



# Research Report

February 2026

## New Research Awards in Dept of Pediatrics

### 2025 College of Medicine Research Awards (CoMRAD)



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**Dr. Tim Bradley**  
 Targeting Arterial Stiffness  
 in Kidney disease in  
 children (TASK) study



**Dr. Ghita Wiebe**  
 From Waitlists to What  
 Matters; Redesigning Autism  
 Systems of Care with Families  
 in Saskatchewan



**Dr. Alan Rosenberg**  
 Unraveling the  
 Characteristics, Clinical  
 Associations, and Biological  
 Immunofluorescence Patterns  
 in Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

#### CONTENT

Awards.....	1	Our Partners.....	3
Child Health Research Trainee Day .....	2	Coming Events .....	7
Rare Disease Day.....	5	Publications.....	8



### 2025-2026 SHRF Align Grant

Dr. Athena McConnell (PI)  
Evaluation of nirsevimab implementation in  
Saskatchewan 2025-2026  
Funding : \$10,000



Co-Investigators: Cheryl Sparks, Jessica Christoph, Dr. Josep Blondeau, Melanie Bonilla,  
Rachel Leavitt Trainee: Dr. Erinna McMurtry Supporters: Kim Woycik, Dr. Terry Klassen

Summary: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the most common cause of respiratory tract infection among young children, particularly in those younger than 1 year of age. The majority of patients hospitalized with RSV are healthy term infants. Nirsevimab is a long-acting monoclonal antibody against respiratory syncytial virus infection in infants. Clinical trials and real world data in other countries have shown significant reduction in admissions and outpatient visits for RSV-related infections. It was approved by Health Canada in April 2023 and will replace palivizumab for the prevention of infection due to RSV in the 2025-2026 season for eligible groups in Saskatchewan. An evaluation of the nirsevimab program in Saskatchewan is needed to reassure internal and external stakeholders of the value of the program. Data will also be of use as improvements to the program are sought for future years.

## Department of Pediatrics Child Health Research Trainee Day 2026



**Keynote Speaker: Dr. Veronica McKinney**

Please join us on Thursday March 26th 12-4 pm for this research symposium featuring presentations from residents, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and undergraduate students engaged in child health research at USask.

**RSVP**  
before March 12<sup>th</sup>!



# 2025 Undergraduate Research Showcase Department of Pediatrics Awardees



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## First Place Marina Liu (Dr. Paul D'Alessandro)

Verbatim theatre in pediatric oncology: integration into residency education and continuing interprofessional development sessions Hybrid (in-person and virtual) sessions, including those involving medical humanities, are increasingly ubiquitous in health professional education since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ed's Story, a verbatim play written from the journal of an adolescent/young adult (AYA) osteosarcoma patient, has been utilized in medical education at Canadian institutions for over a decade. However, we have never integrated Ed's Story into sessions for pediatric resident physicians (PRPs) or pediatric oncology healthcare professionals (HCPs). We explored how hybrid sessions using Ed's Story, combining both passive viewing of a recording of the play followed by reader's theatre (RT) of the script, impacted PRPs and HCPs working in the provincial pediatric oncology program at our tertiary children's hospital. Hybrid sessions were feasible and enjoyable; participant empathy increased post-session; and the majority of participants preferred watching the recording over RT. Inductive thematic analysis of narrative feedback identified five themes: new or broadened understanding of interdisciplinary pediatric oncology care and patient/family illness experiences; recognition of AYA care needs; appreciation for nuances of advanced communication; acknowledgement of new skills gained; and session/logistic feedback. These results will inform future iterations of Ed's Story to optimize content delivery and session structure.

Check out all winners here: <https://medicine.usask.ca/documents/2025-urs-awardees-judges2.pdf>

Check out all participants here: <https://medicine.usask.ca/documents/2025-urs-abstracts-book.pdf>



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We acknowledge that we live  
and work on Treaty 6  
Territory and the Homeland  
of the Métis. We pay our  
respect to the First Nations  
and Métis ancestors of this  
place and reaffirm our  
relationship with one  
another.

