



## **MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE**

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**TO: Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit**

**DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa**

**FROM: Dr. Vera Etches,  
Medical Officer of Health,  
Ottawa Public Health**

**Robin Taylor, Associate Medical  
Officer of Health  
613-580-2424 ext. 23684  
robin.taylor1@ottawa.ca**

**EXPÉDITEUR : D<sup>re</sup> Vera Etches,  
Médecin chef en santé publique,  
Santé publique Ottawa**

**Personne ressource :  
Robin Taylor, Médecin adjointe en  
santé publique  
613-580-2424 poste 23684  
robin.taylor1@ottawa.ca**

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**SUBJECT: Ottawa Public Health Research Projects: 2018 to 2022**

**OBJET : Projets de recherche de Santé publique Ottawa : 2018 à 2022**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memo is to update the Ottawa Board of Health on research projects with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) involvement from 2018 to 2022.

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the last five years, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) participated in 36 research projects. These studies aimed to improve the health and well-being of Ottawa residents, address social and structural inequities in health, and make positive impacts in our community. We also built strong relationships with investigators who draw on lived

experience, build capacity for equity-denied groups, and apply principles such as community participation and cultural safety in their work. While a complete list of all projects can be found in Document 1 and on the [OPH Research website](#), this report specifically focuses on highlighting several studies as illustrative examples. Featured studies include: wastewater surveillance enhancement; climate change-driven expansion in tick-borne illness; improving health care and outcomes for racialized communities with respect to COVID-19; strategies to support older adults during extreme heat events; and an investigation into how sociodemographic data can be used to improve health care programs and services for equity-denied groups.

OPH ensures that participation in research supports our mission, vision, and commitments. OPH uses data generated from research to inform local public health programs and services, ensuring that our strategies are guided by high-quality evidence and best practices. This approach is part of evidence-informed decision-making, which is described by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) as a “process of distilling and disseminating the best available evidence from research, context and experience, and using that evidence to inform and improve public health practice and policy<sup>1</sup>.” The Ontario Public Health Standards, which provide the framework for all work in public health, highlight the importance of both evidence-informed decision-making and local public health research<sup>2</sup>.”

Both OPH’s [2019-2022 Strategy](#) and the [2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#) reference the importance of OPH’s work being evidence-informed. As 2018 was the last time OPH reported on research activities to the Board of Health, this memo profiles our continued commitment to evidence-informed practice through applied public health research from 2018 to 2022.

## **DISCUSSION**

While many of the projects supported by OPH over the past five years could be highlighted for their contributions to public health knowledge, the five studies below have been selected as illustrative examples.

### **1. Wastewater Surveillance Enhancement**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, wastewater surveillance proved to be useful in several ways: as an indicator of SARS-CoV-2 community transmission; a way to track new variants; and a method for confirming the trends from COVID-19 testing in Ottawa. Many people in Ottawa who were infected with COVID-19 did not get tested. They did,

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<sup>1</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. Available at: <http://www.nccmt.ca/about/eiph>

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability. June 21; Available at: [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph\\_standards/docs/protocols\\_guidelines/Ontario\\_Public\\_Health\\_Standards\\_2021.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Ontario_Public_Health_Standards_2021.pdf)

however, contribute to Ottawa's wastewater. This type of monitoring is one part of a multi-faceted surveillance system. Each component of the surveillance system is weighed against the others to give the most complete overall picture. Expansion of this system to observe other pathogens circulating in the Ottawa area will enhance public health preparedness.

OPH endorsed a successful Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Alliance grant application, as a partner organization, to build wastewater surveillance for influenza, RSV, and mpox. Alliance grants encourage university researchers to collaborate with partner organizations from the private, public, or not-for-profit sectors. Other partners in this initiative include the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, as well as public health units (PHUs) that have participated in the Ottawa wastewater work done by the University of Ottawa.

OPH benefits from this partnership in several ways. As an adjunct to clinical information, wastewater analysis has proven to be invaluable for event detection (rising rates of COVID-19), situational awareness, and variant detection in Ottawa. It integrates well with knowledge exchange and public communication as an easy-to-understand measure of COVID-19 activity in the community. Adding new agents to the system provides OPH with invaluable information to assist with early detection and situational awareness, which would otherwise be subject to testing practices and availability.

