



BONE AND JOINT HEALTH

Contact

[Leadership team](#)

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Key Partners

[Alberta Bone and Joint Health Institute \(ABJHI\)](#)

[McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health](#)

Major initiatives and achievements, 2022-2023

The Bone and Joint Health (BJH) SCN continues to drive forward several fronts to enable the transformation of the MSK health care system of Alberta, for the benefit of patients and providers working in the system. The BJH SCN Scientific Office (SO), an integral part of the BJH SCN and leadership team, has undergone some changes and shifted directions over the past year to continue supporting an evidence-informed approach to addressing BJH SCN priority areas.

Movement forward – Rapid Access Clinics aim to improve access to and quality of MSK care

Musculoskeletal (MSK) health issues are common in Alberta, especially those impacting the low back, soft tissue knee and shoulder joints. MSK conditions require early and accurate assessment to be effectively treated and managed. However, many Albertans experience significant health system challenges (e.g., long wait times, variation in care, and uncertainty in the patient journey) that can affect outcomes and quality of life. The [MSK Transformation \(MSK-T\)](#) Program aims to significantly improve access to timely assessment and improve the quality of MSK care across the province.

Rapid Access Clinics (RACs) are a key component of the MSK Transformation Program in Alberta. RACs are specialized clinics that employ multidisciplinary teams, enabling expert assessment of MSK problems and appropriate referrals and recommendations for needed care. RACs are expected to enable a more centralized and standardized approach to MSK care and align with Strategy 2 of the Alberta Surgical Initiative: *Improve the provision of surgical consultation and recovery*. Benefits include: faster access for patients to receive their initial consult; efficient, high-quality referrals to surgeons, as appropriate; earlier initiation of conservative management interventions; and better communication among clinicians and across clinics.



Implementation of RACs will begin in 2023/2024 and evaluation of their impacts is ongoing. As part of this work, the BJH SCN has engaged MSK clinics, Primary Care Networks and others and co-developed a set of provincial clinical pathways for MSK assessment ([shoulder](#), [soft tissue knee](#), [spine/low back](#)). These tools provide evidence-based guidance to support patient assessment, screening, diagnosis, and treatment.

Translational Impact Grants target research and improvements in musculoskeletal care

A new Translational Impact Funding Competition, established in partnership with the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health, aims to support rapid uptake of pre-clinical research within health system operations. Specifically, this funding opportunity targets research at Step 2 of the [AHS innovation pipeline](#) – i.e., generate the evidence needed to establish proof concept (efficacy, effectiveness) in the healthcare system prior to broader implementation.

This competition is strategically aligned with the annual Cy Frank Legacy Lecture Series, inspired by Dr. Frank's vision for clinical research and the application of innovative solutions to improve clinical care. The inaugural competition was announced in Sept 2022 with two grant recipients announced in [April 2023](#).

Supporting wellness, disease prevention and digital health innovation

Through the BJH SCN Facilitation Funding opportunity, the Scientific Office supported initial pilot testing for **My Viva**®, an innovative digital health platform that aims to support healthy behaviours and choices related to nutrition and exercise. This tool provides a way to monitor and self-manage one's health and wellness, and encourage healthy, long-term lifestyle habits that can help prevent chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Impact on health and care

The BJH SCN is focused on **'Keeping Albertans Moving'** through focused areas of work that aim to mitigate, maximize and mend problems associated with bones, joints and the MSK system. The BJH SCN is committed to providing access to high quality MSK care to all Albertans. It also aims to empower Albertans to self-manage chronic MSK conditions to optimize quality of life.

Over the past fiscal year, the work of the SCN has positively impacted MSK health and care delivery of MSK services in Alberta by:

- ▶ Developing evidence-informed, consensus-based clinical guidelines for shoulder, low back and soft tissue knee conditions
- ▶ Co-sponsoring a Health Evidence Review regarding low back pain interventions
- ▶ Improving measurement, evaluation and reporting of key performance indicators for MSK conditions
- ▶ Facilitating adoption of digital health solutions and developing patient education materials with evidence-informed information on how to self-manage chronic MSK conditions
- ▶ Actively supporting the Alberta Surgical Initiative to reduce surgical demand and improve surgical wait times
- ▶ Championing and supporting implementation of Rapid Access Clinics to improve access to orthopedic consultation for Albertans with select MSK conditions
- ▶ Improving osteoporosis treatment for patients who experience a hip fracture through provincial implementation of the Fracture Liaison Service (FLS)

Other highlights

Welcome to our new Scientific Director – Dr. Claire Barber

The Scientific Office came under new leadership at the beginning of this fiscal year (April 2022). Dr. Claire Barber, the new Scientific Director for the BJH SCN, is a rheumatologist in Calgary and an Associate Professor at the University of Calgary in the Departments of Medicine (Division of Rheumatology) and Community Health Sciences. Dr. Barber's research program is focused on quality of care, specifically in inflammatory arthritis, and development of effective care models for patients living with rheumatoid arthritis.



With Dr. Barber assuming the role of the new Scientific Director, we would also like to recognize the significant contributions made by Dr. David A. Hart (SD from 2015-2022) through his research, expertise, extensive network of academic partners, and leadership in re-orienting the role of Scientific Office within the BJH SCN.



Supporting innovation in health care

"It is clear that the health care system is in need of extensive change to meet the needs of all Albertans. The Strategic Clinical Networks, and specifically the Bone & Joint Health SCN is an essential vehicle to affect change in this area of musculoskeletal diseases and conditions that impact the lives of so many Albertans. The BJH SCN is the effective interface between the strength in this area in academia, the community of affected Albertans and Alberta Health. The BJH SCN is uniquely positioned to facilitate effective changes in the system via implementation of validated and significant modifications that benefit both the Health Care System and Albertans."

Dr. David A Hart, former Scientific Director of the BJH SCN, Professor, and Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences

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Grants and Publications	Engagement	Outcomes and Impact
 <p>19 Peer-reviewed Publications</p>	 <p>10 Workshops & Presentations</p>	<p>>13,000 Hip fracture patients assessed by the FLS</p>
 <p>\$3.6M Research Grants</p>	 <p>147 Research Members</p>	<p>50% decrease in hip fracture risk for patients assessed by the FLS after 2 years due to improved screening prevention, and restorative care</p>

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