## Our Partners



Jim Pattison Children's Hospital Foundation is dedicated to raising funds to enhance maternal and children's health-care in Saskatchewan. As the provincial leader in supporting pediatric and maternal health research, the Foundation plays a key role in driving innovative research opportunities across the province.



The Children's Health Research Trust Fund (CHRTF) was established in 1983 to help raise funds to support child health research at the University of Saskatchewan. As all donated funds are endowed, the CHRTF has continued to grow to become an important part in helping advance research in the Department of Pediatrics. For further information about the CHRTF and to donate: [donate.usask.ca/online/chrtf.php](https://donate.usask.ca/online/chrtf.php)

**Second Place: Dawson Holt (Dr. Paul D'Alessandro)**

Parent/caregiver attitudes toward pre-pubertal testicular tissue biopsy for fertility preservation in pre-pubertal boys with cancer or undergoing hematopoietic stem cell transplant in Saskatchewan

Purpose: Prepubertal males who undergo cancer treatment or stem cell transplant are at risk of infertility in the future. While post-pubertal males can undergo sperm banking for fertility preservation (FP), there are no current clinical options for FP for pre-pubertal males. In animal models, immature testicular tissue cryopreservation (TTC) has been utilized to generate sperm used for in vitro fertilization, pregnancies, and live births. Human TTC options exist outside Canada for experimental biobanking, and there is potential to expand TTC options within Canada. In order to build an equitable national strategy, attitudes of caregivers toward TTC from less densely populated provinces need to be documented. The aims of this study were to describe attitudes of caregivers of pre-pubertal male cancer/HSCT patients diagnosed in Saskatchewan within the last five years towards TTC, and to determine willingness thresholds to potential consent to TTC. Materials and Methods: We conducted a single centre study with caregivers of prepubertal boys with cancer or requiring stem cell transplant. A questionnaire with demographic information, a rank-order list regarding perceived barriers to TTC, and an open-ended question was administered. An additional theoretical threshold setting exercise was conducted. Results: Fifty-two caregivers participated (response rate 85.2%; 75% female; age 36.9y; 75% White; 15.4% Indigenous; 15.4% Asian; all five income quintiles represented.) On average, caregivers endorsed willingness to accept TTC in the setting of: minimum 26% chance of infertility from underlying treatment; 29% chance of testicular biopsy complications; 18% chance of future FP use; maximum \$616 annual storage cost; and maximum 7.4 hour driving time. Rank-order list of perceived barriers and responses to open-ended question suggested that caregiver attitudes were child-focused (ie: risk/benefit of procedure) rather than parentfocused (ie: travel, logistics, cost.) Conclusions: Caregivers across Saskatchewan demonstrated interest in TTC. These results can inform efforts to expand TTC options for pre-pubertal cancer/HSCT patients locally and nationally.

**Second Place: Nada Emara (Dr. Wendie Marks)**

Modeling early life adversity in Wistar rats: Exploring the effects of maternal fiber restriction on pup development and the brain

Early-life stress (ELS) can have long-term physical and cognitive health effects. In rodents, ELS can be modeled by altering maternal diet during lactation. This changes nutrient availability and microbial transfer to pups, influencing their development via the gut–brain axis. In this study, lactating Wistar rat dams were assigned to fiber-restricted (0.4% cellulose), fiber-enriched (30% cellulose), or control (5% cellulose) diets. Offspring were assessed for somatic growth, sensory and motor development, and stress-related behaviors from postnatal day 1–21. Enrichment accelerated sensory maturation, with earlier pinna detachment and eye opening compared to restriction and control. Males were more sensitive in auditory maturation, whereas females were more affected in visual maturation. For motor performance, restriction impaired righting reflex and grip strength, whereas enrichment improved righting reflex but reduced grip strength. For somatic growth, enrichment produced the greatest overall weight gain compared to restriction, though in males the opposite trend was observed. Maternal diet did not significantly affect ultrasonic vocalization counts. Overall, these findings suggest that maternal dietary fiber shapes early-life somatic, sensory, and motor development, with some effects differing by sex. Future work will examine gut microbiota, neuroendocrine markers, and adolescent cognition and stress responses to uncover underlying mechanisms.