## **2. Best Practices for Urban Planning in the Context of Climate Change and Emerging Tick-Borne Diseases**

Populations in Canada, including those living in major cities and suburban regions, are at increasing risk of tick-borne diseases. Climate change-accelerated range expansion of ticks and tick-borne pathogens, population growth, and urban expansion increase the risk of Ottawa residents encountering ticks in their environment.

This 2022 project, led by the University of Ottawa, represents the second phase of the successful 2016 study, "UPTick," in which the project team continues to characterize and monitor changes in tick populations and tick-borne disease risk in the context of urban development.

The main goals of this study are to extend the tick and small mammal surveillance activities conducted in three of the original four study neighbourhoods from phase one of the project (Carp, Kanata North, and Stonehaven) for three additional years (2023 to 2025), as well as to include two new sites: Orléans and Findlay Creek. The research team will also execute a community survey in 2024 to collect data on risk factors for human-tick contact, and further refine the geographic analysis of risk areas within neighbourhoods to identify landscape features and other socioecological factors driving tick-borne disease transmission.

This ongoing collaborative effort between OPH and the University of Ottawa has been instrumental in providing local risk information to residents and health care providers in Ottawa. As newer tick-borne risks continue to expand into our area, this project provides an important opportunity to grow OPH's knowledge base. OPH relies on tick testing and geographical information from this research to update our positive tick risk level. The findings from this project will inform community-based strategies to reduce the risks posed by emerging tick-borne diseases.

### **3. Strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on African, Caribbean, and Black communities in Ontario**

Members of marginalized and racialized communities in Canada commonly experience inequities in relation to health outcomes and healthcare services. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities were disproportionately affected and experienced additional barriers to healthcare access when compared with members of non-racialized communities. As the pandemic continues, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of healthcare systems and allow ACB populations to receive adequate care. Actions towards addressing health inequities will also help to develop resilience and build capacity in the post-pandemic future.

The 2020 study, *the COVID-19 ACB Providers Project*, identified the need to reduce stigma and paternalism among health professionals working with ACB communities. Evidence generated from this research formed the foundation for the 2021 project, *Strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on African, Caribbean, and Black communities in Ontario*, which aims to develop solutions to structural inequities, including systemic racism, that continue to hamper the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from this study specifically called for the development and implementation of courses on racial competence to facilitate capacity building for health professionals working with ACB populations. This call to action and the resulting snowball effect will provide healthcare professionals with tools to better care for the often-marginalized ACB population in Ottawa and throughout Ontario. This study will produce evidence-based educational health interventions in the form of webinars to reduce COVID-19 risk and burden in ACB communities. It will also determine the reach and effectiveness of online capacity building interventions, such as webinars, for healthcare professionals.

OPH saw value in partnering in these studies for several reasons. First, improving evidence-based communication among health stakeholder groups (e.g., health planners, health professionals, and ACB communities) will improve local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce COVID-19-related health inequities. Second, the results from these studies could influence health care professionals working with ACB populations at a local, provincial, and federal level. Finally, OPH will benefit by having

immediate access to webinars that can be used to inform ourselves, as well as distribute to our partners as part of our Physician Engagement portfolio.

#### **4. Evaluating the effectiveness of commonly recommended heat mitigation strategies for limiting heat strain in elderly adults during extreme heat events.**

Another example of how public health research can improve public health practice and outcomes for priority populations is the 2022 project, *Evaluating the effectiveness of commonly recommended heat mitigation strategies for limiting heat strain in elderly adults during extreme heat events*. It is estimated that because of climate change, by 2050, average summer temperatures for major Canadian cities will reach or exceed 30°C, with increased humidity. Extreme heat causes some of the highest death tolls among all natural weather hazards, and dramatically increases short-term mortality in older adults. Older adults are especially vulnerable to heat because of a reduced physiological capacity to dissipate it, potentially leading to dangerous increases in body core temperature during Extreme Heat Events (EHE).

