

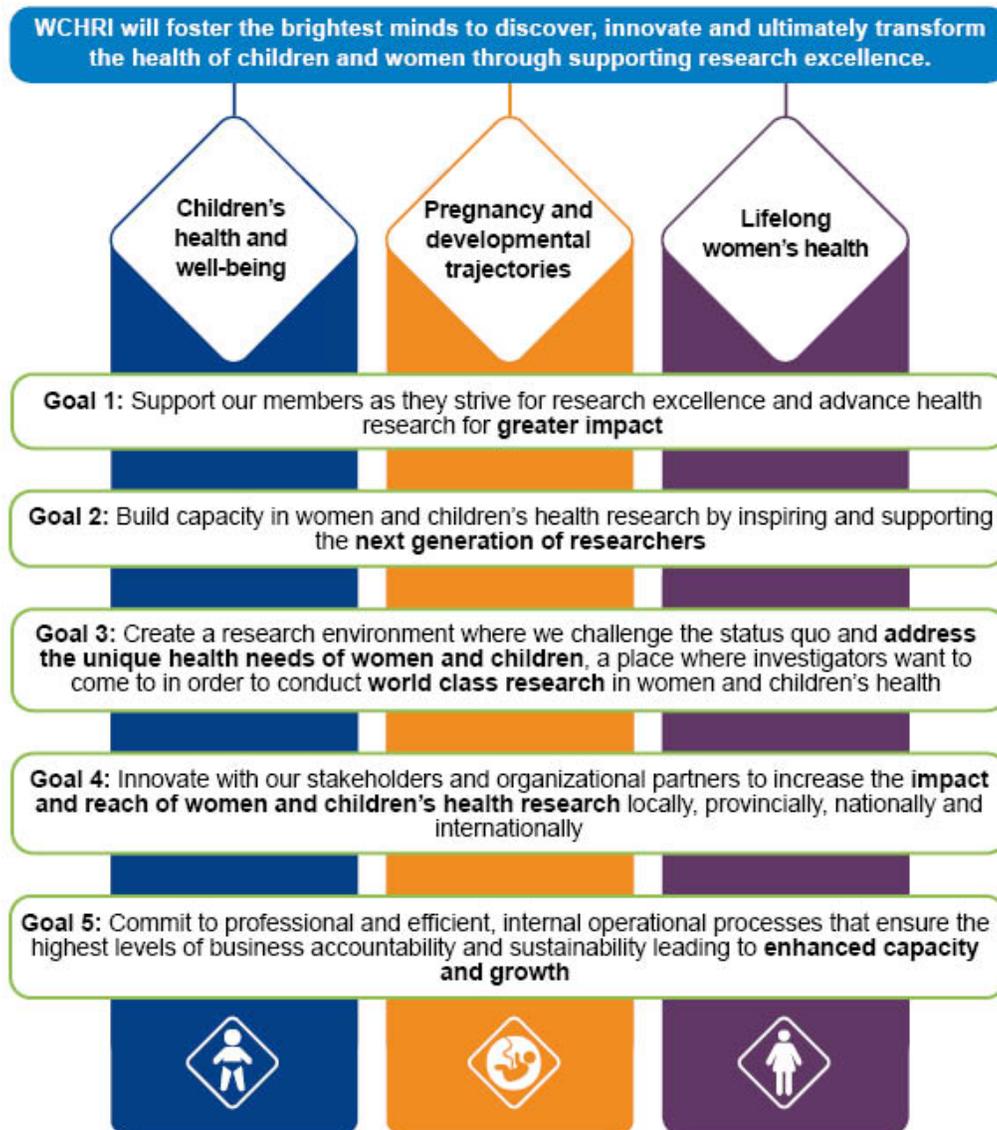
Executive Director Progress Report

Presented to: Oversight Board

Date: December 10, 2020

Reporting Period: September to November 2020

Strategic Plan Overview



Goal 1: Our academic members

Support our members as they strive for research excellence and advance health research for **greater impact**

- **Objective 1.1** Promote research leadership and collaborations in theme areas
- **Objective 1.2** Support our members to advance their research in our changing environment
- **Objective 1.3** Recruit and retain research excellence

Progress

Stollery Science Lab Distinguished Researchers

- Kate Storey presented to the SCHF Board on September 8.
- On September 22, Shannon Scott and Lisa Hartling conducted a virtual lab tour for SCHF staff and donors.
- On October 8, Michael Hawkes' research through the Stollery Science Lab was featured in [this Mighty Millions Lottery video](#).

Grant programs

CRISP competition closed September 3 with 12 eligible applications. [Six applications were awarded](#), with five funded by SCHF and one funded by RAHF. Full details are attached.

Recruitment

- Dr. Cheng-Han Lee was the successful candidate for the Sawin-Baldwin endowed chair in Ovarian Cancer. We are anticipating his move to Edmonton in spring 2021.
- Recruitment of assistant professor in Department of Psychiatry with focus on child and adolescent mental health remains in progress; we anticipate shortlisted candidate(s) will be interviewed before the winter break. Sandy Davidge is on the search and selection committee.

