



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

It's hard to believe that five years have passed and our first term as Co-Directors is coming to an end. This feels like a good time to reflect on the ways in which the Centre has developed and grown since September 2021.

The most impactful transformation was, of course, our name change, and the merging of the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility with the Rehabilitation Research Program to create the Centre for Aging SMART. We were also given the mandate to guide our community through a strategic planning process with the goal of strengthening the Centre and developing a synergistic aging and rehabilitation science platform.



Our membership made recommendations in five areas: research, capacity-building, community engagement, inclusiveness, and sustainability.

The next page of the annual report highlights activities in support of the five recommended areas across 2021 to 2025. Continue reading to see the accomplishments at the Centre over the last 5 years!

We're proud of what we have accomplished with the help of our research community, as well as through the efforts of our small but mighty operations team. Looking ahead to fall 2026, we plan to re-engage our membership in new strategic planning sessions to guide us in our second term. Thank you to all members, staff, and trainees for your ongoing effort and support. We are excited to continue building the future of the Centre with you.

Sincerely,

Drs Janice Eng & Teresa Liu-Ambrose

HIGHLIGHTS 2021 - 2025

Research

- Formed a Scientific Advisory Board to provide external expertise and guidance towards attaining our mission
- Established a small grant funding program for members and their collaborators through the Edith Winifred Hopper Endowment fund
- Revitalized our research infrastructure through four consecutive years of successful VPRI Research Facilities Supporting Grant applications
- Worked with the UBC and VGH Hospital Foundation to establish the Ken Woods Stroke Rehabilitation Endowment fund
- Hosted the 2024 CIHR Institute of Aging Summer Program in Aging
- Launched two annual research events: INCREASE BC, and the Centre for Aging SMART Annual Research Day

Sustainability

- Created and delivered the Vancouver Summer Program Injury Biomechanics course for international students, with consistent growth year over year
- Developed a new Physical Therapy mini-school for high school students, to begin in the summer of 2026
- Successfully applied and received two CFI Innovation Fund awards to support new and upgraded infrastructure for the Robert HN Ho site's Mobility Innovation Core and the GF Strong Rehab Centre Research labs, as well as salary support for key staff members.

Community Engagement

- Provided social opportunities for all Centre members through monthly Lunch & Learns, a variety of Trainee Committee initiatives, and other events
- Developed and delivered a Falls Prevention workshop for clinical practitioners

Inclusiveness

- Created an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee to develop, support and ensure accountability for EDI principles across the Centre
- Established the Public Partners in Research Advisory Group to promote meaningful and ongoing involvement of public partners in research initiatives at the Centre

Capacity Building

- Partnered with the Department of Physical Therapy and the School of Biomedical Engineering to attract and hire two new faculty members: a Tier-2 Canada Research Chair in Spinal Cord Neuromodulation, and the VCHRI Cordula Paetzold Chair in Innovation and Aging
- Recruited 9 new Core and 16 new Associate Members to the Centre
- Supported the revitalization of our Trainee Committee
- Nominated Dr. Danmei Liu, Research Operations Manager, for the Applegarth Staff Service Award, which she received in 2025

ABOUT THE CENTRE

The **Centre for Aging SMART at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)** is a University of British Columbia affiliated, internationally recognized research centre accelerating discoveries and new knowledge to improve the lives of an aging population and individuals living with a disability. We are focused on developing novel **S**olutions for **M**obility, **A**ctivity, **R**ehabilitation and **T**echnology so that people living with the effects of aging or disability can live a high quality of life.

Our interdisciplinary team of researchers, clinicians, students, staff, volunteers, and community partners work together to evaluate, implement, and disseminate solutions to some of our health care system's most pressing and expensive problems. Our researchers develop and test innovative treatments to improve the lives of older adults or people living with a disability. These treatments include exercise prescriptions, surgical innovations, chronic disease management, pharmacological regimes, assistive technology, and sensor technologies.