While the negative health impacts of heat are predictable, there is limited evidence on the best heat mitigation strategies to protect older adults' health during EHEs. Municipal, provincial, national, and international health agencies advocate for the use of cooling centers and electric fans; however, there remains a lack of knowledge supporting their effectiveness in safeguarding health. This study's primary objective is to assess the efficacy of two highly recommended heat mitigation strategies: visiting cooling centres for a few hours, and electric fan use. Researchers will be evaluating the physiological responses of older adults during a daylong exposure to extreme heat representative of recent temperature extremes, with and without the use of a cooling room for two hours and the continuous use of standard pedestal and ceiling fans. Physiological responses will be assessed during the daylong exposure, with researchers collecting data on body temperatures, local and whole-body heat loss, cardiovascular responses, blood biomarkers to assess fluid balance and the heat stress response, and thermal comfort.

Research outputs (e.g., data, infographics, etc.) generated as part of this project will be made available to OPH and will facilitate the development of messaging, guidance, and other interventions related to heat mitigation that can be tailored to meet the needs of older adults. This study's findings will be used to support healthy environments for older adults in Ottawa's municipal and other long-term care facilities and retirement homes, thereby reducing heat-related illnesses and deaths in this group.

#### **5. Lessons learned from the collection of sociodemographic data during the COVID-19 pandemic**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health units (PHUs) expanded the collection of sociodemographic data (SDD) as part of COVID-19 case management and COVID-19

vaccination efforts. Collection of SDD can inform PHUs about who is utilizing their services and can help to identify and quantify inequities in health. Health inequities illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic have amplified public and community stakeholders' expectations for health data reporting, including the collection and reporting of SDD elements, and of the immediate need to scale-up this work.

In 2022, OPH partnered with researchers from Peel Public Health and the Upstream Lab for a special purpose Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) through the Public Health Ontario (PHO) program. This project focused on the consequences of COVID-19, and formally collected, collated, and synthesized experiences from the perspective of PHU staff regarding practices that enhanced SDD completeness during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHUs employed innovative strategies to reduce barriers to SDD collection and increase both practitioner and client comfort. Barriers and enablers need to be more formally understood, documented, and shared so that mechanisms can be developed to support SDD collection as part of public health practice going forward.

## **CONCLUSION**

The studies described above, as well as those listed on the [OPH Research website](#) and attached as Document 1 for convenience, represent OPH's commitment to understanding and influencing the factors that determine population health.

Research projects often take more than one year to complete and then months or years to enter the literature through peer-reviewed publication. Journal publications authored by OPH represent research that informs our public health practice and allows us to modify programs and services to better meet the needs of Ottawa residents.

To promote OPH's vision, mission, commitments, and strategic goals, OPH will continue to engage in applied public health research with a health equity lens. We will continue to form partnerships with investigators who mirror OPH's commitments, advance population health, and promote health equity.

Dr./ Dre Vera Etches  
Medical Officer of Health/ Médecin chef en santé publique  
Ottawa Public Health/ Santé publique Ottawa

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: Research Projects Approved for OPH Participation: 2018 – 2022

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### I. Research Projects: 2022

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#### **#022-22 – COVID-19 in the Urban Built Environment (CUBE): Evaluating the Use of SARS CoV-2 Environmental Swabs for the Detection and Surveillance of COVID-19 in School and Childcare Settings**

Led by the University of Ottawa, OPH's Health Hazard Response team committed to being a knowledge user for this project. This study aims to validate viral detections of COVID-19 from floors within high-risk settings and study the utility of this approach for predicting and detecting COVID-19 cases and outbreaks.

#### **#023-22 – Public Health Risk Assessment Tools for Emerging Vector-Borne Diseases 2.0. Best Practices for Urban Planning in the Context of Climate Change and Emerging Tick-Borne Diseases**

Led by the University of Ottawa and supported by OPH's Environmental Health team in the form of technical input, this study builds upon phase one of the successful 2016 project, "UPTick". This project aims to characterize and monitor changes in tick populations and tick-borne disease risk in the context of urban development in order to inform community-based strategies for reducing tick-related risks to human health. A funding application has been made to the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

#### **#024-22 – Cardiac Adverse Events Following COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine in Children and Youth: A Single Center Case Series**

Led by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and supported by OPH's Epidemiology team, this study aims to characterize and compare clinical presentations of children and youth diagnosed with myocarditis, pericarditis, or myopericarditis associated with mRNA COVID-19 vaccination. The expected outcome is the generation of data that will be used by public health officials when making decisions related to the pandemic and vaccination.

