



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

Information previously distributed / Information distribuée auparavant

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. Trevor Arnason,
Medical Officer of Health,
Ottawa Public Health

Contact :
Amira Ali
Interim Director,
Quality, Epidemiology, Strategy and
Technology (QUEST)
amira.ali@ottawa.ca

EXPÉDITEUR : Dre. Trevor Arnason,
Médecin chef en santé publique,
Santé publique Ottawa

Personne ressource :
Amira Ali,
Directeur par intérim,
Qualité, Épidémiologie, Stratégie et
Technologie (QUEST)
amira.ali@ottawa.ca

DATE: [Click here to enter a date_ENG.](#)

[Click here to enter a date_FRE.](#)

FILE NUMBER: ACS2026-OPH-QES-0001

SUBJECT: Ottawa Public Health Research Projects: 2025

OBJET: Projets de recherche de Santé publique Ottawa : 2025

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to update the Ottawa Board of Health on research projects with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) involvement in 2025. These projects demonstrate OPH's commitment to evidence-informed decision-making and role in advancing public health priorities through collaboration, data-driven approaches, and policy development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is committed to evidence informed decision making supported by meaningful engagement with community and academic partners. In 2025, this commitment was demonstrated through 23 public health research projects, with 17 projects continuing into 2026. OPH has contributed to these projects in multiple capacities including shaping study design, contributing data, supporting implementation and helping translate findings into practical interventions that respond to community needs. By integrating equity-driven, prevention-focused, and impact-maximizing strategies, OPH continues to position itself as a key partner in generating and translating evidence into actionable policies and programs.

The research initiatives undertaken by OPH in 2025 cover a broad spectrum of public health priorities, including climate change, health equity, infectious disease prevention, and healthy aging. Participation in each research project contributes valuable insights that inform policies and interventions aimed at improving health and well-being across Ottawa's communities. Moving forward, OPH remains dedicated to ensuring that our policies and programs continue to be guided by evidence.

BACKGROUND

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is committed to evidence-informed decision-making and our collaboration in public health research plays an important role in advancing this commitment. Over the years, OPH has strengthened research partnerships, aligning with our strategy of being equity-driven, prevention-focused, and impact-maximizing. In 2025, this commitment is reflected in a diverse portfolio of 23 new research projects and

25 projects continuing from previous years, ensuring evidence is integrated into our programs and services.

OPH played various roles across these 23 projects, with 17 of them continuing into 2026. As a study partner in 13 projects, OPH helped shape research objectives, methodologies, and knowledge-sharing strategies through meaningful engagement with community researchers and academic partners. In five projects, OPH contributed firsthand insights as a study participant, recognizing the importance of experiential knowledge in informing public health research and practice. Additionally, OPH supported one study through data sharing, ensuring that valuable local public health data informed evidence-based findings. OPH also took on the role of co-lead investigator in two projects, driving the research project from conceptualization to publication. Finally, OPH serves as an end-of-grant knowledge user in two project proposals, helping translate research findings into actionable public health policies and programs. This range of engagement highlights OPH's role as both a contributor to and beneficiary of public health research.

Central to OPH's involvement in these 23 projects is the strong and meaningful partnerships with community researchers, academic partners, and organizations at local and national levels. These collaborations span leading universities such as the University of Ottawa, McMaster University, McGill University, and the University of Waterloo, as well as specialized research institutes like The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and the Bruyère Health Research Institute. OPH also worked closely with other public health units and provincial partners such as Public Health Ontario, reinforcing strong regional collaboration. The breadth of these partnerships reflects OPH's commitment to meaningfully engaging diverse expertise and interdisciplinary partners, demonstrating the confidence that evidence partners place in OPH's leadership in evidence-informed decision-making.

DISCUSSION

The 23 research projects cover diverse public health priorities such as health equity, infectious disease surveillance, environmental health, and chronic disease prevention. A detailed outline of these projects is provided in the Appendix. While each project contributes valuable insights, key initiatives are highlighted across four overarching themes.

1. Climate Change

Climate change is an escalating public health concern, influencing disease patterns, environmental conditions, and the well-being of vulnerable populations. OPH's role in the Heat Smart project (100-25) strengthens the integration of public health and primary care by supporting tailored alerts and health-protective advice. Through electronic medical records and targeted messaging, this work brings climate-related evidence into day-to-day clinical and public health practice, enabling earlier warnings and more personalized interventions for at-risk residents.