Recent WCHRI member award

Georg Schmolzer, associate professor in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, was awarded the University of Alberta Martha Cook Piper Research Prize. His research focus lies in understanding basic respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological changes in the fetal to neonatal transition and improving diagnoses, mitigating risk and improving survival and quality of life for newborns. The annual award recognizes two faculty members in the early stage of their careers who enjoy a reputation for original research and show outstanding promise as researchers.

Goal 2: Our in-training members

Build capacity in women and children's health research by inspiring and supporting the **next generation of researchers**

- **Objective 2.1** Attract the best trainees and support their research training

Progress

Trainee grant programs

Our 2020 Summer Studentship profiles [have been released](#).

Trainee Advisory Committee (TAC)

TAC launched a mentorship program for WCHRI graduate students. The program aims to provide WCHRI trainees with a career-focused mentorship opportunity where they are matched with a mentor outside their current lab and/or discipline. Mentors include academics from across WCHRI theme areas, postdoctoral fellows and PhDs who have chosen alternate career pathways (e.g research associates, lab managers, health system employees, etc.). We had 14 mentees sign up for the program and all were matched to a mentor. The program will run until May 2021.

Research Day

On November 4 we hosted our 13th annual Research Day. The day was an outstanding success and we are incredibly proud of each participant who contributed in making this day an unmatched event for our trainee and academic members, partners and stakeholders. This year we adapted our annual Research Day to provide interactive presentations and networking opportunities, supported through a virtual event platform. More than 350 researchers, students and stakeholders actively participated. A full summary of the day is attached.

Learning Sessions

In September, we re-launched our "lunch and learn" seminars as online "learning sessions". We are coordinating several sessions with the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute (ACHRI) and the Canadian Child Health Clinician Scientist Program (CCHCSP). During the reporting period, we offered five learning sessions:

- Cocktail Pitch (how to introduce yourself to professional connections in a compelling way)
- Leveraging birth cohorts: The APrON study, 10 years in (how to access and use data from APrON cohort)
- Burnout: The Outcome of Professional Contagions (how to manage stress and enhance your professional wellbeing)
- How to prepare your 3MT style presentation for WCHRI research day
- Navigating budget (how to develop a research project budget)

Goal 3: Our environment

Create a research environment where we challenge the status quo and address the unique health needs of women and children, a place where investigators want to come to in order to conduct world class research in women and children's health.

- **Objective 3.1** Position WCHRI as a national / international leader in women and children's health research; an institute that supports fundamental / preclinical research through clinical to population health focused on the unique health needs of women and children.
- **Objective 3.2** Position WCHRI as a national leader in interventional research in order to ensure safe and effective treatments for children and women; and to provide patients at our partner hospitals access to novel therapies.

Progress

LHH Women's Research Centre

In order to support the expansion of WCHRI clinical research support model to LHHW, we recruited two new staff positions:

- Maya Henriquez was hired as a clinical research coordinator – her role supports specimen collection (e.g. placentas and other biosamples) for perinatal researchers and patient recruitment for clinical studies.
- Laura Reyes Martinez, was hired as the clinical research lead for women's health – her role is to help catalyze women's health research at LHHW. Some initial areas of priority for Laura include:
 - optimizing use of the research centre
 - promoting studies that happening at the site
 - supporting clinical research/trials tied to the main LHHW clinics and surgical areas - such as urogyne, HBOC, menopause, MFM, gyne-onc
 - community outreach/collaboration to support engagement with/recruitment pregnant women
 - oversight and development of sample collection/management strategies

These positions will be on-site at LHHW (when permitted) and are working closely with the existing research nurse and leadership team at LHHW.

Pediatric Clinical Trials Unit

WCHRI's pediatric clinical trials team are back in the clinics seeing patients enrolled in a variety of trials and supporting other trials for which patients receive care at home. The team is primarily working from home unless they need to prep for a patient visit or see a patient, due to pandemic restrictions. We are supporting 97 studies, 53 clinical trials and 37 cohort studies.

Data Coordinating Centre

WCHRI's data coordinating centre (DCC) participated in two Health Canada inspections this year. The inspections were looking at study sponsor responsibilities (such as pharmacovigilance, standard operating procedures, regulatory document management, study oversight, etc.), but also included an inspection of electronic systems, including the REDCap system managed by WCHRI. The inspection did not result in any significant findings, which validates our use of this system for academic Health Canada regulated clinical trials.

Knowledge Translation (KT) Spotlight:
Structured peer crisis intervention stress management for NICU health care providers to improve NICU resilience and patient safety

Health care providers in neonatal intensive care units (NICU) experience daily critical or distressing events in their work. They often witness deaths of newborns and share the grief of their parents. If left overlooked, these experiences can cause significant stress and burnout among the clinical staff, and affect patient care.