## Canada Foundation for Innovation's John R. Evans Leaders Fund (CFI-JELF)



Congratulations to **Dr. Munier Nour** and his team, **Dr. Saija Kontulainen** and **Dr. JD Johnston** on successfully securing a Canada Foundation for Innovation's John R. Evans Leaders Fund (CFI-JELF) for the purchase of a second-generation, high-resolution peripheral quantitative computed tomography (HR-pQCT-II) scanner.

Check out this CTV News Clip:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/saskatoon/article/sask-researchers-use-new-scanner-in-first-of-its-kind-study-on-childrens-bone-strength/>



Congratulations to **Emma Finch**, University of Saskatchewan who was recently awarded a CANTRAIN Doctoral Studentship. Supervisor: **Dr. Darryl Adamko** Study is entitled, "Targeted Urine Metabolomics for Enhanced Diagnosis of Hypoxic-Ischemic Encephalopathy in Newborns"

Infants are at risk of a lack of oxygen to the brain when being born and this can cause brain damage (called hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE)). The condition can have long-term adverse effects on infants including cerebral palsy (CP). Cooling therapy of infants can prevent CP if it is recognized early. Current diagnosis of HIE is based on clinical features of the child and measuring lactate levels. These predictors are not able to identify all affected infants and can be influenced by the experience of the healthcare practitioner. Thus, a better objective test based on metabolite levels would be a significant improvement to available diagnostic tests. Liquid Chromatography- Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS) is a method of analyzing small molecules, such as metabolites, which are directly affected by disease state. The analysis of a non-invasively collected fluid, namely urine, using LC-MS holds promise as a novel diagnostic tool. An initial pilot study showed that 15 quantifiable metabolites were differentially expressed between healthy and HIE infants. A clinical study to refine the diagnostic model is of value as it can contribute to the development of an objective diagnostic tool, which can be used to prevent brain injury.

Learn more about CANTRAIN here! <https://wecantrain.ca/home/studentships-and-fellowships-program/>



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## Rare Disease Day

Check out the recent video highlight Rare Disease Day – Feb 2025. Featuring Daislyn Vidal – Pediatric Clinical Trial Navigator. Rare Disease Day is on Feb 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
<https://youtu.be/V9OSBF-sMDw>

## Dr. Barry Adams Paediatric Resident Advocacy Education Grant

Established in 2004, the Dr. Barry Adams Paediatric Resident Advocacy Grant supports paediatric residents to develop, plan and implement community-based research or advocacy projects in child and youth health. This grant provides up to 4 awards of \$2,500 each in funding.

The grant aims to support community based projects that improve health access, reduce disparities, or enhance the healthcare experience for children and youth, especially those that are underserved.



Dr. Dilpreet Bajwa is a second year pediatric resident at the University of Saskatchewan



Congratulations to **Dr. Dilpreet Bajwa** on being awarded the 2025 Dr. Barry Adams Paediatric Resident Advocacy Education grant in the amount of \$2,500. The title of her project is, “Little Steps, Big Strengths: A Co-Created Family Resource for Supporting Preschool Autism in Saskatchewan”. This grant is funded by Healthy Generations, foundation of the Canadian Paediatric Society. It supports paediatric residents in developing planning and implementing community-based research or advocacy projects in their community. These projects aim to improve health access, reduce disparities or enhance the healthcare experience for children and youth. Supervisor, **Dr. Ghita Wiebe**.



