

NeuroMatters, Spring/Summer 2017 Edition

June is Annual General Meeting time for many organizations, Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation being one of them. As we approach that day for ONF I it is worth taking a minute to think about what a year we've had since last June. From the release of new treatment guidelines for traumatic brain injury to the new Standards for Post-Concussion Care ONF has demonstrated that collaboration and partnership is the way to make change happen.

By bringing together researchers, clinicians, policy-makers and those living with spinal cord injury ONF is supporting the development of treatment guidelines and approaches that address some of the intractable health issues facing those living with SCI – pain, primary care, bladder management and the cure for paralysis due to spinal injury.

I am also proud of the leadership through collaboration and partnerships that ONF continues to take in terms of injury prevention. Reducing the number and severity of neurotrauma injuries will positively impact the personal, health and social systems costs – a goal worth reaching for.

ONF is wrapping up a three-year funding window with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Research and Innovation. The Foundation is grateful to those who recognize and support efforts to bring research into practice to improve the lives of Ontarians. I look forward to continuing this important work on all fronts.

Kent Bassett-Spiers,

CEO, Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation

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Standards for Post-Concussion Care released

After more than a year of consultation, discussion and planning the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation released [Standards for Post-Concussion Care](#) June 13, 2017. The Standards address the interdisciplinary nature of post-concussion care and offer a framework for how this care is delivered.

As the short- and long-term health effects of concussions have become better understood, there has been a proliferation of individual practitioners and clinics offering concussion care in Ontario. This has resulted in some confusion over the match between how and what care is offered by such clinics for those who experience persistent symptoms.

ONF led the Standards project with significant support and input from the Concussion Advisory Committee that included members from across Ontario representing patients and several clinical roles. There was a thorough approach to consulting on and finalizing the content of the Standards document. Once finalized the decision was made to get the important information into circulation as soon as possible. The document is now in the translation process and the French version will be ready and posted online during the summer.

“The Standards provide guidance to clinicians that will help support them to work within their scope of practice and provide the interdisciplinary care that is required,” says Corinne Kagan, Senior Director Acquired Brain Injury at ONF. “It’s important that there is a common understanding across the system regarding the processes around post-concussion care and particularly for people who experience persistent symptoms.”

Many members of the Concussion Advisory Committee agreed to be media spokespeople for the Standards and several were interviewed in the days following the release of the Standards.

The new Standards complement previous internationally-known work sponsored by ONF in the development and publication of treatment guidelines for [Adult](#) and [Pediatric](#) Concussion care. These guidelines are updated and revised every few years as new evidence emerges.

4th meeting of OSCIRN brings SCI community together

Researchers, clinicians, scientists, students, industry, people with SCI review developments, future possibilities

The challenge of basic spinal cord injury research is making it relevant to those living with SCI as well as potential funders and supporters. This gap was narrowed at a May meeting organized by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation and its partners.

Almost 160 participants gathered to share information on the most current developments in SCI research including researchers, funders and people living with SCI. Ontario Spinal Cord Injury Research Network is a collaborative network of clinicians and scientists based at five Ontario academic health science centres in Toronto, Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton and London. This group collaborates to research and implement multi-centre SCI clinical research projects.



“We had some pretty specific goals in mind when we developed the conference agenda,” says Tara Jeji, ONF Program Director, Spinal Cord Injury. “Having the SCI community involved was critical. They need to hear about progress being made towards a potential new therapies and technologies to improve function and care for those with SCI and to encourage people to participate in clinical trials.” The conference included presentations, workshops and poster presentations as well as lots of opportunity for participants to build their personal and professional networks.

Dr. Bob Bell, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health for the province provided the keynote address (see photo above). Chaired by Dr. Michael Fehlings, presenters included Dr. David Darrow, Dr. Karim Fouad, Dr. Brian Kwon, Dr. David Magnuson, Dr. Martin Oudrega, Dr. Nick Terrafranca and Dr. Albert Yee.

Barry Munro, Chief Development Officer for the Canadian Spinal Research Organization (CSRO) and ONF kicked off the conference with a reflection on the current research realities from the perspective of those living with SCI. Other keynote topics focused on various aspects of neuromodulation as well as progress being made in repair and rehabilitation. Participants also had the opportunity to explore poster presentations and participate in workshops and update sessions on a range of current and upcoming research project.