Recognizing the importance for staff support, Chloe Joynt, neonatal-perinatal specialist, and her team addressed the issue in the study, "*Structured peer crisis intervention stress management for NICU health care providers to improve NICU resilience and patient safety*"; supported by WCHRI CRISP funding. The study demonstrated that the implementation of a multidisciplinary, peer selected, formally-trained team of coworkers, named the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team, improved NICU care providers resilience, stress recognition and team culture, all of which can alleviate the effects of stressful daily experiences. The SCHF provided additional funding to sustain and expand the CISM support program across multiple hospital units (NICU, PICU, PCICU, Oncology) within the Stollery Hospital.

Goal 4: Our ecosystem

Innovate with our stakeholders and organizational partners to increase the **impact and reach of women and children's health research** locally, provincially, nationally and internationally

- **Objective 4.1** Improve health outcomes for children and women and increase dissemination and implementation of high quality health research evidence by supporting stakeholder* engaged research and research that is embedded at the point of care.
- **Objective 4.2** Ensure research strategies are aligned with and adaptive to our ecosystem

Progress

CRISP Community Review Panel

For the third year in a row, we engaged a community review panel as part of the Clinical/Community Research Integration and Support Program (CRISP) grant. The community review panel participates in the CRISP reviewing process and provides feedback on CRISP grant applications, specifically, the quality of stakeholder engagement and knowledge translation.

Scientific Advisory Committee

Our current SAC members' first terms are ending in 2021. In preparation, we worked with WCHRI's Program Advisory Committee to update our member renewal process and shortlisting new members.

National initiatives and partnerships

Partnership for Women's Health Research – Canada (PWHR-Canada) developed a draft vision – “catalyze high quality, high impact research and innovation that improves the lives of all women” – and draft mission – “support and leverage new knowledge to improve women's health across the lifespan by transforming practice and policy”. A working group is investigating and analyzing pan-Canadian trainee opportunities, with a focus on developing joint core training in women's health research.

In response to the UNICEF 2020 report card (where Canada ranked 30th of 38 wealthy countries with respect to measures of children's mental and physical health, education and social well-being), #WeCANforKids was launched. This initiative is a partnership between Children's Health Care Canada, CIHR Institute of Human Development, Pediatric Chairs of Canada and UNICEF. #WeCANforKids is facilitating a series of conversations between October 2020 and March 2021 to co-design a framework to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and families in Canada. WCHRI members were asked to engage in the process and we are engaging at an organizational level through MICYRN.

Precision health strategy

We are working on a strategy for precision health focused around three priority areas that interweave with the FoMD research themes and priorities. We selected priority areas that align well with the research interests and strengths of our members, leverage existing WCHRI programs/ infrastructure and align with our funder priorities: 1) Translational Genomics Hub, 2) undiagnosed disease program - precision health research at the point of care, and 3) WCHRI precision health research seminar series.

Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit Partnership

In October we partnered with the Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit (AbSPORU), Phase 2. In Phase 2, they will be re-organizing provincial research support platforms into four service areas focused on 1) data, 2) patient engagement, 3) capacity building, and 4) advancing a learning health system. We aim to leverage current WCHRI services, funding and training programs in partnership with the AbSPORU to create a more cohesive and integrated provincial model of support for women and children's health researchers. Through this new partnership with AbSPORU we can further highlight Foundation investments research platforms and patient oriented research.

Goal 5: Sustainability and growth

Commit to professional and efficient, internal operational processes that ensure the highest levels of business accountability and sustainability leading to **enhanced capacity and growth**

- **Objective 5.1** Prioritize operational and leadership succession planning; optimize internal business processes in order to continuously the quality and accessibility of programs/platforms.
- **Objective 5.2** Be accountable and responsive to our funding partners needs

Progress

Leadership and governance

We recently restructured to reflect the evolution and growth of the Research Grants area. Michelle Bailleux (an 11 year employee with WCHRI) was promoted to Research Grants Director. In this new role, Michelle will be responsible for managing the daily operations of the WCHRI grants office, including recommendations for program modifications, development and implementation of policies and procedures, grant review committee management, budget analysis and funding recommendations, and research grants reporting and assessment.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion planning

We initiated EDI planning in October with a management team meeting where we reflected on why we want to engage in EDI, discussed the notion of radical inclusion, reviewed key elements from the UAlberta EDI plan, and discussed how we can implement these elements within the context of WCHRI. Some of the next steps involve a review of our values and “about us” statements to incorporate EDI principals and language; we are also engaging with the VP Indigenous Programming and Research at UAlberta to explore training and capacity building opportunities.

Membership database update

To address part of Objective 5.1 of our strategic plan, to optimize internal business processes, we are working to update our membership database and processes. The project team is currently working on assessing the process for accepting new members going forward, and how to ensure our information on existing members stays accurate.

Stewardship activities

- We published a spotlight on [Padma Kaul](#) that highlighted her SCHF and LHHW funded research.
- We recruited 12 ambassadors for the Alberta Women’s Hospital Foundation and pulled relevant content on WCHRI researchers and ambassadors for its website.
- On September 19 we celebrated the RAHF by virtually attending and donating to Harvest Celebration 2020.
- The WCHRI Warriors team participated in the Shoppers Love.You Run for Women on September 20.
- There were nine media mentions that showcased WCHRI/SCHF support and three that showcased WCHRI/RAHF support.