



## BC-CfE welcomes Prime Minister Trudeau and members of cabinet to its Hope to Health Research Clinic

Welcoming a new government that embraces evidence-based science has been a breath of fresh air for researchers across the country after a decade of silence from the Canadian government. This is in stark contrast to the previous Conservative government who fought Insite all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and, subsequently, passed Bill C-2, which created substantial barriers to the establishment of safe consumption sites. The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) is deeply appreciative of the support shown for our research in HIV, viral hepatitis and addiction work, part of the government's commitment to improving the health of Canadians.

The BC-CfE had the pleasure to recently welcome Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, accompanied by Defense Minister Harjit Sajjan, to 625 Powell Street, its newly expanded Hope to Health Research Clinic. The BC-CfE hosted a roundtable discussion with the Prime Minister, first responders and community partners on the overdose crisis. The Hope to Health Research Clinic, located on the Downtown Eastside, is a BC-CfE research clinic which supports research to adapt, evaluate and expand Treatment as Prevention® to other contagious diseases. Under the leadership of Dr. Julio Montaner, BC-CfE Director, in the beginning, the clinic will focus on three pillars: HIV, addiction and viral hepatitis.

The roundtable meeting was informative and moving as attendees spoke passionately about the overwhelming toll the overdose crisis has had on communities in B.C. To date, B.C. is the only province to declare a public health emergency after experiencing a surge in drug-

related overdoses and deaths. Prime Minister Trudeau announced the federal government will provide \$65-million over five years to respond to Canada's opioid crisis, with \$10-million earmarked for B.C.

Health Minister Jane Philpott's visit to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside last January 2016 during the provincial and territorial ministers meeting, where Dr. Montaner was invited to speak, was yet another sign of the present government's changing attitudes. Minister Philpott has returned for subsequent visits where she has met with Dr. Montaner, Irene Day, BC-CfE Operations Director, and Dr. Evan Wood, Director of the BC Centre on Substance Use, part of the BC-CfE, for a tour of the Hope to Health Research Clinic and an update on the BC-CfE's ground breaking research.

Having worked as a family doctor for over 30 years, both in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa, Minister Philpott has not shied away from expressing her commitment to ending the HIV epidemic. The Health Minister and the Canadian Government have both officially endorsed the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) global targets for HIV, including the 90-90-90 Target. The global Treatment Target calls for 90% of people living with HIV to know their status, 90% of people diagnosed with HIV to be in treatment, and 90% of people in treatment to have undetectable viral loads.

The December 1, 2016, World AIDS Day statement by Prime Minister Trudeau reaffirmed the government's commitment to eliminating HIV. The statements closes by saying, "The fight against HIV/AIDS is a winnable one. I encourage all Canadians to support efforts to raise

awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention through the UN-led #HIVPrevention campaign. By working together with researchers, activists, civil society, other countries, and the courageous people living with HIV/AIDS around the world, we can bring this global epidemic to an end."

On the heels of Minister Philpott's visit, Dr. Montaner, and colleagues were honoured to welcome Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Jody Wilson-Raybould for a discussion and tour of the Hope to Health Research Clinic.

Dr. Montaner and BC-CfE research scientists discussed highlights of their research on HIV, sex work, and substance use.

Minister Wilson-Raybould acknowledged the problem of the over-criminalization of HIV non-disclosure in the criminal justice system. Dr. Kate Shannon, Director of BC-CfE's Gender and Sexual Health Initiative, also discussed with the Minister how HIV non-disclosure disproportionately affects women in the criminal justice system. Minister Wilson-Raybould was supportive of working with the BC-CfE on these issues.

An important consensus statement signed by Dr. Montaner and 75 other prominent Canadian medical experts reflects the need for the criminal justice system to adapt to better reflect the current scientific evidence on HIV transmission.

The BC-CfE celebrates the federal government's renewed commitment to support HIV and AIDS domestically and internationally, and we look forward to working together.



» The over-criminalization of HIV non-disclosure discourages many individuals from being tested and seeking treatment, and further stigmatizes those living with HIV or AIDS.

— Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Jody Wilson-Raybould



## NEW INITIATIVE

# Announcing RETAIN

The Re-Engagement and Engagement in Treatment for Antiretroviral Interrupted and Naïve populations (RETAIN) Initiative is a new partnership with the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, Medical Health Officers from each health authority and Public Health staff throughout British Columbia.

The RETAIN Initiative seeks to promote treatment initiation for HIV-positive British Columbians who have never been treated with HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART) and treatment re-initiation for individuals who have interrupted HIV treatment through ART. On sustained and consistent treatment, people



living with HIV (PLHIV) can achieve a viral load undetectable by standard blood tests. HIV treatment improves an individual's quality of life and longevity, while nearly eliminating the chances of transmitting HIV to others. This is the evidence-based concept behind Treatment as Prevention®.

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for B.C. has reviewed this initiative, and it adheres to strict privacy standards and all applicable privacy legislation.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/stop-hiv/aids/retain>

## FINDINGS

# Data on HIV and Women in British Columbia Shows Improvement in Access to Care, Treatment

The BC-CfE HIV Pulse series is a comprehensive and concise fact sheet highlighting HIV/AIDS-related findings for health care professionals and administrators in the province of British Columbia. The series focuses on Treatment as Prevention® (TasP®)—expanding access to earlier testing and immediate universal access to HIV treatment upon diagnosis—and its implementation in B.C. The HIV Pulse fact sheets provide easy to access information on progress against HIV, persistent gaps and how to address these gaps.

