

THANK YOU.

Because of your generous support for research and care,
Sunnybrook's St. John's Rehab Program is special.



Staff and volunteers gathered to celebrate Dr. Larry Robinson (fifth from left) and his decade-long leadership as Chief of Sunnybrook's St. John's Rehab Program, where he built a powerful research engine and led trailblazing studies. **Together, we started a dialogue on what patients need to thrive – now it's a national conversation. Thank you.**

FALL 2024

A message of gratitude from Sunnybrook



In July 2024, I was honoured to be appointed Chief of Sunnybrook's St. John's Rehab Program, building on the strong foundation set by Dr. Larry Robinson. I thank him for his outstanding leadership over the past ten years.

Dr. Robinson's steadfast guidance has been fundamental to the growth of St. John's Rehab. He played a critical role in attracting new leaders to our multidisciplinary team who are elevating rehabilitation care at Sunnybrook.

My own history with Sunnybrook runs deep. I feel fortunate to have been affiliated with

St. John's Rehab since 2013, as one of the first staff physicians hired following Sunnybrook's formal merger with the rehabilitation program.

Since then, I have honed my expertise to focus on quality improvement and patient safety, with a specific interest on improving long-term outcomes following limb loss and innovating limb loss care. My background in clinical engineering, biomaterials and biomedical engineering has informed my career path in developing prosthetics with computer-assisted design and 3D printing.

Sunnybrook's St. John's Rehab Program has been integral to my own research breakthroughs and continues to fuel the successes of many other clinicians, researchers and health-care professionals. When I look to the future, I am excited by the possibilities ahead of us. St. John's Rehab allows experts to collaborate among the best; the ability to work across disciplines has always been a unique strength that distinguishes our program from others. My ambition is to expand upon our successes and balance our strengths in research and clinical care, with an equally strong commitment to improve the patient and family experience.

You drive this important work and more. Your generosity supports innovation with immediate impact on our community. Thank you.

As you'll read, donor support accelerates the most promising rehabilitation approaches and ensures more patients return to full lives faster. In the coming years, I look forward to sharing more updates made possible because of your steadfast belief in Sunnybrook.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda Mayo".

Dr. Amanda Mayo

Chief, St. John's Rehab Program
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

**St. John's Rehab
2023-24:**

63,277

outpatient
attendances

2,475

inpatients
discharged

24 days

average length of
stay for inpatients

486

complex care
inpatients admitted

191

inpatients cared for
from outside the
Greater Toronto Area

Updates from the **JOHN AND SALLY EATON CHAIR IN REHABILITATION RESEARCH**

Dr. Larry Robinson's leadership as the John and Sally Eaton Chair has elevated our national and academic profile and built clinical and research capacity for the next generation of experts in rehabilitation treatment and care.

Driving exponential growth

The John and Sally Eaton Chair in Rehabilitation Research broke new ground in physical medicine and rehabilitation, reducing length of stay for patients and enhancing collaboration across Sunnybrook.

Over the past 10 years under Dr. Robinson's leadership, the St. John's Rehab Research Program demonstrated tremendous growth:

- **\$5 million in project funding secured;**
- **200+ peer-reviewed publications; and**
- **70+ trainees supported.**

In addition to increased funding toward research activities, Dr. Robinson's tenure as Eaton Chair oversaw the expansion of the research team, with the addition of several world-leading scientists and specialists.

The assembly of this multidisciplinary team has allowed St. John's Rehab to drive innovation and develop more breakthroughs in rehabilitation care. Dr. Robinson's impact has been transformative and has led to stronger ties between teams working at Sunnybrook's Bayview campus and at St. John's Rehab.

Activities and achievements

In his final year as Eaton Chair, Dr. Robinson was proud to represent Sunnybrook as an invited speaker at several international conferences, including:

- American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine;
- International Society for Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine;
- UltraEMG; and
- 5th Asia Oceanian Congress of NeuroRehabilitation (AOCNR 2023).

Additionally, Dr. Robinson's research advanced national and international understandings in the areas of electrodiagnostic studies in managing nerve and spinal cord injuries, enhancing rehab interventions across the continuum of care, and the role of rehab in the management of disability due to COVID-19.

Dr. Robinson's work continues to have far-reaching impact. We are grateful for the support of our community in empowering experts like him to lead the way in rehabilitation research and care.



“My goal has always been to promote rehabilitation research at St. John's Rehab on a national and international level to reach more patients when it matters most.

As I reflect on the end of my term, I am profoundly grateful to the breakthroughs we made thanks to donor support.”

– Dr. Larry Robinson

Collaborating among the best

OPTIMIZING RECOVERY FOR STROKE SURVIVORS

Multidisciplinary experts across Sunnybrook are advancing rehabilitation science by conducting person-centred, collaborative research that prioritizes improving long-term outcomes for people who have experienced stroke.

A valuable resource developed at Sunnybrook

With donor support, Sunnybrook researchers recently introduced the **Stroke Toolkit for Aquatic Rehabilitation and Recreation Therapy (STARRT)**, a digital guide to optimize the access and use of aquatic therapy for people after stroke.