#### **#026-22 – The Safe High Study: Development of a Low-Threshold, Trauma-Informed Stimulant Safe Supply Program for People who are Homeless or Vulnerably Housed**

Led by the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and supported by OPH's Sexual Health and Harm Reduction Services team, this study aims to develop and test a safe supply

program for stimulant users. A funding application has been made to the Canadian Health Research Institute.

### **#027-22 - Using Behavioral Science Approaches to Optimize Public Health and Social Measures that Prevent COVID-19 Transmission and Infection in Priority Populations in Diverse Urban Settings**

Led by the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and supported by OPH's Community Engagement Team, this study aims to connect members of identified populations with the research team and in-kind support. The goals of the project are to identify the barriers and enablers for different populations when engaging in public health measures as they relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, and what behavioral science-informed strategies can be used to address those barriers/enablers to complement OPH's existing strategies.

### **#028-22 – Indoor Temperature Study: Internet of Things – Data for Heat Alert Response Systems**

Led by the University of Waterloo, this study was supported by OPH's Health Hazard Response team through high-level guidance and the advertisement of our already existing resources to research participants on how to combat excessive heat. The study collected data on indoor heat during the summer months to develop a framework with recommendations for heat-health warning systems, considering both indoor and outdoor heat.

### **#029-22 – Understanding Modelling, Simulation, Visualization and Mapping Gaps in Public Health Emergency Operations Centers during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Part of a much larger conglomerate of research projects to move forward on public health objectives in Canada, this study was led by York University and supported by OPH's COVID-19 response and Epidemiology teams. OPH was asked to respond to a survey analyzing its emergency operations capabilities. The aim is to understand gaps in the use of modelling, computer simulations, and mapping in the emergency response operations of public health agencies across Canada.

### **#031-22 - Validating gonorrhea and chlamydia self-swabs for out-patient use**

Led by the University of Ottawa and supported by the OPH Sexual Health and Harm Reduction Services Team, this project is a validation study of extragenital testing for gonorrhea and chlamydia in the out-patient setting. Clients of the OPH Sexual Health Clinic will be asked if they would perform at-home swabs for gonorrhea and chlamydia before their visit to the clinic. These same swabs will then be repeated at the OPH



Sexual Health Clinic. All swabs will be sent to the Public Health Ontario Laboratory for processing. The researchers will analyze concordance between positive results and negative results to determine non-inferiority.

### **#032-22 - Wastewater Surveillance Enhancement**

Ottawa Public Health was asked to support a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Alliance grant application as a partner organization. The purpose of the project is to build wastewater surveillance for influenza, RSV, and mpox, and potentially others. Other public health units who have participated in the Ottawa wastewater work done by the University of Ottawa will also be solicited for participation.

### **#034-22 - Lessons learned from the collection of sociodemographic data during the COVID-19 pandemic**

OPH partnered with researchers from Peel Public Health (lead public health unit) and the Upstream Lab for a Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) through the Public Health Ontario (PHO) program. The program unites public health units (PHUs) with academic and community partners to research public health issues of shared interest. The researchers will review practices of sociodemographic data (SDD) collection across different PHUs, in order to document enablers and barriers that Ontario public health units' experienced when collecting SDD during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will facilitate the development of recommendations to improve and expand SDD collection and use beyond the scope of COVID-19-related activities. Collection of SDD informs PHUs about who is utilizing their services and helps to identify and quantify disparities in health.

### **#036-22 Public Health Organizational Capacity Study (PHORCAST) research project**

OPH acted a participant in PHORCAST, a repeat national survey that monitors organizational capacity for chronic disease prevention (CDP) and/or healthy lifestyle promotion in all 350 public health organizations across Canada. Data from the first two waves were collected in 2005 and 2010 and data collection from a third wave is underway. Since 2010, major initiatives have been undertaken in Canada to enrich and expand our public health system. Information collected will provide critical insight into these changes, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have had profound impact on organizational capacity for CDP in Canada. The data will continue to inform ongoing dialogue on national policy regarding the public health system in

Canada. PHORCAST is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.  
<https://www.celphie.ca/phorcast>

### **#039-22 - How can primary care provider tools improve collaboration between local public health and community family doctors in addressing the health and social inequities of the COVID-19 pandemic? A review of the literature and subsequent key informant interviews**

A collaboration between the University of Ottawa and OPH's Public Health Medicine Unit, this project aims to undergo a review of the literature and conduct key stakeholder interviews of leaders, practitioners, and system-level thinkers in primary care and public health. The study will examine what specific tools or strategies have demonstrated or shown promise to improve collaboration between public health and community primary care providers in the Ottawa region in addressing the health and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on marginalized populations.