**Dr. Bilal Marwa**



**Dr. Paul D'Alessandro**

Congratulations to **Dr. Bilal Marwa** and **Dr. Paul D'Alessandro** for being selected to participate in the **American Pediatric Society - Society for Pediatric Research Journeys Program for 2025-2026**. The Journeys program will feature eight one-hour virtual sessions designed to encourage and support promising early-career investigators in pediatrics by offering inspiring career path stories, career development, mentoring, feedback on research, and networking with experienced Cohort Leaders and peers in academic medicine.



**2024-2025 College of Medicine Dean's Summer  
 Research Project Pediatrics Awardees**

**Dr. Susan Petryk**

Student, Alejandra Van Dusen  
 "Evaluating the use of Parent Feedback Forms during  
 Pre-Clerkship Pediatric Clinical Skills Sessions"

**Dr. Paul D'Alessandro**

Student, Marina Liu  
 "Verbatim theatre in medical education:  
 participatory versus passive learner engagement"

**Dr. Tim Bradley**

Student, Lorynn Labbie  
 "The Saskatchewan Fetal  
 Echocardiography Database  
 Project"

**Dr. Paul D'Alessandro**

Student, Dawson Holt  
 "Testicular tissue  
 cryopreservation needs  
 assessment/caregiver  
 attitudes"

**Dr. Basmah Ishteivi**

Student, Andreea Ababei  
 "Well-appearing febrile young infants  
 aged <=90 days, a retrospective  
 analysis of our clinical practice in  
 Regina."



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



**Multidose Ondansetron after Emergency Visits in  
 Children with Gastroenteritis**

**Authors:** Stephen B. Freedman, M.D.C.M., Sarah Williamson-Urquhart, B.Sc.Kin., Amy C. Plint, M.D., Andrew Dixon, M.D., Darcy Beer, M.D., Gary Joubert, M.D., Petros Pechlivanoglou, Ph.D., Yaron Finkelstein, M.D., Anna Heath, Ph.D., Jasper Zhongyuan Zhang, M.Sc., Angela Wallace, B.A., Martin Offringa, M.D., and Terry P. Klassen, M.D., for the Pediatric Emergency Research Canada Innovative Clinical Trials Study Group\* [Author Info & Affiliations](#)

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USask is part of a research team that will help kids with acute gastroenteritis recover at home. Dr. Klassen shares outcomes from a recent double-blind randomized clinical trial in Canada. Results are published in the ***The New England Journal of Medicine***.

*"In areas like pediatric emergency medicine, we need to collaborate nationally to conduct clinical trials that provide the evidence-based solutions needed to inform care to ensure that every child has an optimal outcome," says Klassen.*

**Coming Events**

Mar 5 <sup>th</sup>	Pediatric Grand Rounds – Dr. Susan Gilmour
Mar 12 <sup>th</sup>	Pediatric Resident Journal Club Dr. Nikhail Mainra & Dr. Nita Chauhan
Mar 19 <sup>th</sup>	Pediatric Grand Rounds - Analu Alvarez from OUT Saskatoon
Mar 26 <sup>th</sup>	Keynote Speaker at Child Health Research Trainee Day Dr. Veronica McKinney
April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Pediatric Grand Rounds - Dr. Susan Petryck
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Pediatric Grand Rounds - Dr. Krista Baerg
April 16 <sup>th</sup>	Pediatric Resident Journal Club - Dr. Brooke Fedrau & Dr. Kaleigh Hlady
April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Pediatric Grand Rounds - Natalya Mason and Dr. Laosebikan

# Publications - Oct 2025 to Jan 2026

Tam IS, Nguyen SST, Hawrysh A, Pharis CS, D'Alessandro PR. [Acute Myeloid Leukemia With KAT6A Deletion in a 7-Week-Old](#). *Pediatr Blood Cancer*. 2025 Sep 23:e32077. doi: 10.1002/pbc.32077. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 40985528.

Ladak Z, Medeiros P, Rouleau G, Shuldiner J, Amed S, Cummings E, Doulla M, Ho J, Inman M, Lawrence SE, Li P, Moreau E, Nakhla M, Von Oettingen J, Sellers E, Wherrett DK, Shulman R, Laur C. [Identifying Potential Sustainable and Scalable Interventions to Recognize Signs of Diabetes in Children Across Canada](#). *Can J Diabetes*. 2025 Sep 19:S1499-2671(25)00178-9. doi: 10.1016/j.cjcd.2025.09.002. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 40976280.