The toolkit was co-designed by an interprofessional group of researchers, allied health professionals, stroke organizations and patient partners with lived experience, like Danny Foran (see sidebar).

“STARRT is the first aquatic therapy toolkit developed at Sunnybrook,” explains Dr. Andresa Marinho Buzelli, project lead (pictured with Danny). “This unique resource will help deliver a more specialized aquatic therapy experience.”

For many who experience stroke, the road to recovery is long and filled with many challenges. Aquatic therapy, which involves exercise in water, has been shown to have benefits for people recovering from a stroke.

STARRT is designed to teach stroke survivors, caregivers and health-care professionals about the benefits of aquatic therapy, answer questions about what to expect during sessions and share where to find aquatic therapy pool locations across Canada.

There are currently more than 700 pools that patients and caregivers can explore in the toolkit. STARRT also provides a list of what you might need at an aquatic therapy session, as well as strength, balance and aerobic exercises for patients to follow.

Dr. Marinho Buzelli adds: “The goal of this project is to help more people reap the physical benefits from aquatic therapy, and feel more confident and independent in their functional ability by providing them with all the information they might need in one location.”

You can view the STARRT toolkit [here](#).



Sharing his experience to help others

As a member of the STARRT co-design team, Danny Foran’s own stroke journey informed a valuable new toolkit at Sunnybrook’s St. John’s Rehab.

In 2012, Danny experienced a stroke that left him paralyzed on the left side of his body. In addition to physiotherapy, Danny joined an aquatic therapy club for stroke survivors.

Since pursuing aquatic therapy, Danny has felt an improvement in his balance, strength and endurance, and has even learned how to swim using his right arm.

Danny hopes that sharing his experience to design resources like STARRT will help more people on their rehabilitation journey.

“Not only has swimming helped me physically, but it’s also supported my mental health,” says Danny. “Swim clubs allow survivors to meet with each other in and outside the pool, which is a very empowering and motivating experience.”

St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association

AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO PATIENT CARE

Since 1959, the St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association has provided services that enhance the patient experience and has raised funds for key projects and initiatives across the program. We are grateful for their steadfast support.



Members of the St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association celebrate Dr. Larry Robinson as outgoing Program Chief of St. John's Rehab. Volunteers play a crucial part in enhancing the patient experience at Sunnybrook.

This year marks more than six decades of service from the St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association. Its members play a vital role in the St. John's Rehab community, contributing more than 14,000 hours of service each year and raising funds in support of patient care and staff initiatives at Sunnybrook.

In recognition of their valued contributions, Sunnybrook proudly established the **St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association Research and Discovery Fund**.

The fund supports groundbreaking and innovative research that directly impacts patient outcomes and advances specialized rehabilitation care.

The fund is supported by donors and proceeds from volunteer-led fundraising initiatives, such as the St. John's Rehab gift shop, coffee bar, bake sales, Noel fundraiser and an annual St. Patrick's Day Run/Walk.

Beyond the Association's fundraising, the impact of its volunteers is immeasurable. Sunnybrook is grateful to the many contributions of the St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association, especially toward providing a caring and compassionate experience for patients, families and caregivers.

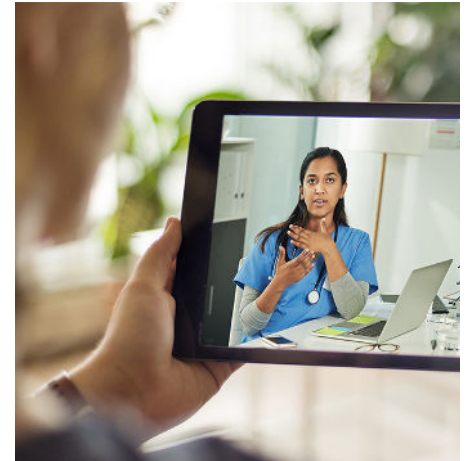
“Our volunteers stand strong and determined, more than ever, to support Sunnybrook and patients in mending their lives and moving forward.”

- Usha Bhargava, President
St. John's Rehab Volunteer Association

Your impact on

ACCELERATING IDEAS INTO ACTION

With donor support, the research program at St. John's Rehab is making real-world impact by influencing clinical practice, education and health policy.



A focus on accessible homes

Canada is experiencing a housing crisis, with disproportionate impact among people with disabilities since many homes do not fully meet their needs or because modification is too costly.

To address this, **Sander Hitzig, PhD**, became a founding member of the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition, a first-of-its-kind network of researchers, policy-makers, community advocates, real-estate developers and people with lived experience who are collaborating to find accessible housing solutions.

With donor support, Dr. Hitzig is working on one solution: the co-design of a housing toolkit for people with spinal cord injuries. The resource will provide educational tools and strategies on how to find, modify and advocate for accessible homes.

Prioritizing mental health

The Psychiatry Consulting Liaison (PCL) service at St. John's Rehab was created to address mental health distress experienced by patients recovering from life-changing injuries and illness.