## **II. Research Projects: 2021**

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### **#009-21 – UNICEF Child & Youth Well-Being Survey!**

OPH acted as a participant in this UNICEF Child & Youth Well-Being Survey, a collaborative effort led by UNICEF Canada, and supported by the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative, and the University of Ottawa. The results from the survey will help members of the collaboration and its partners to identify local issues that need to be addressed, leading to new policies and improved services and supports for all children and youth in Ottawa and the surrounding areas. UNICEF Canada published the study: [Community Child and Youth Wellbeing Survey](#)

### **#012-21 – GetaKit: Online Testing in Ontario (COVID-19 expansion)**

Led by the University of Ottawa, funded by the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN), and supported by the OPH Sexual Health and Harm Reduction Services Team, this study aimed to expand upon the existing Get-a-Kit online HIV self-testing project which increased the accessibility of COVID-19 testing to targeted populations in Ottawa. OPH located COVID-19 hot spots for the study and gave input towards participant eligibility, follow-up instructions, promotion of the study, and staff resources to complete follow up with participants.

**#015-21 - Evaluating the effectiveness of commonly recommended heat mitigation strategies for limiting heat strain in elderly adults during extreme heat events**

Led by the University of Ottawa and supported by OPH's Environmental Health Team, this study aimed to assess the efficacy of two highly recommended heat mitigation strategies for protecting the health and well-being of older adults during extreme heat events by generating novel physiological data.

**#017-21 – Optimizing vaccine acceptance in the African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Ottawa**

Led by Dr. Etowa at the University of Ottawa and supported by the OPH Community Engagement Team, this two-year study aims to optimize vaccine uptake in African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Ottawa. OPH is expected to contribute to the recruitment, training, and coordination of ACB community peers to assist with community engagement as well as space and resources to host events and educate the peers about OPH resources that ACB people can access.

**#018-21 – Strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Ontario**

Led by Dr. Etowa at the University of Ottawa and supported by OPH's Public Health Medicine Unit, this project aims to accelerate the use of evidence collected on the challenges experienced by ACB communities to develop, implement, and evaluate community-informed solutions to structural inequities including systemic racism that continue to hamper the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**#020-21 – The LIFe-Threatning Illness National Group (LifTING) Research Training Platform: Spanning boundaries between research and care**

Led by the University of Toronto and supported by OPH's Public Health Medicine Unit, this study aimed to support the development of interdisciplinary, interjurisdictional, and intersectoral open research training platforms to provide opportunities for research education, mentorship, professional development, and sustainable careers in research. This platform will provide flexible curricula for those who want to engage in research on life-threatening diseases associated with critical care illness.

### **#019-21 - Designing Cities for Active Transportation Pathing: Minimizing Adverse Environmental Factors and Promoting Healthy Living**

Led by the University of Ottawa and supported by OPH's Health Hazard Response Teams, this study aimed to simulate environmental factors under different scenarios for different neighborhoods to develop data-driven design principles for urban planning, mitigation of environmental factors through integration of greenspace into transportation corridors, and the promotion of revolutionary transportation technologies to support healthy lifestyles and communities.

### **III. Research Projects: 2020**

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#### **#002-20 - Advancing Healthcare for COVID-19 in Ontario: Strengthening providers' capacity for best practices in African, Caribbean, and Black community service provision**

Led by the University of Ottawa and supported by OPH's KEPQ team, this research project aimed to strengthen collaborative partnerships and generate evidence-based models and interventions to strengthen the Ontario health system's capacity to support African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was published here: [10.12691/ajphr-9-2-2](https://doi.org/10.12691/ajphr-9-2-2)

#### **#004-20 – Long-Term effect of SARS-Co-2 infection on physiological and psychological health**

Led by the Ottawa Hospital and supported by OPH's COVID-19 response team, this research followed survivors of SARS-CoV-2 to detect any persistent or emerging abnormalities in physiological and psychological function. This type of research will be essential for guiding future interventions and strategies to optimize health outcomes and minimize healthcare costs related to COVID-19.

