



BC-CfE Director, Dr. Julio Montaner and BC Minister of Health, Hon. Adrian Dix

## BC aims to reduce new cases of HIV with expanded PrEP

### British Columbians at high risk of HIV to receive publicly-funded pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to prevent new HIV infection

**B**ritish Columbians, including men and transwomen who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and people who have sex with individuals living with HIV, can now access free medication to protect against HIV.

As of January 1st, the province of British Columbia is covering the cost of pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment (PrEP), recommended by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) as an effective method to prevent HIV in people at risk of infection.

"The addition of PrEP to our Treatment as Prevention® strategy will further accelerate the decline of new HIV infections in the province," said Dr. Julio Montaner, director, BC-CfE. "This move further demonstrates BC's continuing leadership in decreasing HIV and AIDS by addressing the specific healthcare needs of all British Columbians."

The new program joins the existing, and newly expanded, PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) program. Developed and managed by the BC-CfE

for the past twenty years, the PEP program has provided HIV prevention medication in instances of sexual assault and occupational exposure.

With the support of the provincial government, the BC-CfE has expanded NPEP (non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis) provincially. NPEP covers individuals who may have been exposed to HIV through consensual drug use or sexual encounters.

"Our government is committed to helping fight the spread of HIV/AIDS and supporting people as they take action to protect themselves from this virus," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health in a press release. "Making this medication free for people will prevent new HIV infections, remove barriers to care and services, and help people live longer and healthier lives."

In August 2016, the Common Drug Review recommended PrEP coverage be expanded based on securing a lower price for the generic version of the drug Truvada.

"By reducing the cost of PrEP, both for treatment and prevention, we now have an opportunity to expand our abilities to effectively decrease new HIV infections in the province," said Dr. Montaner. He says identifying groups who are most at-risk for being infected with HIV will be a key part of the success of the medication.

"The team at the BC-CfE has been working hard to make PrEP accessible and economical. The good news is we have a more complete range of tools at our disposal to pursue the elimination of HIV in BC based on our Treatment as Prevention® model," says Dr. Mark Hull. "We are now working on educating physicians and British Columbians about access and availability."

The BC-CfE website features detailed prescribing practices, enrollment information, education and training. Updated guidelines, course information and frequently asked questions will be addressed through online channels and social media. Ongoing online education courses, including webinars, will offer updates regarding all BC-CfE programs including PEP, NPEP and PrEP.

» "This is a win for the community, but cost isn't the only barrier stopping PrEP from getting into the hands of people who need it. We need to educate and empower gay and bisexual men and transwomen about access, and the ongoing care and testing that PrEP guidelines require."

— Jody Jollimore, Managing Director,

Community-Based Research Centre for Gay Men's Health



## Dr. Robert Hogg announced as a Member of the Order of Canada



Senior Research Scientist, Dr. Bob Hogg

» Every year, BC-CfE computer programmer Nada Gataric brings Dr. Bob Hogg cake – on her daughter Andrea’s birthday.

“I have been doing it for 22 years but it’s a small gesture compared to the kindness he showed me twenty years ago,” says Gataric. “I was a new employee, new to Canada, learning a new language and nervously trying to learn the ropes at the BC-CfE. And when I became pregnant I was nervous about telling anyone, but Bob and his team had a baby shower for me.”

There are as many reports of these kind gestures, as there are significant career achievements over the course of Hogg’s three-decade long career.

Colleagues are unsurprised Hogg has been named a member of the Order of Canada, citing his contributions in population health research to establishing a national research framework to mentoring some of Canada’s leading research scientists in addictions and HIV/AIDS.

However, it’s his leadership style – generously offering up the spotlight to others, nurturing new researchers and leading quietly by consensus and with compassion – that colleagues speak about first.

Research scientist Dr. Surita Parashar and Nada Gataric began their work at the BC-CfE over a decade apart, but their experiences under Hogg’s leadership are similar.



“Bob encourages and inspires students, but he will always ‘back off’ and give new researchers the independence to grow and take the reins on big projects as a first author or lead researcher,” says Parashar. “I am always amazed by how he attends research conferences, listening to early career investigators and community members present, asking questions, expressing genuine interest in their work. Often, when they find out they were just talking to Dr. Robert Hogg, they are stunned.”

Hogg’s research career began in Australia. He completed his PhD in 1991 at the Australian National University, where he was involved in assessing cardiovascular risk factors and mortality of Australian Aborigines living in several rural communities. He returned to Canada and to his family, completing his post-doctoral fellowship at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and began his career with the BC-CfE about a year later.

