



Year in Review 2023-2024

June 13, 2024

The Royal is dedicated to providing excellent care and innovative research that meets the needs of those with mental health and substance use issues and the families who support them. Of course, we couldn't do this without our remarkable staff, volunteers, and client and family partners. Their commitment and expertise drive our growth, and their compassion, empathy, and tireless efforts continue to make a meaningful difference for our community.

Read on for a few highlights from this past year:

New leadership at The Royal

The Royal announced the appointments of Cara Vaccarino as new president and CEO and Dr. Sandra Northcott as chief of staff and psychiatrist-in-chief. With their combined expertise and leadership, The Royal is well-positioned to continue our mission of supporting transformative research, providing compassionate care to our clients and families, and creating an environment where staff and physicians can thrive.

[Click here to learn more about Cara Vaccarino and Dr. Sandra Northcott.](#)



Board of Trustees

The Royal's Board of Trustees is made up of dedicated volunteers from across our community who are passionate about advancing mental health care and research, and who share our values of innovation, collaboration, honesty, integrity and respect.

Leading with compassion and a commitment to serving the most vulnerable, the Board of Trustees provides stewardship and governance to help The Royal achieve its strategic goals. To focus its work, the Board has established a set of priorities and over the past year has moved forward on a number of actions.

You can read a summary of our actions and priorities [here](#).

On behalf of the entire community, we thank The Royal's Board of Trustees for giving so generously of their time and expertise to help us build a better future for mental health care.

Opening of The Royal's Client and Family Resource Hub

The Hub offers clients and their loved ones vital information, support, and resources. From connections to mental health services to peer support and educational materials, it's a **lifeline for anyone navigating their healthcare journey**.

Designed by clients and families for clients and families, [see how The Hub transforms lives](#)



Corporate donations transforming lives at two clinics



BMO increased access to mental health care with a \$2 million donation to The Royal to support the **BMO Innovative Clinic for Depression**. It's the single-largest corporate gift made to The Royal in its history, and provides increased treatment opportunities to people living with severe depression and difficult-to-treat depression. [Read more about the impact of this donation right here](#)

Marion Beckett lived with depression her entire life, but a new treatment available at the **BMO Innovative Clinic for Depression** finally helped her get her life back. [Read more about her story right here](#)

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TD Bank Group (TD) donated \$1M to support the Prompt Care Clinic, a program that provides rapid, low barrier access to specialized mental health services. Powered entirely by philanthropy, the donation will help us continue offering this important service for the next five years.

[Read more about Prompt right here](#)



A collaborative trauma-informed approach to transforming the SUCD inpatient spaces

In collaboration with clients in the Substance Use and Concurrent Disorders Program, Royal staff members enhanced inpatient areas using principles of trauma-informed care, which included a new wall mural painted by multiple cohorts of CDU clients. Funded by The Royal Foundation with the support of the

Ottawa Art Gallery, this transformation of the inpatient spaces is just one of the innovative, client-first initiatives in the SUCD program.
[Click here to read more.](#)

“Playing Bear” at The Royal

The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre unveiled a stunning alabaster carving of a polar bear. The hope is that it will remind staff, clients, and families that The Royal is a welcoming space for everyone.
[Click here to find out more about this artwork and its creator, Koomuatuk “Kuzy” Curley.](#)

A long-term care home unlike any other in Ontario

Royal Ottawa Place occupies a distinctive space in the healthcare continuum. Located on the grounds of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, ROP is a long-term care home for people who are diagnosed with a mental illness. This past year, ROP was given a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) designation. A BPSO is a health care or academic organization that works with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) to implement and evaluate best practice guidelines for client care. A BPSO follows these guidelines to improve the quality and safety of their services, measure the results, and share their experiences with other BPSOs around the world.
[Read more here.](#)

The Royal has once again been accredited with Exemplary Standing from Accreditation Canada.

This designation means the organization met or exceeded the highest standards of quality and safety in health care services and organizational practices.