“ONF is the link between the work of the basic and clinical researcher as well as the individual living with SCI,” says ONF CEO Kent Bassett-Spiers. “This conference was an opportunity to get everyone who is or wants to make a difference through research together in one room.

The scientists need to meet those who are benefitting from their efforts in the same way that those living with SCI need to understand how important it is for them to participate in research projects.



Organizers of the OSCIRN conference: (back row, left to right) Dr. Michael Fehlings, Dr. Karim Fouad, Dr. Keith Hayes, Mr. Kent Bassett-Speirs; (front row) Dr. Anoushka Singh, Dr. Tara Jeji

Provincial collaborative explores next steps to share fall prevention knowledge and strategies

A new provincial group is collaborating to reduce the number of falls and the related personal and health care costs in Ontario. The collaborative includes public health departments, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), the Rehabilitation Care Alliance as well as Regional Geriatric Program (RPG) representation. Efforts will focus on exploring new ways to improve practice that helps prevent and/or reduce falls in the province's older adult population.

“Building on an initial February teleconference the collaborative is exploring areas where everyone can work together while encouraging new regions and groups to join in this effort,” says H el ene Gagn e, Program Director, Injury Prevention, Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation. “This is the core group of champions supporting fall prevention strategies and knowledge sharing.”

Helene and other collaborative leaders will turn their attention to building the agenda for an inclusive online forum tentatively scheduled for September or October. The aim of the forum is to engage all interested stakeholders in identifying provincial priorities that all organizations can act on.

In addition to raising awareness, the goals of the new collaborative approach include reducing duplication of effort through knowledge sharing, improving practice by standardizing the provincial approach to falls reduction while addressing local requirements and exploring new ways for all interested collaborators to work together to establish this system-wide approach.

ONF Partner Profile: McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

McMaster

OPTIMAL AGING PORTAL

The [McMaster Optimal Aging Portal](#) is focused on sharing knowledge of healthy aging initiatives making it a natural partner for the Loop collaboration platform and the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation.

McMaster Optimal Aging Portal focus

The bilingual Optimal Aging Portal is a free website geared to policymakers, public health professionals, clinicians and older adults wherever they live. It offers evidence-based information about common health conditions, rates the content of health websites for quality of directs users to blog posts that provide engaging commentary on the science of health research projects including research on older adults and falls.

Partnership details

The Loop partnership with the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal provides a link to a broad range of older adult-focused health care information and evidence for Loop members. Users of the Optimal Aging Portal have access to comprehensive evidence-based information on fall prevention initiatives developed for health care providers and community organizations.

“We appreciate the connection with Loop and ONF which started several years ago when our organizations were looking for ways to provide older adults with access to our respective knowledge sharing platforms,” says Laura Harrington, Managing Director of the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging, which houses the portal. “We share a commitment to healthy aging which includes falls prevention. There are a number of mutual interests for us to explore.”

The partnership also supports ongoing interaction between McMaster University’s researchers and projects focused on prevention initiatives supported by ONF. A recent example is a new study supported by ONF involving McMaster researchers that aims to better understand the relationship between falls and memory impairment.

NeuroMatters features one [ONF partners](#) in each issue. ONF is proud to work with a number of partners to determine the key causes of neurotrauma and support the development of interventions and policies that make a difference.

News Bites

[ONF 2016/17 Financial Statements now available](#)

At the Annual General Meeting on June 20, 2017, the Board of the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation approved the financial statements for the year 2016/17. These are now available for review on the **ONF website**

Rowan's Law Advisory Committee reviews progress to implementation

Rowan Stringer was 17 years old when she died in May of 2013 as a result of brain injuries following a series of three sports-related concussions over a one week period. Forty-nine recommendations were delivered by the jury at a Coroner's inquest. Rowan's Law was passed in June of 2016 and the Rowan's Law Expert Advisory Committee has been working on the practicalities of implementing the 49 recommendations with its report due in September. This includes co-ordinating youth concussion protocols, training for coaches, awareness and education to reduce the incidence of concussion.