### **IV. Research Projects: 2019**

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#### **#250-19 - Psychometric Evaluation of a Measure to Assess Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM) Competence in Public Health Nursing**

Led by McMaster University and supported by one of the OPH graduates of the Knowledge Broker Mentoring program, this study aimed to assess a new measure that could be integrated into evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) competence assessment in public health practice, to facilitate organizational planning and professional development. The project findings were published here: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0248330>

### **#254-19 - Oral health and dental care pathways of humanitarian migrants: advancing a mixed methods program of research**

Led by McGill University, this research project explored how newly arrived humanitarian migrants understood oral health, access to oral health care, their current oral health status, and the barriers to accessing services. The project findings were published and can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168874>

### **#255-19 - Evaluation of a participatory learning initiative to build public health organizational capacity for action on health equity**

OPH acted as a participant in this study led by the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH). This project study was an evaluation of the 'Organizational Capacity for Health Equity Initiative' by the NCCDH. The evaluation assessed the implementation of the initiative, the extent to which objectives were met and the perceived and actual impact of the initiative on its participants. Please see the following webinar published as a result of this study: [The anatomy of a health equity-oriented organization: Insights on organizational capacity.](#)

## **V. Research Projects: 2018**

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### **#248-18 TOHAMO Study - Improving Breastfeeding Outcomes using an Innovative Youth-Informed Breastfeeding Program for Young Women**

Led by the Ottawa Hospital and supported by the Healthy Growth and Development team at OPH, this project represented the second phase of a two-phase research study. The study explored the experiences of staff at St. Mary's Home Breastfeeding Program and tapped into their recommendations for the implementation of this youth-informed program at other agencies servicing pregnant and parenting youth.

### **#246-18 -Based Nurse-Led HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)**

Led by the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI) and supported by OPH's Healthy Sexuality Risk Reduction Team, this study examined the efficiency of a nurse-led version of the standard-of-care, physician-led pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for persons at risk of becoming HIV positive. This project examined the impact of such an approach to healthcare delivery, as well as patient care and satisfaction.

### **#245-18 - Qualitative Study on Ottawa Public Health's "Good Food Corner Stores"**

Led by the University of Toronto and supported by the Healthy Eating team at OPH, this study aimed to investigate perceptions of Ottawa corner store owners and OPH staff as

part of the Good Food Corner Stores (GFCS) Initiative that was implemented in 2016. GFCS was a comprehensive population health-focused model that promoted access to healthy foods. The study also explored stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, and perceived barriers and facilitators in relation to the initiative's sustainability.

### **#244-18 - Mental Health in Ottawa's African, Caribbean & Black Community**

Designed and led by the Mental Health team at OPH, this qualitative study aimed to better understand the experiences of Ottawa's African, Caribbean & Black (ACB) community in relation to mental health and advocated for better services and supports for people of ACB descent. The findings from this study helped to inform mental health strategies and services for ACB populations. [Mental Health of Ottawa's Black Community](#)

### **#243-18 - Healthy Built Environment – A Provincial Framework for Healthy Community Design**

Led by Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit and implemented locally by the Public Health Inspection team at OPH, this Public Health Ontario (PHO) Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) aimed to provide public health professionals with evidence-informed resources to support a healthier built environment.

### **#241-18 - Exploring the benefits of utilizing rapid hepatitis C testing with a high-risk drug using population**

An OPH innovation-fund funded project that was conducted by the Healthy Sexuality and Risk Reduction team, this study examined the efficiency of a newly approved point-of-care hepatitis C test to screen OPH's site program clients for exposure to hepatitis C. Researchers assessed the impact of acquiring immediate results in relation to encouraging more testing within a high-risk population, earlier counseling, and better client outcomes.

### **#240-18 - Assessing Barriers to Immunization Access and Uptake in Ottawa's Newcomer Refugees to Improve OPH Services**

This OPH innovation fund funded project was conducted by the Vaccine Preventable Diseases program at OPH, in partnership with Centertown Community Health Centre, and the YMCA family shelter. It aimed to identify barriers to immunization in Ottawa's refugee population in order to develop specific messages and tailor services to the needs of this population group in terms of access to immunization services.