



Heart and Stroke Foundation Centre for Stroke Recovery receives multimillion dollar contribution to expand groundbreaking research

Pushing the boundaries of stroke recovery

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Ottawa, Ontario – The Heart and Stroke Foundation today announced \$10 million in funding to its partner organization, the Heart and Stroke Foundation Centre for Stroke Recovery (CSR) to fund research in the area of stroke recovery.

“The Centre for Stroke Recovery is redefining research, stroke care, and stroke recovery across the country,” says David Sculthorpe, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. “This contribution will facilitate new discoveries and help stroke survivors recover faster than ever before.” We are extremely grateful for the contributions from the Centre’s current partners which include Baycrest, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the University of Ottawa, the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, and our new partner, Memorial University.”

CSR partners are committed to transforming outcomes by dramatically reducing the incidence of stroke and improving recovery and quality of life for stroke survivors and caregivers. Funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the CSR’s other partners will support vital research and accelerate its pace.

The Foundation’s investment will continue to fuel the Centre’s research into new areas of stroke recovery. Created in 2002, the CSR has initiated multiple research initiatives and partnerships aimed at accelerating and enhancing recovery from stroke.

“Research into stroke recovery is more important than ever because we now know that recovery continues indefinitely rather than stopping a few weeks after the event,” says Dr. Dale Corbett, CEO and Scientific Director of the CSR. “This finding has major implications for rehabilitation and for research into recovery following stroke. It opens the door to new modes of rehabilitation and treatment. For survivors, it means it is never too late to regain functions.”

Key areas of research in this virtual centre include:

- **Exercise, stroke recovery and brain health.** CSR teams, including one led by Dr. Laura Middleton at Sunnybrook Health Science Centre, are working to understand the implications of exercise for recovery. These innovative studies have the potential to change lives in a very substantive way according to Dr. Corbett.

Research shows that something as simple as regular exercise can actually speed up the process of brain repair. “We all know physical activity is good,” says Dr. Corbett. “Now, we are amassing evidence that exercise may also accelerate stroke recovery. Our teams are trying to learn what intensity and duration of exercise will bring the best results. Their findings will have many applications, and may lead to new guidelines and greater emphasis on exercise therapy after stroke. Also, our research can be translated immediately into clinical practice because new exercise regimens do not require a long approval process.”

- **White matter injury, covert stroke and cognitive function.** Dr. Black and her team at Sunnybrook as well as colleagues at Baycrest are among the many CSR researchers studying silent or covert strokes – tiny strokes that do not immediately produce obvious symptoms.

While covert stroke has received increased attention over the last few years, the magnitude of the problem is just now being realized. Canadians are five to six times more likely to experience covert strokes than massive overt strokes – and the long-term effects often include significant loss of cognitive function and eventually dementia.

The cumulative effect can be devastating, according to Dr. Corbett. “Major strokes are the tip of the iceberg” he says. “Covert stroke is the huge hidden part of the iceberg – and the part we need to better diagnose and understand.

“Part of the challenge, and an important first step, is acquiring improved data. Currently in Canada we do not capture this sufficiently. My hope is to see improved data capture and better cognitive tools to ensure early detection. Much of our research in this area is aimed at improved data capture, development of better tools for early detection and new cognitive rehab therapies.”

- **Regenerative approaches to stroke recovery involving neurogenesis and cell transplants.** CSR teams, including one led by Dr. Corbett, working at University of Ottawa and the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, are looking for ways to promote the replacement of brain cells – a process known as neurogenesis. The goal is to help the brain heal itself using its own processes after stroke. “This area of research is still in its infancy, but it may lay the groundwork for future therapies which – down the road – will significantly accelerate stroke recovery,” says Dr. Corbett.

Research has huge significance for stroke survivor Joe Newton and his wife and caregiver Shirley. A major stroke 13 years ago left Joe paralyzed on the left side of his body, and unable to eat solid foods. Since then, he has worked ceaselessly to regain physical and cognitive functions.

Today he is a recognized water colour artist. He prepares gourmet meals, travels and works out regularly – and he continues to regain functions lost to stroke. He has also taken part in several studies and both he and his wife Shirley are firm advocates of research. “It’s a good life now,” says Shirley, “and that is due in part to stroke research. Just understanding that the brain has the potential to repair itself has enhanced our life.”

“Research gives us hope,” says survivor Joe Newton.

“Knowledge gained by CSR researchers will help stroke survivors recover more,” says David Sculthorpe. “Faster, more complete recovery means lower health care costs and, even more important, a better quality of life for everyone affected by stroke. “

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability. Approximately 50,000 strokes occur in Canada each year – that’s one every 10 minutes – and 315,000 Canadians are living with the after-effects of a stroke. Many more experience covert stroke, with devastating cumulative effects. Each year, nearly 14,000 Canadians die from stroke and more women than men die from stroke. Of those who survive, more than half require ongoing assistance with daily activities. Stroke costs the Canadian economy \$3.6 billion a year in physician services, hospital costs, lost wages, and decreased productivity.

To learn more about research into stroke recovery, visit www.centreforstrokerecovery.ca
To learn more about stroke and stroke prevention, visit www.heartandstroke.ca/stroke

The Heart and Stroke Foundation Centre for Stroke Recovery

The Heart and Stroke Foundation Centre for Stroke Recovery (CSR) (www.centreforstrokerecovery.ca) is leading the way in stroke recovery research and serving as an example for the global community.) A "virtual" Centre of Excellence, the CSR enables world-class researchers, scientists and clinicians from Baycrest, Memorial University, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the University of Ottawa and the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute to share information, insights and ideas to accelerate the pace of scientific advances in stroke treatment and recovery. More than 100 individual CSR researchers are already affiliated with organizations across North America.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

The Heart and Stroke Foundation (www.heartandstroke.ca), a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

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