Aging SMART acknowledges with gratitude and respect that we are located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the the xwməθkwə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil- Waututh) Nations.

The partnerships between the Centre for Aging SMART, Vancouver Coastal Health and the University of British Columbia are key to developing health care innovations that can be rapidly moved into practice and policies to improve the lives of patients and families today.

What Drives and Defines Us

Our Purpose: To accelerate discoveries and new knowledge to improve the lives of an aging population and individuals living with disability.

Our Values: Excellence, innovation, impact, leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and integrity, which are underlined by a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Our Vision: A world where people of all ages and abilities enjoy a life with quality



AGING SMART AT A GLANCE

Core Faculty Members

37

Associate Faculty Members

23 (+2 in 2025)

Trainees

200+

\$23.1 million
in funding
awarded

430 Publications

Faculty Promotions

- **Dr Julia Schmidt**
Associate Professor, Occupational
Science & Occupational Therapy
- **Dr Amir Ardestani-Jaafari**
Associate Professor, Faculty of
Management, Sustainability (IGS)

EVENTS

- **INCREASE BC**
- **Vancouver Summer Program**
- **Aging SMART Research Day**
- **Seasonal Social**
- **Percolating Ideas Webinar on Physical Activity after Hip and Knee Replacement**
- **Care Anywhere Annual Showcase**

Lunch and Learns

- **8 in 2025**

Trainee Committee hosted events

- **Summer BBQ**
- **Wine & Cheese Fall Welcome Back Event**
- **Springing into Summer Initiative**
- **Community Pantry Food Drive**



RESEARCH AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

Order of Canada

Dr Janice Eng's influential research has advanced treatments and shaped clinical practice worldwide, notably in the delivery of upper and lower extremity recovery after stroke. She has improved the quality of life for thousands of patients in Canada and beyond. The Order of Canada is one of Canada's highest civilian distinctions.

Arthritis Society Canada Top 10 Research Advances of 2025

- **Dr Linda Li**. Project title: Improving rheumatoid arthritis self-management through digital coaching
- **Drs Luke Johnson, Kishore Mulpuri, & David Wilson**. Project title: Preventing hip osteoarthritis in young adults

UBC Faculty of Medicine Awards

- **Dr Bruce Forster**. Award for Excellence in Mentoring Early Career Faculty.
- **Dr Danmei Liu**. Applegarth Staff Service.
- **Dr Janice Eng**. Service to the University and Community

UBC Vice-President, Research & Innovation Research Facilities Support Grant

Aging SMART received \$16,000 in this highly competitive grant to support upgrades to Centre equipment. Led by **Dr Tony Hodgson, Amanda Main, Vivian Chung, & Dr Danmei Liu**

Edith Winifred Hopper Fund

The 2025 Aging SMART Edith Winifred Hopper Fund is awarded to cross-discipline teams to support our members in conducting interdisciplinary research. This granting pool was generously donated to the Centre to support salary and research expenses. 2025 marks the second funding round of this internal award.

- **Dr Clare Ardern**. Project title: Co-creating a digital tool to diagnose and triage musculoskeletal conditions in the community
- **Dr Courtney Pollock**. Project title: The Stroke Transition Home Program

UBC Okanagan Researcher of the Year

- **Dr Brodie Sakakibara** has been recognized for his outstanding research commitment and achievements. This prestigious award recognizes faculty members making the world a better place through scholarly and creative pursuits.



2025 Aging SMART RESEARCH DAY

The 3rd Annual Research Day was held on October 9, 2025 and brought together the Aging SMART community to showcase the outstanding scholarship and innovation of our faculty, trainees, and research staff. This event featured a morning faculty retreat, trainee poster session, oral presentations by trainees and faculty, as well as lunch and networking. Prizes were awarded to the top trainee presenters in both the poster and oral presentation categories. We greatly appreciate all the presenters, attendees, and organizers for making this day a success.

