



Mental Health - Care & Research
Santé mentale - Soins et recherche

WINTER 2023 / 2024





Reflecting on a remarkable year, thanks to you

The Royal is igniting extraordinary achievements in mental health care, research, advocacy, and education. This progress is a true testament to the transformative power of community.

Donor support has enabled The Royal to accelerate our impact as the second largest specialty mental health hospital in Ontario. With you by our side, we are redefining what is possible and doing so hand-in-hand with the patients, families and communities we serve.

In the following pages, you will explore some recent donor-funded achievements, including:



Catalyzing discoveries in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illness by bringing trailblazing research and innovation to the point of care.



Helping patients and their families navigate The Royal and the healthcare system by opening a new resource hub designed by patients for patients.



Addressing a gap in the continuum of care for individuals with schizophrenia.



Improving health outcomes for young people who too often fall through the cracks as they enter the adult mental health system.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we remain grateful for you – and the vital role you play in shaping a brighter future for people on their path to mental health recovery.

Thank you.

Paving the road to recovery

In a relentless pursuit of a mental health care system that is equitable, accessible, and effective, The Royal is bold and innovative in its approaches. We bridge gaps in the system and seek opportunities to improve a patient's continuum of

care, ultimately leading to better health outcomes. We also recognize equity-deserving communities' disproportionate obstacles when seeking mental health services and offer low-barrier solutions that meet their unique needs.

MEETING IMMEDIATE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS



The multi-disciplinary team at The Prompt Care Clinic

Adequate access to mental health care remains the most pervasive challenge we hear about daily. Initially established in May 2020 at the onset of COVID-19, the donor-funded Prompt Care Clinic is designed to provide quick and effective access to care. The Clinic's model allows people to receive a mental health assessment within weeks after referral – a pace unheard of in our current mental health climate.

This service has become a lifeline for people who don't know where to turn. Individuals gain quick access to specialized care, and linkages with their primary care providers ensure continued support and safe transitions to community services.

The Clinic began as a virtual service and opened its doors to a physical location in the heart of Ottawa (250 City Centre) this year. While fundraising continues to ensure the sustainability of the Clinic, we are incredibly grateful to our donor community for fueling this important evolution of care in Ottawa.



2,500

patients seen at The Prompt Care Clinic in just two years



65%

of appointments were first-ever visits with a mental health care provider

REVITALIZING CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Schizophrenia is one of the most stigmatized mental health conditions. Misconceptions about individuals who experience psychosis have led to unproportioned levels of unemployment, homelessness and substance use disorders.

In Ottawa, support is available to individuals with the most severe cases of psychosis, but those who do not qualify for highly specialized care are finding their needs unmet. The Royal has an esteemed reputation for our leadership

in schizophrenia care and research, and we leveraged our expertise to open a pilot community-based specialized clinic.

Staff at The Ozerdinc Grimes Family Regional Psychosis Clinic work with individuals and their families in a recovery-oriented and highly coordinated approach to manage their symptoms and address health concerns, including trauma, homelessness and poverty.

BY PATIENTS, FOR PATIENTS

The Royal's best experts are our patients and their families, providing valuable guidance in our decision-making. Eager to increase peer support services at The Royal, members of the Client Advisory Council brought forward the idea and led the strategic development of the newly opened Client and Family Resource Hub.

In this space, prominently located by the entrance of the Carling Avenue building, lived expertise volunteers answer inquiries and provide meaningful support to their peers. Peer support offers a sense of belonging and understanding that is unmatched in mental health recovery and is fundamental to patient-oriented care.

The next phase of the Hub is to establish partnerships with evidence-informed services, including culturally appropriate services for equity-deserving populations.



“

The Hub started out as an idea four years ago and exploded into this vision of what we saw for clients and families. We're proud and so hopeful for what The Hub means – that it will improve their journey through the system. And that somebody out in the community thought it was worthwhile enough to donate funds to see it happen.... it's just so fulfilling.”

GLEND A O'HARA,
President, Royal Ottawa Volunteer Association
Chair, Client Advisory Council

Breakthroughs in outcome-oriented research

One in four Canadians is struggling with a mental health issue. Of those, one in three say their needs for mental health care are not fully met with existing services and treatment. Simply put, these people do not get better. Despite the clear link between brain health and mental health, there have been few treatment advances in the past decade, with most treatments proving to be unsuccessful for many patients.