Thanks to donors, the PCL service has two psychiatrists embedded to work with the interprofessional team to provide care to patients.

To better meet increasing demand, **Dr. Rosalie Steinberg** and **Dr. Larry Robinson** conducted clinical trials to test the feasibility and therapeutic benefits of group therapy to improve coping and well-being for inpatients recovering from limb loss and major trauma.

The findings from these studies are leading to the development of clinical guidelines that can be adopted by other rehabilitation sites interested in providing group therapy for their patients.

Hybrid virtual care model

St. John's Rehab took bold steps during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure continuity in care through a virtual initiative for stroke patients. As in-person appointments resumed, the team is now making virtual care a permanent fixture.

Dr. Matthew Godleski and **Dr. Marina Wasilewski** evaluated the stroke hybrid outpatient tele-rehabilitation program, which provides both virtual and in-person therapy sessions delivered by an interdisciplinary team of 30 providers.

Interviews and surveys with health-care providers, patients and family members demonstrated that stroke virtual care was highly valued for its flexibility, ability to involve both patients and family members in therapy sessions, and the unique advantage of being able to conduct assessments within home environments.



A patient-centred pilot project

Patients at St. John's Rehab who require dialysis can now receive treatment onsite, without having to interrupt their rehabilitation journey to travel to and from our Bayview campus.

The trial program shows our ongoing commitment to seamless, integrated patient care provided by dedicated interprofessional teams.

"We are meeting the needs of St. John's Rehab patients by bringing this treatment to them," says Dr. Matthew Oliver, Division Head of Nephrology and Medical Director of Vascular Access. "It is more patient focused."

In the past, patients at St. John's Rehab who needed dialysis had to travel to Sunnybrook's Bayview campus three times a week, including at night, to receive treatment over the course of several hours.

Now, St. John's Rehab patients who require dialysis can receive treatment in familiar surroundings. The program began on April 15, 2024 and will be reassessed after one year, with the hopes of continuing.



Revolutionizing prosthetics with 3D printing

In 2018, Dr. Amanda Mayo started a line of research on the potential of using 3D-printed technologies to fabricate prosthetics for people with limb loss. Dr. Mayo found that the use of 3D printing was a promising solution, but that most 3D-printed devices had limited functionality.

Dr. Mayo partnered with Nia Technologies Inc., a not-for-profit organization that develops and deploys 3D-printed prosthetics in low- and middle-income countries, to explore ways to enhance the use of this technology at Sunnybrook. A pilot study provided important insights on what was needed to adopt 3D-printed technologies into routine care.

The data from these early studies provided the foundation for Dr. Mayo and the Sunnybrook Centre for Independent Living to obtain a \$1.2-million capital fund award to establish a state-of-the-art centre in 3D printing, which will be ready in 2025.

The impact of Dr. Mayo's work in 3D printing is already changing lives. In 2023, she received funding from the University of Toronto to bring 3D-printed prosthetics to Ukraine to help people who have lost limbs from the ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

Dr. Mayo's research has vaulted St. John's Rehab onto the global stage, bringing 3D-printed prosthetics into clinical practice across Sunnybrook and around the world.

Your impact on our **HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS**

Donor funding powers professional development initiatives for staff and provides educational opportunities to elevate skills and enhance patient care.

We are pleased to share these words of gratitude from the 2023-24 recipients of education funding at St. John's Rehab.



Eaton Education Endowment Fund

"I am so thankful for the John C. and Sally Horsfall Eaton Academic Fund. It enables me to hold my head high and focus on my goals. I truly feel supported here at St. John's Rehab."

- Angeline Laureta, Registered Nurse studying for her Registered Practice Nurse diploma

"Learning about Functional Electrical Stimulation is a skill that is helpful in my practice. Education funding was extremely helpful in my pursuit and continuation of my professional growth."

- Allison Mah, Occupational Therapist

"With the education funding for a Neuro Development Treatment course, I learned to apply therapeutic handling techniques to promote independence for my stroke patients."

- Elliot Tung, Occupational Therapist

Malcolm Moffat Education Fund

"I was able to acquire further clinical knowledge to fill my learning gaps in my professional practice. It advanced my treatment strategies to recommend beneficial and appropriate modalities to enhance my patients' lives."

- Jasmine Chan, Physiotherapist

"This funding allowed me to pursue advanced training to enhance my ability to provide high-quality patient care. This support has also reduced financial stress, enabling me to focus more on my professional development and stay current with best practices, ultimately improving patient outcomes."

- Elaisha Colendres, Registered Practical Nurse

"Having this opportunity allowed me to build my skills, gain more knowledge and opened possibilities to advance my career. I get excited to share what I have gained from the course with my colleagues that could be beneficial to our patients' care."

- Sandra Lotito, Physiotherapist Assistant

Sunnybrook is special because of our donors.
Your generosity is trailblazing rehabilitation care
for our patients and families. Thank you.

Lindsey Hutchison
Philanthropy Director
St. John's Rehab Program
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