Poster Presentation Trainee Awards

1st place

- **Dr Jade Witten** “The Impact of Caregiver Peer Support for Informal Caregivers of Adults with Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury: A Scoping Review”

2nd place four-way tie

- **Rebeca Hernández Gambo** “Comparing the effects of exercise-only intervention versus exercise-based multidomain behavioural interventions on cognitive function in older adults: a meta-analysis”
- **Christine Seo** “Reducing Falls Risk Post Hip Fracture in Older Adults with Cognitive Impairment: A Randomized Controlled Trial”
- **Rinni Mamman** “Exploring Public Perceptions about TBI: A Scoping Review”
- **Dr Paul Mackie** “Higher doses of inpatient step training does not alter 1 year physical activity after stroke. A secondary analysis of a randomized controlled trial”

Oral presentations Trainee Awards

1st place

- **Naomi Jung** “Buried 6 Microns Under: Increased Proportion of Mineralizing Lacunae in the Residual Trabeculae of Prostate Cancer Bone Metastasis Lesions”

2nd place tie

- **Alvin Kimbowa** “Real-time Automated Knee-Cartilage Segmentation in Point-of-Care-Ultrasound Devices”
- **Dr Stanley Hung** “Scaling-Up the Implementation of a Community Exercise Program for People Living with Stroke in British Columbia”

3rd place

- **Dr Guilherme Moraes Balbim** “24-hour activity cycle behaviours and gray matter volume in mild cognitive impairment”



RESEARCH AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

CFI Innovation Fund 2025

- PI: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**. Project title: Mobility Innovation Core. The Centre for Aging SMART has been awarded \$1,463,060 from the Canada Foundation for Innovation to support upgrading integral Centre equipment and to support the highly qualified personnel on the Centre's operations team

NSERC Discovery Award

- PI: **Dr Peter Crompton**. Project title: Open MRI Hardware for Advanced Biomedical Engineering Research
- PI: **Dr Tony Hodgson**. Project title: Developing and Integrating Advanced Ultrasound Imaging and Motion Tracking Tools and Techniques for Diagnosing and Surgically Treating Pressing Musculoskeletal Disorder
- PI: **Dr Alex Scott**. Project title: PHATA - Pregnancy, Hormones And Tendon Adaptation
- PI: **Dr David Wilson**. Project title: Measuring Hip Mechanics With Imaging

NSERC Research Tools and Instruments Grants

- PI: **Dr Lara Boyd**. Project title: Robotic delivery of transcranial magnetic stimulation for mapping human brain
- PI: **Dr Peter Crompton**. Project title: Open MRI Hardware for Advanced Biomedical Engineering Research

UBC AI & Health Network Fellows Program

- PI: **Dr Clare Ardern**. Project title: Co-creating an AI-based Decision-Support Tool for Triaging and Diagnosing Musculoskeletal Conditions: DigiMSK

Research on Research Joint Initiative

- PI: **Dr Clare Ardern**. Project title: Equalising Research Grants for Open Research Impact in Health: The ERGO-Impact Project. This project is funded by CIHR, SSHRC, and Michael Smith Health Research BC.

Fellows of International Orthopaedic Research

Dr David Wilson has been appointed a 2025 Fellow of International Orthopaedic Research by the International Combined Orthopaedic Research Societies in recognition of his significant contributions to the field of orthopaedic research

UBC Faculty Research Award Winners

- **Dr Jackie Whittaker**. UBC Killam Accelerator Research Fellowship
- **Dr Kristin Campbell**. UBC Killam Research Prize, Applied Science, Medicines, & Sciences, Established Category.

