



PROVINCIAL POPULATION & PUBLIC HEALTH

Integrated Provincial Program

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER

Maureen Devolin, RN, BScN, MEd

Peter Mackinnon, MHSA, CHE (to 09/2021)

SENIOR MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Dr. Laura McDougall, MD, University of Calgary, AHS

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH EVIDENCE & INNOVATION (PHEI)

Dr. Gary Teare, PhD, MSc, DVM, University of Calgary

LEAD MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, PHEI

Dr. Jason Cabaj, MD, MSc, FRCP(C), University of Calgary

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PHEI AND PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE & INFORMATICS

Dr. Hussain Usman, MD, PH, MSc, MBBS

KEY PARTNERS

AHS Zone Public Health Operations

AHS Clinical Operations

Primary Care Networks

Alberta Medical Association

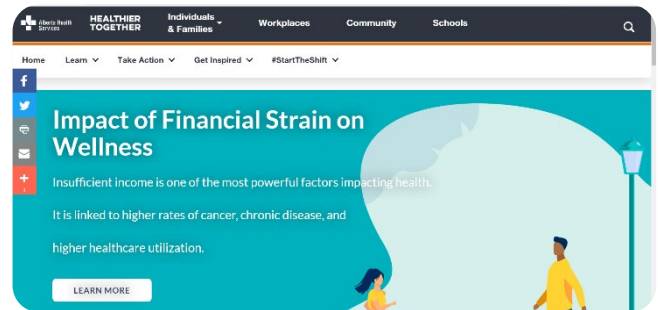
Alberta Universities (UA, UC, UL)

Major initiatives and achievements, 2021-2022

Over the past year, Provincial Population and Public Health (PPPH) has supported Alberta's response to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to advance knowledge about the impact of post-COVID conditions and of financial strain, and supporting programs and evidence-informed health system improvements focused on population and public health.

Reducing the impact of financial strain (RIFS) and other social determinants of health

Building on foundational work complete in the previous fiscal year, the RIFS team developed and launched a [website](#) that provides information and resources for healthcare providers, communities, patients and families that can support organizations and primary care providers take action in their own community. The website includes stories to inspire change and action. They include the voice of Albertans who have experienced financial strain and examples of approaches health care providers and communities have taken, working together to address these challenges.



The information and resources shared on this site are designed to improve understanding of how to screen for financial strain and other social determinants of health (SDoH) in primary care. Originally a three-year project, RIFS was extended to September 2021 due to pandemic-related delays. RIFS is a partnership between AHS Provincial Primary Health Care Integration Network, Provincial Population and Public Health (PPPH), the Alberta Medical Association, AHS Zones, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and clinics, and local communities. [Learn more](#)

Enhanced cancer and chronic disease prevention and screening: ASAP+ & strategies to create health equity

PPPH has led and supported several initiatives that focus on cancer and chronic disease prevention and increasing access to screening. For example:

Alberta Screening and Prevention Plus (ASAP+): PPPH's Cancer Prevention and Screening Innovation team has collaborated with the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) to develop a Change Package and series of training modules for primary care providers that guide screening and brief interventions for modifiable risk factors of cancer and chronic disease (such as smoking, alcohol misuse, physical inactivity and insufficient vegetable and fruit intake). These materials are available to primary care providers through the AMA Accelerating Change Transformation Team (ACTT) website: [Alberta Screening and Prevention Plus \(ASAP+\)](#).

Creating Health Equity in Cancer Screening (CHECS) Project: Data from the Calgary Zone shows individuals living in the East and Northeast parts of Calgary experience higher material deprivation and lower breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening rates. To address inequities in cancer screening in these areas, the CHECS team engaged with community members and health workers to better understand reasons and motivations for screening for cancer. Results of the engagement informed the co-design of an outreach strategy aimed at increasing cancer screening awareness. A series of 7 animated cancer screening videos were developed, which have been translated into 5 languages (Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu, Mandarin, Tigrinya) plus English (www.screeningforlife.ca). Grant funding for this initiative was provided by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC).

Improved Access to Colorectal Cancer Screening via Online Ordering System for Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT): Beginning January 2022, eligible Albertans (aged 50 to 74) can order a free FIT kit online at www.screeningforlife.ca (or by calling AHS Screening Programs) and have it mailed directly to them. FIT is the recommended colorectal cancer (CRC) screening test in Alberta for individuals aged 50 to 74 who are of average risk.

This initiative, launched by the Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program and AHS aims to reduce barriers and improve access to colorectal cancer screening for Albertans. This is especially important for those living in rural and remote communities who do not have a primary healthcare provider, and those with significant travel distances to access care and to pick up a FIT kit at a lab. Since the launch of the initiative, more than 1,300 FIT kits have been mailed to Albertans. Grant funding for this initiative was provided by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC).

Partnering with Rural Communities: PPPH has been working with rural communities throughout Alberta, developing local coalitions to promote health and prevent cancer and chronic diseases. Participating communities follow a program called the Alberta Healthy Community Approach that involves stakeholder engagement; understanding their community; prioritization and planning; implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement. Information to help build healthy communities, plan local initiatives, links to community health profiles and a population health dashboard are available on [HealthierTogether.ca](https://www.healthiertogether.ca).

Understanding the early impact of Post-COVID Conditions in Alberta

Senior scientists with PPPH co-chaired and contributed to a Data and Reporting Working Group tasked with evaluating the potential scope and impact of post-COVID conditions (“Long COVID”) in Alberta. The Working Group, part of the Emergency Coordination Centre’s Post-COVID Condition Task Force, compiled information from early research studies as well as primary analyses of relevant data, compiling a report outlining (1) characteristics of post-COVID conditions, (2) patient pathways to information and care, and (3) health system impacts of COVID-19. The report also identified current data limitations and made recommendations for future reporting. [Full report](#)

Other highlights

Translating knowledge and evidence into practice that optimizes oral health and oral health equity

AHS’ Provincial Oral Health Office (POHO), in collaboration with partners internal and external to AHS, conducts research and surveillance projects to better understand Albertans’ oral health needs and focuses on translating knowledge gained by research into actions to improve oral health and oral health equity.

In 2021-22, the POHO published three studies examining dental public health issues in Alberta. Topics include:

- [provision of dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and effects of social distancing restrictions on access to care for low-income families
- [impact of fluoridation cessation on children’s dental health](#)
- [fluoride concentrations at water treatment facilities and other endpoints](#)




These studies provide valuable insight about the oral health status of Albertans and evidence to inform public policy decisions in social, economic, and environmental sectors.

Impact on health and care in Alberta

PPPH continues to advance population and public health outcomes across Alberta. Their work over the past fiscal year has:

- Supported Alberta’s emergency response, public health measures, data analysis and surveillance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- Helped expand access to screening for cancer, chronic disease and financial strain in all communities, with particular focus on addressing the needs of equity-deserving groups
- Improved awareness of underlying social needs, supports and coordination by primary care clinicians and community partners
- Fostered positive relationships and connections with patients, families, primary care, community partners and other stakeholders to support ongoing collaboration

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Grants and Publications	Engagement	Outcomes and Impact
 <p>18 Peer-reviewed Publications</p>	 <p>14 Workshops & Presentations</p>	<p>Co-designed & launched knowledge translation tools that support screening, prevention, and community action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 3 web sites (RIFS, ScreeningforLife.ca, HealthierTogether.ca) ✓ training modules for primary care providers to support cancer prevention ✓ digital stories and videos ✓ online ordering of FIT kits ✓ evidence reviews (oral health, Long COVID)
 <p>\$6.7M Research Grants</p>		

www.ahs.ca/ppihscn