Steady state is not an option.

The Royal recognizes the critical role research plays in improving the quality of mental health care for those who rely on it. We are dedicated to changing the course by investing in advances in brain imaging, and discovering novel treatments with promising results.



A patient receives repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation from Dr. Sara Tremblay, a researcher at The Royal

RIDING THE WAVES OF HOPE

Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) is one of the first non-pharmaceutical treatments specifically approved for depression in 50 years. rTMS is a painless treatment that uses mild magnetic pulses targeted to stimulate nerve cells involved in depression and other illnesses.

The Royal's new rTMS clinical-research platform is the first of its kind in Ottawa. rTMS has helped over half of those who have not found relief through any other standard treatment – a revolutionary advance in the field. Research funding enables The Royal to continue improving results, with some studies showing a 75 per cent remission rate for this hard-to-treat group.

RESEARCH IS CARE

For many people with severe depression who have yet to find a medication or treatment that helps, ketamine may offer hope. Researchers at The Royal were the first in Canada to deliver the innovative treatment for depression in 2010. Remarkably, just a decade later and in large part due to pioneering, donor-enabled research at The Royal, ketamine treatment for depression was fully approved by Health Canada in 2020.

Recognized as one of the greatest breakthroughs in depression research, The Royal has demonstrated that ketamine is effective in rapidly treating those with severe depression or suicidal ideation, and that it can have significant and prolonged effects.

As a teaching and research hospital, The Royal is able to integrate research directly into the provision of care. This is a key element of the BMO Innovative Clinic for Depression, which offers novel treatments based on the latest science, leading to better outcomes for patients – patients like Marion.



MEET MARION

While her other medications have kept her stable, Marion describes the addition of ketamine to her treatment plan as the missing piece of the puzzle. She no longer thinks of herself as simply managing. She has her life back.

“The way my brain processes things has absolutely changed. I never would have imagined that I could be as well as I am today.”

UNLOCKING THE NEXT ERA OF BRAIN IMAGING AT THE ROYAL

In 2016, thanks to the generosity of donors, The Royal took a major step forward in uncovering the complexities of the brain by opening a Brain Imaging Centre (BIC) equipped with a positron emission tomography-magnetic resonance imaging (PET-MRI) scanner – one of the only of its kind dedicated solely to mental health research in Canada.

Both PET and MRI techniques have large-scale applications across mental and substance use health research. Each approach offers a unique opportunity to better comprehend how mental illnesses are diagnosed and treated.

The BIC has progressed into a thriving hub, equipped with experts in brain imaging, physics, and neuroscience, including the recent recruitment of a PET radiochemist. This new role enables us to independently produce radiotracers, and influence their availability across Ottawa's healthcare landscape – radically shifting how we can unravel the mysteries of the brain.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN SCHIZOPHRENIA

Principal Investigator
Lauri Tuominen, MD, PhD,
Researcher at The Royal

While people living with schizophrenia can experience a much-improved quality of life with the right treatment, a number of barriers can stand in the way of their recovery, including delayed or mistaken diagnosis. In this study, Tuominen is using PET imaging to look at how an inability to differentiate between emotional and neutral information may cause the onset of psychotic symptoms in people with schizophrenia. PET imaging techniques, like those used in this study, have been crucial in advancing schizophrenia research, ultimately aiding in diagnosis and treatment.



The PET-MRI machine at the Brain Imaging Centre

Cultivating the next generation of mental health leaders

By exploring and pushing the boundaries of our knowledge, driven by the needs and experiences of our patients, we can create better futures for people living with mental illness. With donor support, The Royal created an Emerging Research Innovators in Mental Health (eRIMh) incubator in 2017. This was the first of its kind in Canada, and has proven to be an incredible approach to building capacity in mental health research. The contributions of these seven early-career scientists, each with diverse research interests, have been nothing less than transformative.

- Leveraged funding: \$20.1M as of 2022, an average of \$2.9M per eRIMh scientist.
- 131 peer-reviewed journal articles
- 128 conference presentations or abstracts
- 95 trainees

The onboarding of all seven researchers as a unified cohort has catalyzed advanced interdisciplinary research as a natural outcome of their bond. With early career scientists representing more than 60 per cent of our roster, we have seen a surge in innovative, bold thinking and decision-making. The Royal is quickly becoming an expert at nurturing early careers and mid-career transitions.