2. Health Equity

Equity is a critical pillar of public health, ensuring that everyone has fair opportunities to achieve optimal well-being. A significant portion of the 2025 projects is centered on equity. Several projects address inequities experienced by African, Caribbean, and Black communities, including strengthening culturally informed perinatal mental health supports (109-25), advancing community-driven screening and prevention for pre-type 2 diabetes (116-25), and building a national network to support Black women's health leadership (102-25). Additional projects explore how structural and place-based factors shape access to care. The work mapping tuberculosis diagnostic pathways (104-25) helps identify systemic barriers across different health systems, while the development of a place-based framework for equitable health service delivery (105-25) examines how neighbourhood conditions influence access to programs and services by using spatial data from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study. Through these initiatives, OPH is working alongside research and community partners to embed equity into public health decision-making.

3. Infectious Diseases

OPH strengthens innovation across diagnostics, treatment, and surveillance for infectious diseases. The evaluation of syphilis point-of-care testing (099-25) brings rapid, clinic-based screening that shortens the time between testing and treatment, while the complementary study on polymerase chain reaction testing for syphilis across different specimen types (106-25) examines more sensitive methods that may support earlier and more accurate diagnosis. Innovation in treatment is reflected in the testing of shorter and safer regimens for latent tuberculosis infection (111-25), aimed at reducing treatment duration and improving adherence. Surveillance capacity is further enhanced through wastewater-based approaches, including work assessing how wastewater signals can strengthen respiratory virus risk classification (115-25). Together,

these initiatives advance more timely, precise, and responsive strategies for reducing the burden of infectious diseases in the community.

4. Supports for healthy aging

Healthy aging is crucial for Ottawa's rapidly growing older adult population. Through its partnerships in integrating a precision dementia-prevention tool into the Aging Well in Ottawa program (098-25) and developing a neighbourhood-level decision support dashboard for older adults (120-25), OPH is helping advance community-based approaches that support healthy aging. These initiatives strengthen early identification of risk, improve access to supports, and highlight aging-related needs, thereby promoting healthier aging across the community.

CONCLUSION

OPH's involvement across these research projects reinforces our commitment to evidence informed decision making built on meaningful collaboration with community and academic partners. Looking ahead, OPH remains committed to strengthening research collaborations, expanding its contributions to knowledge generation, and ensuring that public health policies and programs in Ottawa are grounded in the best available evidence.

OPH APPROVED RESEARCH PROJECTS – 2025

#098-25 - Precision dementia prevention program for older adults in the community

This study builds on the Project Big Life (PBL)- Dementia Risk Calculator, an interactive tool launched in 2021 that provides personalized dementia risk assessments and identifies modifiable risk factors. Partnering with OPH, the PBL team at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute will integrate the tool into the Aging Well in Ottawa program to support tailored dementia prevention efforts and expand the toolkit for broader use. OPH will support needs assessments, program development, tool promotion, and knowledge sharing.

#099-25 - Investigational Testing Authorization (ITA) to evaluate a second generation of syphilis Point-of-Care Test (POCT) device, ChemBio Diagnostic Systems, Inc. at the Sexual Health Clinic

Diagnosing syphilis currently requires sophisticated laboratory testing, which is slow and impractical for timely public health responses, especially in remote regions. The primary objective of this study is to determine if a Point of Care test (POCT) for syphilis administered at a clinic can provide comparable results to those obtained by conventional laboratory testing. OPH's Sexual Health Clinic is partnering with researchers from University of Ottawa, Public Health Agency of Canada and National Microbiology Laboratory to evaluate POCT kits for syphilis under an Investigational Testing Authorization.

#100-25 - Heat Smart: Empowering Primary Care Providers to Safeguard Vulnerable Populations Against Extreme Heat

Led by the University of Ottawa with OPH as a partner, this project aims to prevent heat-related deaths, which are mostly indoor and preventable, by bridging primary care and public health through Heat Alert and Response Systems (HARS). This randomized controlled trial across Eastern Ontario will identify at-risk individuals using electronic medical records and surveys, segment them by key socio-cultural and clinical factors, and deliver personalized, bilingual heat-risk messages. Patients will receive early heat warnings with tailored protective advice, and the intervention's impact will be assessed through brief surveys and health data analyses.