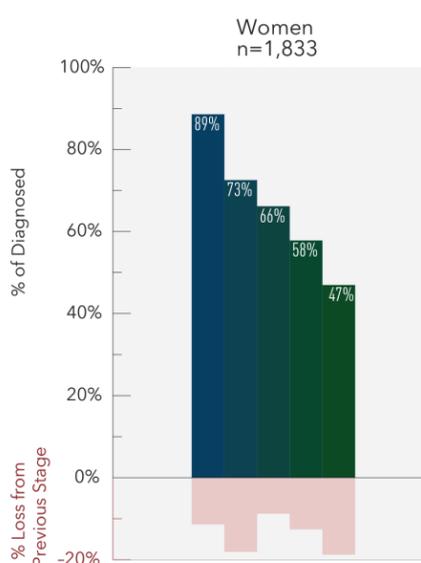
The latest HIV Pulse looks at how HIV affects women in B.C, a group that makes up approximately 18% of the population living with HIV in the province. The latest data shows HIV care and treatment for women is improving.

BC-CfE research has shown persistent gaps for women living with HIV, as they can face distinct barriers to accessing treatment and care. For example, a previous study led by the BC-CfE found that, while the life expectancy of people living with HIV has gone up across Canada, on average, women with HIV don't live as long as men with HIV. The same study found that women were more likely to start HIV treatment later than men.

The numbers in the latest BC-CfE HIV Pulse demonstrate an improvement for women living with HIV, but there is still work to be done to reach the UNAIDS target of 90-90-90: 90% of those living with HIV diagnosed, 90% of those diagnosed on treatment, and 90% of those on treatment with suppressed viral loads. In the third quarter of 2016, of an estimated 1,833 women living with HIV, 89% were linked to care, 73% were retained in care, 66% were on treatment, 58% were adherent and 47% were suppressed.

Interestingly, women are now testing at a greater rate than men and are seeing generally declining rates of HIV since 2005; although there was a slight increased observed from 2013 to 2014. The highest proportion of new HIV diagnoses is found among women aged 30 to 39 years (37%), followed by those aged 20-29 (30%) years.

Figure 1 Estimated Cascade of Care for Women Living With HIV in British Columbia, Year Ending 2016 Q3



The positive trends among women living with HIV may reflect increasing knowledge about TasP®, as well as the removal of some barriers to care through the creation of more inclusive standards on access to HIV testing and treatment. All British Columbians are now encouraged to have an HIV test. Several hospitals and primary care clinics in the province have implemented routine HIV testing. Additionally, in accordance with the TasP® approach, all individuals should be offered HIV treatment upon diagnosis, regardless of their CD4 count (an indicator of immune system health).

Despite these recommendations, women are generally still starting treatment later than men, according to the most recent data from B.C. In 2016, the median CD4 count for women at ART initiation was lower, which could be explained by late diagnoses and the unique barriers women living with HIV face when accessing care and treatment.

For more data related to STOP HIV/AIDS® program and the implementation of TasP® in the province of British Columbia, please see the STOP HIV/AIDS Quarterly reports available at <http://stophiv aids.ca>.

## ARV UPDATE

# Spring HIV/Antiretroviral Update

Monday, June 12, 2017, 8:30 AM to 5 PM  
Grand Ballroom-North Tower,  
Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, Vancouver, BC

This is an open educational event sponsored by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and accredited by the College of Family Physicians of Canada. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided on site

On-line registration will open April 1st at <http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/events/spring-hivantiretroviral-update-2017> Please note seating is available for up to 400 people, so pre-registration is strongly recommended. On-site registration will not be available.

We hope you can attend and are sure that you will find these presentations informative and helpful. If you cannot attend in person, the event will also be live streamed on BC-CfE website.

A full program will become available on the BC-CfE website. For topics, additional information, and registration visit the "Events" page at [cfenet.ubc.ca](http://cfenet.ubc.ca) on or after April 1st.

## AWARD

# BC-CfE's Dr. Kate Shannon to receive 2017 CAHR-CANFAR Excellence in HIV Research Award



We are pleased to announce Dr. Kate Shannon, Director of the Gender & Sexual Health Initiative at the BC-CfE, is the recipient of the 2017 CAHR-CANFAR (Canadian Association for HIV Research-The Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research) Excellence in HIV Research Award.

The Excellence in Research Awards program is intended to highlight and celebrate

the contributions of Canadian researchers in HIV/AIDS research in Canada and internationally. Each year at the CAHR Conference, up to five awards are bestowed to highlight the achievements of researchers actively contributing to HIV research in their respective discipline.

The award will be presented to Dr. Shannon during the opening of the 26th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research to be held in Montreal, Quebec, April 6-9, 2017. Congratulations on this most deserved honour!

## LECTURES & EVENTS

### What's New in Addiction Medicine?

TBA

Speaker: Dr. Ben Trepanier

Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 12-1PM

Hurlburt Auditorium (2nd floor), St. Paul's Hospital

### HIV Care Rounds

**Drug to Drug Interactions**

Speaker: Junine Toy

Thursday, April 6, 2017, 8-9AM

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

**Nutrition**

Speaker: Kathy Ho and Jenn Messina

Thursday, April 20, 2017, 8-9AM

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 through PharmaCare and the Provincial Health Services Authority.



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CENTRE for EXCELLENCE  
in HIV/AIDS