The first cohort of the Emerging Research Innovators in Mental Health program.

Transforming scientific evidence of sleep into novel treatments for better health

Dr. Rébecca Robillard is spearheading a national knowledge mobilization strategy to catalyze the translation of scientific evidence and technology into clinical practice and novel treatments. Over the next few years, teams will improve treatments for insomnia and sleep deprivation, tailor interventions for the healthy development of children and youth, address sleep issues related to aging, and promote inclusivity in sleep research, working with Indigenous communities and other equity-deserving populations.

Dr. Robilliard also serves as co-chair of the newly established Canadian Sleep Research Consortium, a national hub of sleep scientists and clinicians paving the way to a better understanding of sleep as a pillar of health and improving access to sleep treatments for Canadians to enjoy quality in sleep and quality in life.



Rébecca Robillard, PhD
Clinical Sleep Researcher
The Royal

Empowering resilience in young people



70%

of people with mental illness see their symptoms begin before 18.



Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people in Canada.

Adolescence is a formative time, often filled with complexity, risk and transition. One obstacle that young people face is the transition to the adult healthcare system, with less than half finding their way. This offers a critical opportunity to set people on the right course toward positive mental health outcomes, strength, and resilience.

CARING ADULTS ARE HELPING YOUTH RECOVER

The time immediately after a hospital stay for a suicide attempt or suicidal ideation is critical. An individual's support circle and a comprehensive support plan are essential to promote healing and long-term recovery.

In partnership with The Royal, Suicide Prevention Ottawa, Parents Lifelines of Eastern Ontario (Pleo), and members with lived expertise, a pilot Youth-Nominated Support Team is improving outcomes for young people who have recently reported a suicide attempt or have serious thoughts about suicide.

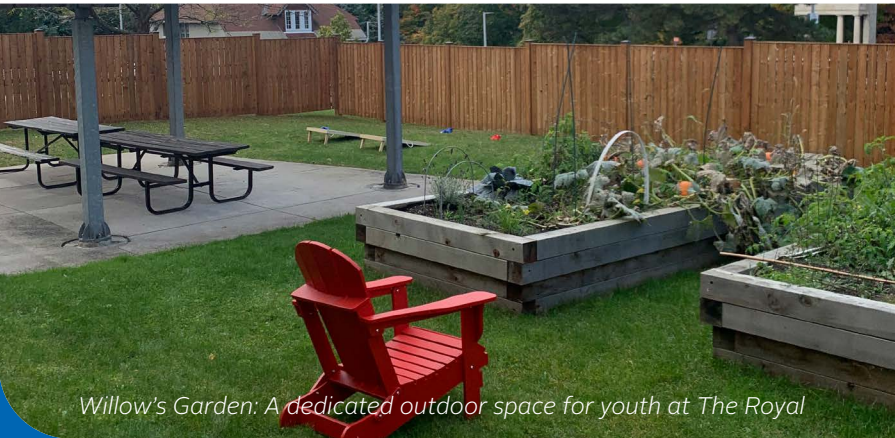
The suicide prevention program addresses elevated risk for suicide post-discharge by guiding youth to identify a group of adults in their lives to support them following their hospital stay. Members of the supporting team may include adult family members, teachers, coaches, neighbours and religious or community leaders. The rollout of the team has shown to reduce six-week suicidality and decrease long-term mortality in the participating youth.

WHOLE-PERSON, YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CARE

People don't get better from medication alone. A whole-person approach to mental health care recognizes that mental well-being comes from more than just clinical interventions.

Young patients staying at The Royal can be here for weeks, or even months, accessing intensive and specialized mental health services.

Creating youth-focused spaces like a kitchen and a newly renovated outdoor garden offers opportunities to make connections, foster creativity, and learn new skills. The benefits are more than therapeutic — they offer the space for young people to rediscover the joy of being a kid again. We can think of no greater gift to young people as they navigate an extraordinarily complex time.



Willow's Garden: A dedicated outdoor space for youth at The Royal



CHRIS IDE

President, Foundation

Thank you

**There is so much hope
on the horizon.**

Beyond the pages of this report are countless achievements that are uncaptured, and behind every update are real people who are steps closer to recovery, thanks to you.