#101-25 - Training EARly Childhood Educators in Physical Activity (TEACH) study

The Child Health and Physical Activity Lab at Western University developed an online physical activity module for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in English to equip both current ECEs and students with the skills to promote active play in childcare settings. Following OPH's recommendations, the researchers tailored and translated the module into French to better support Francophone ECEs. OPH is assisting by facilitating the recruitment of Francophone ECEs and students and working with child-care sector partners to promote the learning opportunity to eligible participants.

#102-25 - Tackling structural inequities through transformative partnership to advance Black Women's Health in Canada

Aiming to reduce structural inequities and improve the health and wellbeing of African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) women in Canada, a University of Ottawa research team is partnering with organizations and leaders nationwide to develop the Black–Women's Health Interdisciplinary Network (B-WHIN). The network will act as a national hub for knowledge and action by informing research, policy, and programming. Alongside OPH, its members include leading academic researchers and experienced community organizers working across the social determinants of health, entrepreneurship, communication, psychology, education, gender studies, and information systems.

#103-25 - TAIMA TB-Ottawa Shedding Study (TOSS)

Led by The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, this study aims to measure levels of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Mtb) in the stool, urine, and sputum of people with tuberculosis (TB) to understand shedding patterns throughout treatment and improve interpretation of Mtb signals in wastewater. These findings will inform the larger Taima TB Wastewater Study (TTWWS), which is examining wastewater-based surveillance as a real-time, early detection and screening tool for remote communities and congregate settings. OPH is an integrated knowledge user supporting the study's design and implementation.

#104-25 - Measuring Access Pathways Study (MAPS): Development and Cross-Context Validation of a TB Healthcare Journey Scale

Led by researchers from the University of Waterloo, this multi-country study will develop and validate a health seeking scale that maps the diagnostic journey of people with tuberculosis and identifies systemic barriers across both high- and low-burden settings. Phase 1 in Nigeria will create and preliminarily test the scale through interviews with patients, providers, and experts, while Phase 2 in Canada will refine and validate it with TB patients in Alberta and Ontario; a final phase will integrate findings to ensure broad applicability. By identifying barriers along the diagnostic pathway, the study will generate a tool to guide targeted improvements, with OPH serving as an integral partner in Phases 2 and 3.

#105-25 - A place-based framework for equitable health service delivery

This proposal explores how characteristics of place influence equitable health services, aiming to develop a place-based framework that integrates data, spatial analytics, and community collaboration. By leveraging the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study and an existing research partnership with OPH, the researchers from University of Ottawa and Bruyère Health Research Institute will investigate the mechanisms driving health inequities and develop a framework for equitable health service delivery.

#106-25 - Investigation of the utility of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) from various samples for detection of *Treponema pallidum* DNA during syphilis infection

Led by the University of Ottawa, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for diagnosing active syphilis infections using specimens collected from different anatomical sites. OPH is an integrated knowledge user on the project, and OPH's Sexual Health Clinic serves as one of the key specimen collection locations, contributing clinical expertise and operational support to the research.

#107-25 - Consensus Meeting to Develop a Childcare Physical Activity Policy

Led by the Western University, this collaborative work engaged physical activity and childcare experts, trainees, and knowledge users to develop and co-create a physical activity policy to help support healthy movement of young children in childcare settings in Canada. OPH participated in a focus group and survey to offer insights.

#108-25 - Healing Physicians in Public Health for an Inclusive and Equitable Recovery (HaPPHIER)

The purpose of the HaPPHIER (Healing Physicians in Public Health for an Inclusive and Equitable Recovery) project is to assess the effectiveness of burnout and mitigation strategies implemented by public health units. As a co-lead investigator OPH collaborates with Public Health Ontario to support the study design and its implementation.

#109-25 - Advancing African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) Perinatal Mental Healthcare: Assessment, Advocacy and Action

The goal of the proposed project is to provide culturally informed, evidence-based resources to strengthen perinatal mental health services for Black birthing people. OPH will partner with the research team from University of Ottawa to support meetings, feedback, promotion, and recruitment activities.

#110-25 - Oral Health Outcomes for People with a Mental Illness

Led by the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, this project aims to characterize the oral health status of Canadians living with mental illness compared to those without, including differences in risk factors, lifestyle influences, and the impact of oral health on overall systemic health. OPH will serve as an end-of-grant knowledge user, helping to disseminate the study findings once results become available.

