the direct uptake at MODC of our collaborative research findings." Further information on AGE-WELL NCE is available here: <http://agewell-nce.ca>.

March of Dimes Canada's Former President & CEO Andria Spindel with Dr. Michael

International Partnerships: Bridging Aging and Disability in Research, Policy and Practice

MODC seeks to collaborate with researchers internationally to advance knowledge and evidence to ensure better services and supports for people with disabilities of all ages. To understand how to best support people aging with and into disability MODC initiated the *Bridging Aging and Disability International Network (BADIN)*, which is comprised of researchers from across the globe interested in bridging the fields of aging and disability. As part of these efforts, MODC co-hosted international conferences in 2007 and 2011 which were then highlighted in a special issue of the *International Journal of Integrated Care*. Most recently funding was acquired through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research by Dr. Emily Nalder, March of Dimes Paul J.J. Martin Professor (University of Toronto) to develop a taxonomy of bridging activities at the nexus of



aging and disability. MODC also hosted a think tank on the topic that was attended by researchers, as well as those involved in practice and policy development within the federal government. For more information on bridging aging and disability visit: www.badinetwork.org

Dr. Emily Nalder and Deborah Pal with a Poster on the

findings of their research study on Aphasia Friendly Peer Support Groups for Stroke Survivors and Caregivers.

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