Dennison T, Nutter S, Chauhan N. [Weight stigma amid pediatric healthcare providers: a cross-sectional survey study assessing the roles of weight controllability beliefs and blame](#). *BMC Pediatr*. 2025 Aug 16;25(1):625. doi: 10.1186/s12887-025-05995-w. PMID: 40819045; PMCID: PMC12357338.

González-Llorens N, Yau D, León MC, Demirbilek H, Banerjee I, Shah P. [Advances in Pharmacotherapy for Congenital Hyperinsulinism](#). *Paediatr Drugs*. 2025 Nov 7. doi: 10.1007/s40272-025-00727-0. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41201695.

Rheanna Bulten, Gregory Hansen, Tanya Holt. Non-invasive Ventilation in Pediatric Bronchiolitis: Variables Related to Weaning Readiness and Efficacy. *Authorea*. November 05, 2025. DOI: 10.22541/au.176232805.55892865/v1.

Shulman R, Sonnenberg M, Ladak Z, Cummings E, Goldbloom E, Inman M, Reynolds JB, Proulx J, Moreau E, Doulla M, Sellers E, Wherrett E, Li P, Nakhla M, Rac V, Rouleau G, Shuldiner J, Laur C. Implementing and Evaluating an Intervention to Recognize Signs of Diabetes in Children at School. *Canadian Journal of Diabetes*. November, 2025. 49:07 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjcd.2025.10.064>

Samantha Mannala, Mohit Kehar, Leah Samson, Alyssa Poulin, Tristan Kerr, and Mehul P Jariwala. [Drug-induced liver injury secondary to anakinra in a patient with systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis—Case report and literature overview](#) *Canadian Liver Journal* 2025 8:4, 591-596

Shapiro JR, Choi F, Xu A, Duong TT, Gingras AC, Colwill K, Bernatsky S, Benseler SM, Yeung RSM, Versteegen RHJ, Tse S, Spiegel L, Scuccimarrì R, McGrath T, Limenis E, Levy D, Knight A, Jariwala M, Huber A, Houghton K, Hiraki L, Dissanayake D, Dancy P, Church PC, Benchimol EI. [Immunogenicity of COVID-19 booster vaccines in children receiving immunosuppressive medications](#). *Pediatr Res*. Published online July 21, 2025. doi:10.1038/s41390-025-04174-y

Samantha Morin, Karen Beattie, Roberta Berard, Roxana Bolaria, Tania Cellucci, Gaëlle Chédeville, Amieleena Chhabra, Paul Dancy, Tommy Gerschman, Liane Heale, Julie Herrington, Adam Huber, Mehul Jariwala, Jean-Philippe Proulx-Gauthier, Dax Rumsey, Heinrike Schmeling, Jaime Guzman, Michelle Batthish, CAPRI Registry Investigators (Vancouver). [The Association Between Body Composition and Treatment and Disease Outcomes in Patients with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis: Results from the CAPRI Registry](#). *The Journal of Rheumatology* Jul 2025, 52 (Suppl 2) 110; DOI: 10.3899/jrheum.2025-0314.137

de Jonge JB, de Roock S, Schonenberg-Meinema D, van den Berg JM, Marshall DA, Vastert SJ, Yeung RSM, Swart JF, Benseler SM; UCAN CAN-DU and UCAN CURE consortia (Drs. Mehul Jariwala, Alan Rosenberg, Kate Neufeld). [Effect of time to start of biologic therapy on treatment response in childhood arthritis: Results from the UCAN CAN-DU study](#). *Arthritis Rheumatol*. 2025 Sep 22. doi: 10.1002/art.43401. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 40977426.