#111-25 - SSTARLET: Shorter and Safer Treatment Regimens for Latent TB

Led by McGill University, with The Ottawa Hospital overseeing the Ottawa site, this Phase 2 multicenter, open-label randomized controlled adaptive trial is evaluating novel short-course treatment regimens for latent tuberculosis infection. The study aims to enroll 1,800 participants overall, including approximately 100 in Ottawa. As a study partner, OPH supports local implementation by facilitating recruitment and will also contribute to disseminating results once they become available.

#112-25 - Co-designing tailored digital health messages regarding HPV vaccines with and for Franco-Ontarians

Researchers from University of Ottawa are examining the barriers and facilitators of HPV vaccine hesitancy among Francophone minority communities in Ontario, with the goal of co-designing digital, tailored health messages to address this issue. Given the central role of OPH in organizing and administering HPV vaccines to students in schools and leading communication campaigns, OPH will be participating in key informant interviews to provide insights.

#113-25 - Exploring Disaster Cinema Through the Lens of Experts and Consultants

Led by the University of Ottawa, this study examines how disaster and emergency management experts perceive the role of film in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Their insights are essential for developing evidence-informed disaster-entertainment guidelines that support an all-of-society approach to DRR. The project will use this expert feedback to shape guidance for future disaster-themed film production, with OPH contributing as an expert.

#114-25 - Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Paternal Perinatal Depression: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial

OPH co-leads this pilot randomized controlled trial with McMaster University to assess the feasibility of delivering a nine week online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program for fathers and fathers to be experiencing symptoms of perinatal depression, as identified through the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS).

#115-25 - Evaluation of Wastewater Surveillance Utility in Public Health Respiratory Surveillance

Led by the University of Ottawa, this study evaluates the added value of wastewater surveillance data for public health decision-making related to respiratory viruses. The project will assess how incorporating wastewater signals influences overall risk classification and public health information outputs for COVID-19, RSV, and Influenza A and B. OPH contributes data to this work through its Respiratory and Enteric Surveillance dashboard.

#116-25 - Bye-bye T2D @ Remain pre-diabetic: Screen, prevent, promote and empower pre-diabetic Black people

Led by the University of Ottawa, this project will survey 28,000 Black individuals in Ontario and Quebec using a community-based approach to determine the prevalence of pre-type 2 diabetes (pre-T2D) and type 2 diabetes (T2D). HbA1c testing will confirm diagnoses, with individuals referred for care as needed, and 1,000 people with pre-T2D will participate in the 12-month *Challenge@E2ND* prevention program. OPH is an integrated knowledge user supporting this work.

#117-25 - A Community-based HIV & STBBI Surveillance Observatory

Researchers from Carleton University, aim to strengthen the Canadian public health response to HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs) by establishing a community-based public health observatory. The observatory will generate solution-focused insights and ethical recommendations to guide improvements in monitoring and response efforts. OPH supports this project as an End of Grant Knowledge user.

#118-25 - Strengthening Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in Ontario's Public Health Units

Led by Brock University, this study aims to describe the current state of continuous quality improvement (CQI) practices across public health units in Ontario. The findings will help identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities to advance CQI within the public health system. OPH participated as key informant and offered insights into organization's readiness, capacity, and integration of CQI processes.

#119-25 - Public Health Professionals' Perspectives on Vaccine Registries in Ontario: Exploring Trust, Ethics, and System Design

Led by Western University, this study examines how public health professionals across Ontario perceive the role and performance of vaccine registries, including their strengths, limitations, and the ethical and equity considerations involved in improving these systems. OPH contributed as a key informant, providing perspectives based on operational experience with vaccine delivery, documentation, and registry use.

#120-25 - A Place-Based Framework for Equitable Decision Support and System Integration for Older Adults

Led by the University of Ottawa and Bruyère Health Research Institute, this project addresses growing inequities in older adults' access to health and social services in Ottawa. Using a population health lens that combines demographic data, spatial analyses, and intersectoral collaboration, the study aims to identify neighbourhoods with the greatest needs and opportunities for impact. In partnership with the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, frontline service organizations, and OPH as a study partner, the team will co-develop an interactive, neighbourhood-level dashboard integrating health, social, and environmental data.