2025 Cy Frank Award

Dr Pierre Guy has been recognized by the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation for his development of a clinical protocol poised to improve both the patient and practitioner experience during chronic exertional compartment syndrome diagnostic testing

CIHR HIGHLIGHTS

CIHR Spring 2025 Project Grants

- PIs: **Drs Teresa Liu-Ambrose & Linda Li**
Project title: Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain: Aerobic Exercise to Promote Brain Health in Perimenopause
- PI: **Dr Brodie Sakakibara**
Project title: Exploring the 1-year Natural History of chronic disease self-management and health resource utilization after stroke: The ENHANCE Study
- PI: **Dr David Wilson**
Project title: Biomechanical and imaging assessments of hip microinstability

CIHR Spring Priority Announcement Grants

- PI: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**
Award of Excellence in Research in Aging
Project title: Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain: Aerobic Exercise to Promote Brain Health in Perimenopause

CIHR-IMHA Inclusive Research Excellence Prizes

- PIs: **Drs Clare Ardern & Alex Haagaard** - Patient Engagement
Project title: Patients as co-leaders of digital health research to support quality digital healthcare policy for underserved communities
- PI: **Dr Clare Ardern** - Team Science
Project title: Defining essential digital health for underserved communities in Canada
- PI: **Dr Jennifer Davis** - Research Impact
Project title: Otago Exercise Programme - A Cost-Effective Strategy for Secondary Falls Prevention Among Community-Dwelling Older Adults



CIHR HIGHLIGHTS

CIHR Fall 2025 Project Grants

- PI: **Dr Kristin Campbell**
Project title: Does tailored referral support increase the reach of the Breast Cancer Endocrine Fitness (BE-FIT) program
- PI: **Dr Heather McKay**
Project title: Alleviating waitlist woes: Implementing and evaluating a health-promoting program for people awaiting hip and knee replacement surgery for osteoarthritis

CIHR Fall Priority Announcement Grants: Female Athlete Health

- PI: **Dr Michael Hunt**
Project title: Cartilage, biomechanical, and clinical responses to a start to run program in masters aged individuals: Implications for long-term knee joint health
- PI: **Dr Lyndia Wu**
Project Title: Sex-specific biomechanical thresholds and cumulative risk models for sports-related brain injury

CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarships

- **Janna Griffioen**. Supervisor: **Dr Julia Schmidt**. Project title: Peers Actively Involved in Rehabilitation for people with Traumatic Brain Injury (PAIR TBI): A Randomized Control Trial. Doctoral Award & Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements
- **Naomi Jung**. Supervisor: **Dr Michael Cox**. Project title: Characterization of the Lacunocanalicular Network in Prostate Cancer Bone Metastasis. Master's Award. Project title: Characterizing the three-dimensional architecture of the tumor microenvironment in prostate cancer bone metastasis. Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements
- **Anjana Rajendran**. Supervisor: **Dr Lara Boyd**. Project title: Synergy through stimulation: Optimizing stroke rehabilitation through neurophysiology. Doctoral Award

CIHR Fellowship

- **Cassandra D'Amore**. Supervisor: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**. Project title: Exploring 24-Hour Movement Patterns and Cognitive Reserve: An analysis of the Healthy Brains, Healthy Aging CLSA Sub-Study



TRAINEE AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

Michael Smith Health Research BC 2025 Trainee Award Recipients

- **Dr Jordan Broberg**. Supervisor: **Dr David Wilson**. Project title: Effect of Lateral Meniscus Posterior Root Tears and Repairs on the Mechanics of the Loaded Knee
- **Dr Talia Salzman**. Supervisor: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**. Project title: ACTIVE: Adding Life to Years in Cognitive Frailty by Preventing Falls and Promoting Cognitive Function
- **Dr Linda Truong**. Supervisor: **Dr Clare Arden**. Project title: Pushing musculoskeletal primary care to new frontiers: Musculoskeletal Comprehensive Assessment and Response in Emergency (MSK CARE) clinic in the Fraser Health Authority
- **Dr Jade Witten**. Supervisor: **Dr Julia Schmidt**. Project title: The Implementation and Effectiveness of a Peer Support Program for People Living with Brain Injury in BC