C Taylor Stoesz, Helen Valkanas, Gita Wahi, Patricia Li, Krista Baerg, Breanna Chen, Olivier Drouin, Karen Forbes, Jessica Foulds, Peter Gill, Ryan Giroux, Radha Jetty, Geert 't Jong, [80 An environmental scan of Indigenous health and social services for children and families in Canadian children's hospitals](#), *Paediatrics & Child Health*, Volume 30, Issue Supplement\_2, December 2025, pxf116.080, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxf116.080>

Matthew S. Chapelski, Leah J. Ferguson, Amanda Froehlich Chow, Charissa Pockett, Kristi D. Wright, Corey R. Tomczak, Marta C. Erlandson, [Effect of a 6-month Chronic Disease Management Program on the Physical Literacy of Children with Congenital Heart Disease: A CHAMPS Cohort Study](#). *CJC Pediatric and Congenital Heart Disease*. Published Dec 17, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjcpc.2025.12.002>

## Publications - Oct 2025 to Jan 2026 Continued

Scantlebury MH, D'Alfonso S, Erome F, **Appendino JP**, Ho A, Jacobs J, Rabinowicz AL, Carrazana E, Buchhalter J. [Characterization of a real-world population with pediatric epilepsy point-of-care standardized data collection as a tool for healthcare quality improvement and disparities research in Canada](#). *Epilepsy Behav.* 2025 Nov;172:110684. doi: 10.1016/j.yebeh.2025.110684. Epub 2025 Sep 4. PMID: 40912076.

Bev Wudel, **Rupeena Purewal**, Todd F Hatchette, Derek Stein, Muhammad Morshed, Jessica Minion, Maud Vallée, Kristy Hayden, Camille Hamula. [Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network \(CPHLN\) diagnostic recommendations for neurosyphilis in Canada](#). *Journal of the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada*. December 19, 2024 Volume 9:4 Pages 219-228

He Dong, Frederick S. Vizeacoumar, Yue Zhang, Nicholas Jette, Jared D.W. Price, Vincent Maranda, Lihui Gong, Tanya Freywald, Jeff Patrick Vizeacoumar, Mary Lazell-Wright, Saruul Uuganbayar, Jaylynn Quail, Alain Morejon Morales, Ayaan Rizvi, Rani Kanthan, Yuliang Wu, Anand Krishnan, **Kathleen Felton**, **Bilal Marwa**, Laura Hopkins, Gary Groot, John Shaw, Gavin Beck, Yigang Luo, Maurice Ogaick, Mike Moser, Andrew Freywald, Shahid Ahmed, Adnan Zaidi, Franco J. Vizeacoumar, [Organoid Pharmacotyping of Pancreatic Cancer Enables Functional Precision Oncology and Drug Repurposing](#). *bioRxiv* 2025.12.01.691211; doi: <https://doi.org/10.64898/2025.12.01.691211>

**Krista Baerg**, Practical tips for paediatricians: It hurts, swells and changes color, maybe its complex regional pain syndrome—Tips for early diagnosis and treatment, *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 2026;pxaf093, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxaf093>

Ali S, **Klassen TP**, Candelaria P, et al. [Acetaminophen \(Paracetamol\) or Opioid Analgesia Added to Ibuprofen for Children's Musculoskeletal Injury: Two Randomized Clinical Trials](#). *JAMA*. Published online January 08, 2026. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.25033

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Datta AN, Ikeda KM, **Salazar Cerda CI**, Hadjinicolaou A, D'Onofrio G, Jacobs-LeVan J, **Appendino JP**, Kobayashi E, Ramachandran R, Bui E. [Education Research: Shaping the Future of Epilepsy Fellowship Training in Canada: A Canadian League Against Epilepsy Delphi Study](#). *Neurol Educ.* 2026 Jan 15;5(1):e200287. doi: 10.1212/NE9.000000000200287. PMID: 41551438; PMCID: PMC12810931

Check out the [Department of Pediatrics Google Scholar Page](#). There, you can find publications from all faculty and trainees in the department