Dr. Hogg served as the Director of the Epidemiology and Population Health Program, and led the HIV/AIDS province-wide drug treatment program (DTP) at the BC-CfE. In 2006, he made the move to Simon Fraser University to be part of the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Faculty - one of the first in Canada - to teach and conduct research. Working with colleagues in the faculty he helped establish the SFU Interdisciplinary Research Centre for HIV (SIRCH).

“It was a huge opportunity to be involved in something that was just starting - working together, establishing an

entirely new faculty, teaching, mentoring,” says Hogg. “And the interdisciplinary approach was more in line with my background.”

Hogg also spear-headed Canada’s first nation-wide HIV/AIDS antiretroviral research network, originally funded by a \$2.5 million grant over five years from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in 2007. The Canadian Observational Cohort Collaboration (CANOC) brings together HIV/AIDS clinicians and researchers in B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland with two main goals: to enable the Canadian government and health agencies to better understand current gaps in knowledge, treatment outcomes and regional trends, and to establish best-practice treatment guidelines for various populations, including men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and Indigenous communities. Hogg also serves as the Principal Investigator for the COAST (The Comparative Outcomes And Service Utilization Trends) Study and the Momentum Health Study.

BC-CfE Research Scientist Dr. David Moore met Bob Hogg eighteen years ago and says Hogg’s hard work has paid off, but his success can also be attributed to his leadership style and unyielding focus on doing excellent scientific research, asking important research questions and designing them in a scientifically rigorous way.

“The impact of Bob’s work has been felt far and wide across the field of HIV/AIDS research. He conducted one of the first studies to monitor systematic adherence in the DTP by using pharmacy refill data,” Moore says. “That paper demonstrated the relationship between adherence and survival, becoming one of the BC-CfE’s most highly cited studies. Bob was instrumental in driving this population level approach.”

Hogg is reluctant to talk about his work and his impact on the Canadian research community. He is more comfortable speaking about his mentors, including Drs. Eric Roth, Julio Montaner, Michael O’Shaughnessy, and Alan Gray. He took Dr. Nancy Howell’s advice on mentorship to heart.



“Mentor people, so they have every opportunity to surpass your own accomplishments and to become voices for those that need to be heard,” Hogg recalls. “It is deeply satisfying for me to see the people I have worked with to go on to become great scientists and leaders and to accomplish so much locally, nationally and internationally.”

Being named a member of the Order of Canada doesn’t change anything for him, but colleagues argue it cements his impact on the Canadian health research landscape and honours his leadership in scientific and policy circles.

“It’s an honour, but it’s also a huge responsibility,” says Hogg. “It just means you have to keep providing that leadership and you have to keep speaking up for people that need a voice.”

## Innovation and access at the centre of healthcare sustainability discussion



Dr. Julio Montaner shared the stage with Dr. Dermot Kelleher, Dean, UBC Faculty of Medicine, joining a panel discussion regarding the “The Future of Healthcare Sustainability” at the LifeSciences BC Access to Innovation Conference.

The discussion on day two of the conference centered around the uptake of innovation and predicting the impact of technological advances and increased patient data on care models in the BC medical system.

Montaner talked about technology’s role in improving service delivery for HIV/AIDS patients and in promoting adherence to therapies.

“The BC-CfE created interfaces that allowed us to share non-identifiable data to give patients immediate options. That was 15 years ago,” says Montaner. “My one fear in using technology to encourage adherence is that it’s an advantage of the privileged and may not help those less privileged.”

The panelists discussed the opportunities for healthcare innovation in service delivery, the role of disruptive technology and building strong networks within healthcare.

## LECTURES & EVENTS

### Forefront Lecture

**Health Care Access and Costs Related to Drug Use from Linked Survey and Administrative Health Data in Ontario**

Speaker: Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi

Wednesday, February 7, 2018, 12–1PM

Large Lecture Theatre, Providence Level 1, St. Paul’s Hospital

### HIV Care Rounds

**Injectable Opioid Therapy for Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder**

Speaker: Dr. Nadia Fairbairn

Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 12–1PM

Conference Room 7, Providence Level 1, St. Paul’s Hospital

For more information, contact us at [Education@cfenet.ubc.ca](mailto:Education@cfenet.ubc.ca) or visit our website at [www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca](http://www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca)

## BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- > Improve the health of British Columbians with HIV through comprehensive research and treatment programs;
- > Develop cost-effective research and therapeutic protocols;
- > Provide educational support programs to health-care professionals;
- > Monitor the impact of HIV/AIDS on B.C. and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of HIV-related programs.

Physician Drug Hotline  
1.800.665.7677

St. Paul’s Hospital Pharmacy Hotline  
1.888.511.6222

Website  
[www.cfenet.ubc.ca](http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca)

E-mail  
[info@cfenet.ubc.ca](mailto:info@cfenet.ubc.ca)

Funding for the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS is provided by the BC Ministry of Health..