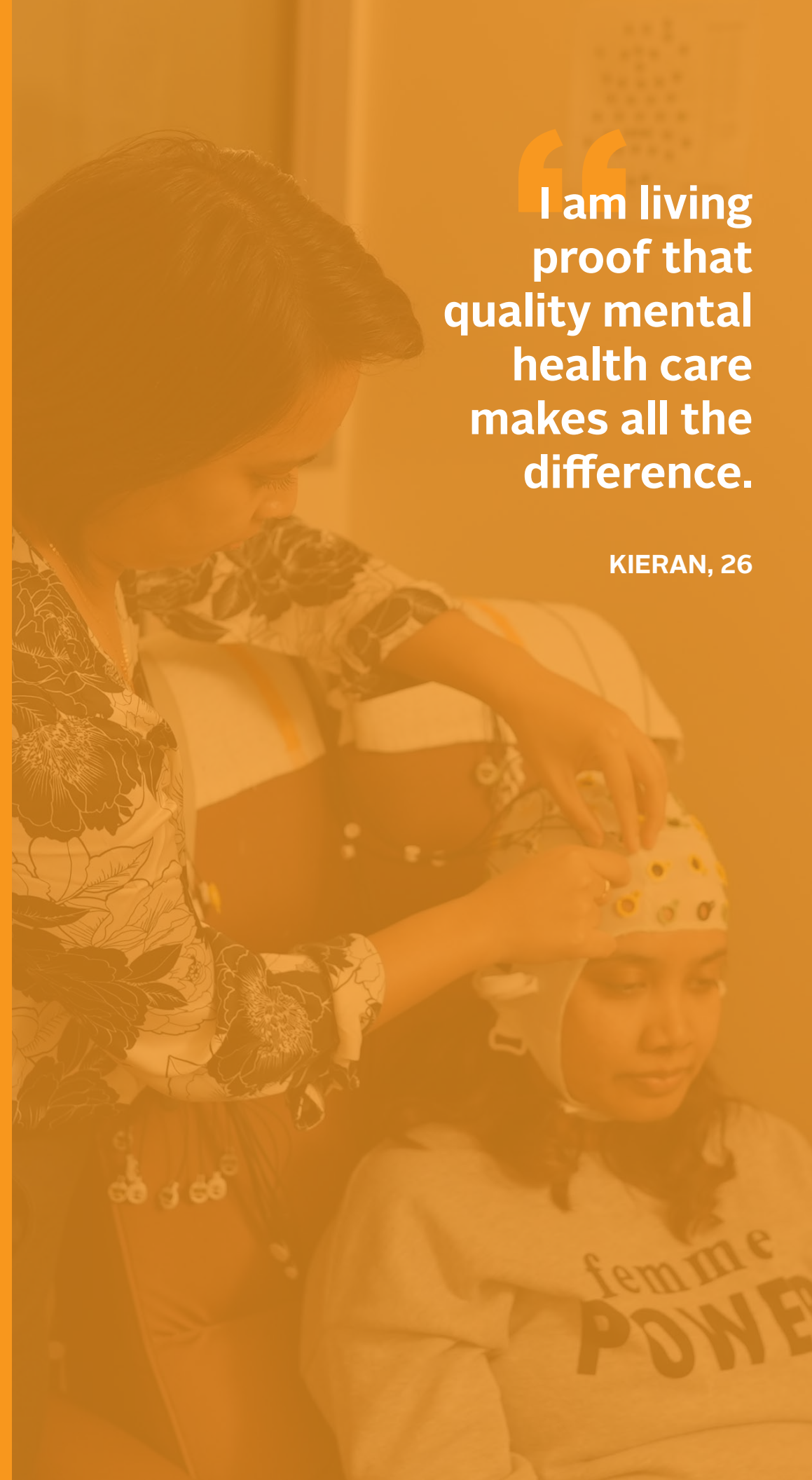
Through the generosity of donors, mental health research and care has flourished, uncovering discoveries and insights into the human mind and the complexities of mental illness and substance use disorders.

As a valued supporter of The Royal, you are helping reshape how, where, and when people can access support. We couldn't do it without you.

**Thank you for embracing
The Royal's vision, believing
in the power of research, and
for infusing the landscape
of mental health with hope,
resilience, and healing.**

**“I am living
proof that
quality mental
health care
makes all the
difference.”**

KIERAN, 26



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Charitable Registration Number:
119129179RR0001



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