The Committee met in mid-May on the anniversary of Rowan's death. Back Row: Warren Hoshizaki, Jennifer Knox, Paul Hunter, Eric Lindros, Kent Bassett-Spiers, Chris Markham. Middle Row: Rosie MacLennan, Elisabeth White, Susan Kitchen, Rosana Salvaterra, Charles Tator. Front Row: Dan Cass, Kathleen Stringer, Gordon Stringer, Louise Logan

Toronto hosted Global Implementation Conference, GIC 2017

Organizations and researchers focused on translating research outcomes into practice gathered in Toronto June 19 – 21 to share the most current knowledge on implementation science on the theme of "Expanding Implementation Perspectives: Engaging Systems." Speakers, panellists and workshops explored successful implementation strategies including infrastructure requirements, systems and supports, evaluation of readiness for change, etc. ONF is one of the leaders in moving research to evidence-informed practices through its regional, provincial, national and international collaborations and partnerships. ONF Injury Prevention Program Director H el ene Gagn e served on the conference Planning Committee.

June is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Reducing the incidence of brain injury should be on everyone's mind throughout the year but June is the month when special emphasis is given to raising awareness about the personal, health system and societal costs of acquired brain injury. The [Ontario Brain Injury Association](#) and

other organizations involved in the care and treatment of those with acquired brain injury have a series of events planned during the month.

Dr. Michael Fehlings recognized with David Lostchuck Memorial Research Award

The [Canadian Spinal Research Organization](#) (CSRO) recognized the many contributions to the research and care of those living with SCI in presenting the inaugural David Lostchuck Research Award to Dr. Michael Fehlings. The award recognizes Dr. Fehlings for his leadership



and accomplishments in advancing SCI research in Canada. Dr. Fehlings is the Director of the Spinal Program at the Toronto Western Hospital, Medical Director of the Krembil Neuroscience Centre at the University Health Network and Co-Lead of the Ontario SCI Research Network. Barry Munro and Anne Kaiser of CSRO presented Dr. Fehlings with the honour at the recent Ontario Spinal Cord Injury Research Network conference. The award was created in honour of long-time CSRO treasurer David Lostchuck who died earlier this year.

Road safety focus for TBI, SCI tweets

Traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries were a focus for ONF tweets in support of National Road Safety Week (May 14 – 20). The link between road collisions, TBI and SCI is significant with more than 50 percent of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries occurring as a result of a road or off-road collision between motor vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, ATV and snowmobiles as well as pedestrian collisions with vehicles.

LHIN services delivery, other mandates move to HSSO

Health Shared Services Ontario (HSSO) recently evolved to take on the health service delivery responsibilities including home care support, finance and administration previously held by the province's 14 Local Health Integration Networks and associated Community Care Access Centres. LHINs continue to have responsibility for overall planning and funding of all health services.

Loop now connected to U of T library

The Loop Library Service is now aligned to the Health Science Information Consortium of Toronto ([HSICT](#)) at the University of Toronto. HSICT members collaborate to provide specialized services and cost effective access to online health information resources. This means that Loop members now have access to the U of T library resources. Loop members need only request the assistance of the Information Specialist if they are looking for health care publications or other resources. More than 71,000 healthcare professionals, educators, researchers and students access the Consortium's online health information resources.

Upcoming conferences

Concussion in Women and Girls, September 23

The Canadian Concussion Centre, UHN Krembil Neuroscience Centre and the University of Toronto are presenting the conference at the BMO Education and Conference Centre, September 23. Invited speakers will present on the latest research & developments in prevention, diagnosis, management/intervention and policy. Researchers and clinicians are invited to attend. More information and registration is [available here](#).

Making a Difference:

2017 Acquired Brain Injury Provincial Conference, November 1 – 3

The Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) in collaboration with the participating Community Associations is holding the 2017 Acquired Brain Injury Provincial Conference in Niagara Falls. The conference curriculum is targeted at ABI rehabilitation professionals as well as people living with the effects of ABI. Sheraton on the Falls, Niagara Falls, Ontario More information is available [here](#).