

# About the Former Addiction & Mental Health Research Partnership Program

## Background

The Alberta Addiction and Mental Health (AMH) Research Hub, formerly known as the Alberta AMH Research Partnership Program (RPP), has an established history at Alberta Health Services (AHS).

The RPP was formed in 2004 by the Alberta Mental Health Board to address the urgent need to increase research and evidence-based practices to advance the mental health of Albertans and the system of care. In 2009, AHS was formed and the Alberta Mental Health Board and the RPP were integrated into AHS. With the combination of the mental health and addiction portfolios, the focus of the RPP expanded to include not only mental health, but also addiction. The RPP worked to generate world-class AMH research in priority theme areas, increased the application of evidence to practice to improve the AMH outcomes for Albertans, and informed and promoted integration in the broader AMH system through research.

## Priority themes

In 2006, Alberta stakeholders established a mental health research agenda with several priority themes to guide the RPP in working toward improving AMH outcomes for Albertans:

- Addiction and mental health in the workplace
- Child and adolescent mental health
- Effectiveness of mental health services and the system
- Indigenous and multicultural populations
- Mental illness and addiction
- Suicide prevention

Several projects were undertaken related to these priority themes, including the following materials:

- Addiction and Mental Health in Alberta's Construction Industry (summary report)
- Substance Use in Alberta's Construction Industry (fact sheet)
- 10 Facts About Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use (infographic)
- Facts About Alcohol Use by Oil and Gas Workers in Alberta (infographic)
- Alcohol and Drug Use in Alberta's Oil and Gas Industry (summary report)
- Online Addiction and Mental Health Workplace Resources (directory)
- Aboriginal Addiction and Mental Health in Alberta (infographic)
- The Relationship Between Cannabis and Cancer in Men (summary report)
- Constant Observation in Psychiatric Inpatient Settings (summary report)

These archived documents are available upon request; email [amh.researchhub@ahs.ca](mailto:amh.researchhub@ahs.ca) for a copy.

### Funding initiatives

The RPP offered several funding initiatives:

#### **Alberta Centennial Addiction and Mental Health Research Chairs**

##### **Background**

The aim of the Chairs Program was to attract quality mid- to senior career scholars to the province with the expectation that through their leadership, links between researchers and AHS will be strengthened. This would in turn increase the quality and output of addiction and mental health research findings, and improve translation of research findings into practice. The RPP awarded two Research Chair awards.

##### **Dr. Jean Addington**

Dr. Addington began her Research Chair term in July 2008 at the University of Calgary. Working in the area of early psychosis, Dr. Addington helped to advance the area of child/adolescent mental health research. Dr. Addington's work aimed to:

- Identify methods of early detection and prevention of psychosis, via early intervention in the prodromal phase of illnesses like schizophrenia.
- Determine whether symptoms can be predicted and treated prior to a full-blown psychotic episode in young people.
- Minimize the impact of the disease early on, thus moving psychotic illness from the category of severe and persistent mental illness into the same realm as disorders such as anxiety, depression, or chronic medical conditions such as diabetes.

For more information about Dr. Addington's research, funding, and publications, see [Jean Addington, PhD](#).

##### **Dr. Katherine Aitchison**

Dr. Aitchison began her Research Chair term in September 2011 at the University of Alberta. Dr. Aitchison's work helped to advance the area of AMH, with a secondary focus on suicide prevention. Dr. Aitchison's work focused on:

- Investigation of the interaction between adverse childhood experiences, recent adverse life events, genetic vulnerability, and exposure to cannabis in individuals with psychotic illnesses (e.g., schizophrenia and bipolar affective disorder).
- Identification of genetic factors associated with risk of mental illness and addictions, as well as treatment response with the aim of enabling health promotion and prevention strategies such as individually tailored treatments.
- Identification of biological and psychosocial factors and mediators involved in suicidal behaviours to help create protective strategies for young people.

For more information about Dr. Aitchison's research, funding, and publications, see her profile at [Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Alberta](#).

### **Collaborative Research Grant Initiative: Mental Wellness in Seniors and Persons with Disabilities**

In 2008, the former Alberta Mental Health Board (now AHS) was granted funding from the former Ministry of Human Services to advance applied research activity in mental health within areas of interest to their Ministry. The focus was on generating knowledge to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs, services, and support to respond to the mental health needs of seniors and adults with disabilities. The grant supported both academic and practitioner-driven investigation to assist seniors and adults with disabilities living with a mental illness, in order to maximize their independence in the community. The grant ended in 2015.

A complete list of grant recipients and their research is available. If you are interested in reading their final reports, contact [amh.researchhub@ahs.ca](mailto:amh.researchhub@ahs.ca).

### **AMH Research Showcase**

The AMH Research Showcase was a one-of-a-kind knowledge translation conference with a tradition of advancing AMH through research and bringing AMH experts from around the world to Alberta. The event promoted applied AMH research; bridged the gaps among research, practice, and policy; and encouraged the use of research findings to continually improve mental health services and outcomes.

Showcase conferences featured such keynote speakers as:

- Sir David Goldberg
- Dr. Reid Meloy
- Lt. General Romeo Dallaire
- Margaret Trudeau
- Jane Pauley
- Dr. David Goldbloom
- Hon. James K. Bartleman

