



TACKLING PAIN AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

CHALLENGE

One in five Canadians suffer daily from moderate to severe chronic pain from a range of causes, including back pain, trauma, stroke, diabetes and other conditions and injuries. Its effect on individuals and their families is devastating with countless experiencing high levels of distress and disability. Many are poorly served by current treatments and the over-reliance on opioid medications has led to a growing national crisis. Direct healthcare costs for chronic pain in Canada are estimated to be more than \$6 billion per year, while lost productivity is estimated to cost our economy an additional \$37 billion per year. Despite the advancements in medical science, considerable gaps in knowledge remain, with chronic pain present in epidemic proportions in most countries.



SOLUTIONS

With over 140 years of experience in physical rehabilitation, Toronto Rehab understands better than most the impact of pain. Home to one of Canada's leading Chronic Pain Programs, Toronto Rehab is pioneering new treatments and paradigms of care to advance access and improve overall life outcomes for patients suffering with this condition. Its Comprehensive Integrated Pain Program (CIPP) is led by experts delivering innovative solutions to build capacity, knowledge and care in the treatment of pain, including:

- **Canadian Opioid Guidelines:** Opioid related deaths are more prevalent in Canada today than 10 years ago. Although the drivers of this public health crisis are complex, it is suggested that unsafe prescribing of opioids to patients with pain has contributed to the problem. Dr. Andrea Furlan, Medical Lead of the Toronto Rehab Pain Program, co-led the development of the Canadian Opioid Guidelines and pioneered the creation of Opioid Manager (for physicians) and My Opioid Manager (for patients) as references for those considering opioids to manage chronic pain.
- **Project ECHO:** A highly successful and first-in-Canada telemedicine program that trains physicians in the management of chronic pain, Toronto Rehab also leads Project ECHO (Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes). This innovative model aims to develop regional experts across Ontario in pain management thereby empowering communities to safely and effectively treat patients. Dr. John Flannery, Medical Director of Toronto Rehab's MSK & Multi-System Rehab Program and Co-Director of UHN's Comprehensive Integrated Pain Program, led Project ECHO in training physicians at 65 sites in remote regions across Ontario in 2016.
- **Myofascial Pain Syndrome (MPS):** One of the most debilitating chronic pain disorders, MPS diagnosis has traditionally relied primarily on physical examination. New evidence suggests that this is unreliable with risk of under-treating patients with more acute conditions. And currently there is no existing specialty in muscle medicine, leaving a gap in effective pain management. Dr. Dinesh Kumbhare, Physiatrist & Affiliate Scientist at Toronto Rehab, is investigating the use of ultrasound and other innovative methods to image uncharted muscle pain for more accurate diagnosis and development of customized treatments.

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With donors and our partners, Toronto Rehab will be well-equipped to tackle the growing health challenge of pain management and opioid use. To embrace the opportunity to empower healthcare practitioners and scientists with the ability to safely and effectively treat pain, the following priorities were identified to build capacity, including:

- **Pain College:** To bridge major gaps in the understanding of pain, this virtual institute will educate individuals and health professionals about what pain is and how to describe it, self-management and therapy options to treat pain, and lifestyle strategies to promote healthy living and pain prevention. The accessible curriculum of modules will be available in print and online via guidebooks and e-learning modules, and include videos and expert forums.
- **Chronic Pain Clinical and Research Fellowship Program:** To train postdoctoral scholars who will support current clinical demands and create a new generation of specialists in chronic pain management. The Fellow will measure results and work alongside Toronto Rehab scientists as they pioneer new treatments and care paradigms; establishing a pathway to recovery for chronic pain.
- **Myofascial Pain Syndrome (MPS) Research:** To advance Toronto Rehab's work in assessing muscle characteristics to provide objective, reliable evaluation to the clinician at the point of care. While reducing pain and suffering and getting patients back to work, school and their communities, this research will minimize the misdiagnosis of chronic pain conditions such as fibromyalgia and explain the transition from acute to chronic pain.
- **Chronic Pain Research Innovation Fund:** To propel new discovery and expand Toronto Rehab's Comprehensive Integrated Pain Program leadership, this innovation fund will advance new interventions and system-wide changes to stem the opioid crisis. Areas of research include: the use of cannabinoids for pain management, application of new treatments technologies such as GAME READY to accelerate recovery and reduce reliance on pain medication, studying the impact of opioids and other drugs on driving in our iDAPT DriverLab, and developing techniques and protocols for de-prescribing opioids.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Pain College - \$1 million
- Chronic Pain Clinical and Research Fellowship Program - \$1 million
- Myofascial Pain Syndrome (MPS) Research - \$500,000
- Chronic Pain Research Innovation Fund - \$3 million

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