Killam Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

- **Vishak Nandan Aathresh**. Supervisor: **Dr Calvin Kuo**

UBC SBME Trainee Research Awards

- **Lily Fishman**. Supervisors: **Drs David Wilson & Jackie Whittaker**
- **Loay Al-Salehi**. Supervisor: **Dr Peter Crompton**
- **Doris Liang**. Supervisors: **Drs Rizhi Wang & Pierre Guy**

3-Minute Thesis Awards 2025

- **Lily Ren**. Supervisor: **Dr Lillian Hung**. VCHRI Research Summit People's Choice
- **Katie Chen**. Supervisor: **Dr Tony Hodgson**. VCHRI Research Summit Second Place
- **Mona Behrouzian**. Supervisor: **Dr Calvin Kuo**. UBC 3MT First Place; Top Honour 3MT Western Regionals

UBC Four-Year Fellowship

- **Karen Davis**. Supervisor: **Dr Courtney Pollock**
- **Vrinda Dimri**. Supervisor: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**
- **Alvin Kimbowa**. Supervisor: **Dr Ilker Hacıhaliloglu**
- **Christopher Lamb**. Supervisor: **Dr Lara Boyd**
- **Yasamin Medghalchi**. Supervisor: **Dr Ilker Hacıhaliloglu**

Canadian Training Awards

- **Ryan Stein**. Supervisor: **Dr Teresa Liu-Ambrose**. Doctoral Personnel Award for Women's Heart & Brain Health from Heart & Stroke Foundation and the CAN-TAP-TALENT Doctoral Studentship
- **Alvin Kimbowa**. Supervisor: **Dr Ilker Hacıhaliloglu**. Doctoral Michael Smith Health Research BC and the CANTRAIN-CTTP Doctoral Studentship



RESEARCH IN ACTION

Building Consensus on Brain Injury, Mental Health and Addictions in Haida Gwaii

BC Consensus on Brain Injury

Dr Julia Schmidt

The mandate of the BC Consensus project is to gather, in a good faith effort, the perspectives, ideas, and values of healthcare providers, community interest holders, and individuals/families including Indigenous groups and marginalized groups with lived experience of the intersections of brain injury, mental health, and addictions.

“We were honoured when The Haida Gwaii Society for Community Peace invited us to bring Consensus Building Day to their lands”, says Cole Kennedy, PhD Graduate Student Research Lead for the initiative.

People with lived experience from the Haida Nation, UVic and UBC researchers, social workers, health care providers, and Elders met in in Masset on April 9 and 10, 2025 for knowledge sharing and knowledge co-production. The discussions and surveys are reflected in the final report of the BC Consensus on Brain Injury.

“We had the opportunity to share our unique concerns of being a rural and Indigenous community,” says Kym Edinborough-Capuska, Director, Haida Gwaii Society for Community Peace.

One of the key findings of the three-year BC Consensus relates to the negative impact of stigma within health and social systems. This issue was underscored in Haida Gwaii.

Haida Elder Sphenia Jones, a survivor of residential school and intimate partner violence related brain injury, lent her voice to the need for programs to prevent abuse in her community. “The only way we can all heal is by sharing what happened to us in our lives”, she says.

“We heard many stories of hardship and resiliency,” says Dr. Julia Schmidt, Co-Investigator, BC Consensus on Brain Injury. “We appreciate building relationships and sharing knowledge, and the opportunity to explore the beauty in the land and within the people,” says Dr. Schmidt.

Learn more about the project at bcconsensusonbraininjury.com





THANK YOU TO THE FACULTY, STAFF,
VOLUNTEERS, TRAINEES, AND OUR
MANY CLINICAL AND COMMUNITY
PARTNERS FOR THEIR
CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH
EXCELLENCE AT THE CENTRE FOR
AGING SMART



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Research Institute



Centre for Aging SMART at VCH
Robert H. N. Ho Research Centre
7/f-2635 Laurel Street
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9
aging.smart@ubc.ca
www.agingsmart.ca