Some research highlights

	Junior research chair bridges the gap between research and care Dr. Gayatri Saraf, a clinician-researcher at The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) and new junior research chair, is excited to be collaborating with teams from The Royal and uOttawa on research projects relating to bipolar disorder (BD), specifically depression associated with bipolar disorder over the next year. For Saraf, the position of research chair is a meaningful boost
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	at the right time. <u>Read more about Saraf and her research right here.</u>
	Congratulations to our UMRF recipients! Five innovative research projects funded through the annual University Medical Research Fund (UMRF) grant competition will improve diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental health and substance use health challenges while increasing access to care. The teams behind these forward-thinking research projects at The Royal will be supported as they embark on <u>cutting-edge studies to improve care and help people with mental health and substance use needs get better, faster.</u>
	Unveiling the psychological and biological impact of burnout on healthcare workers While there's no doubt that heightened stress levels and burnout experienced by healthcare workers in recent years have had a significant impact, you might be surprised to learn that there is still much to learn about the psychological and biological toll it exacts on the human body.
	Take a closer look at our 'blue spot' Recent findings published by a research team at The Royal are opening the door a little wider to personalized treatment for people who are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research has shown that people with PTSD have increased activity in an area of the brain called the locus coeruleus (LC), commonly known as the 'blue spot' because of its pigmentation. The LC is linked to hyper-arousal, causing intense feelings of anxiety and distress, and understanding this linkage can help scientists and clinicians develop better diagnostics and treatments for PTSD.

Some media mentions 2023-2024

February 9, 2024 (Ottawa Citizen):

[Ottawa researchers using brain imaging to probe smoking-schizophrenia link](#)

While today's schizophrenia medications treat psychosis with great success, many people with schizophrenia still face significant cognitive difficulties as a result of their illness. Dr. Lauri Tuominen, one of the IMHR's Emerging Research Innovators in Mental Health, is using the advanced technology at The Royal's Brain Imaging Centre to explore the relationship between schizophrenia, smoking and brain function – knowledge that may lead to new, personalized treatments to improve cognition without the negative health impacts of smoking.

December 28, 2024 (Ottawa Citizen):

[The high cost of poor sleep – from physical and mental illnesses to economic hits](#)

An important element of mental health research is the role it can play in health promotion or prevention of illness. In this article, Dr. Rebecca Robillard, scientist in the IMHR's sleep research unit, raises awareness about the critical importance of sleep for both physical and mental health. Dr. Robillard is also driving awareness and advocacy for sleep health through the Canadian Sleep Research Consortium, a national collaboration of sleep scientists and clinicians that she helped to create.

August 31, 2023 (Faces Magazine):

[Patricia Burhunduli: Medicine In Colour](#)

The IMHR is committed to enabling and supporting talented early career scientists to build their research and bring new insights to the world. This story highlights the impressive work and advocacy of Patricia Burhunduli, an MD/PhD Student at the University of Ottawa and the IMHR.

May 31, 2023 (CTV News):

[BMO donates \\$2 million to The Royal to help fund depression treatments](#)

Research is care – the BMO Innovative Clinic for Depression exemplifies that philosophy by bringing novel treatments for depression directly to clients in The Royal's Mood and Anxiety program.

May 1, 2023 (Ottawa Citizen):

[The 'miraculous' PTSD treatment that is changing lives](#)

Cory Taylor is not a scientist or a clinician, but he has extensive expertise in PTSD based on his personal experience of the illness and that makes him an integral part of the research team highlighted in this article. Cory, along with researchers and the IMHR and The Royal Operational Stress Injury Clinic, is leading research into a life-changing treatment for PTSD.

Research Week 2024

This year's Research Week showcased the innovative work of Royal researchers and trainees. Here are five things you may not know about research at The Royal.

1. Groundbreaking mental health research happens here. Our research teams use innovative approaches to understand and address mental health conditions and contribute to advancements in diagnostics and treatments. At our research fair we saw projects using artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and real time neurofeedback to name a few.
2. The Royal is home to cutting-edge brain imaging. At the heart of The Royal's Brain Imaging Centre (BIC) is a positron emission tomography-magnetic resonance imaging (PET-MRI) scanner. This advanced technology lets researchers explore the biology behind mental illnesses.
3. The connection between research and care grows stronger every day. Through innovative research studies, some clients have an opportunity to access diagnostic and treatment methods that otherwise may not be available to them. One of these treatments is repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), a type of neuromodulation that directly stimulates the specific brain circuit that is known to be dysfunctional in people with major depression.
4. Research isn't just for scientists. Our collaborative approach to inquiry involves all sorts of different professionals. By working together and bringing different perspectives and expertise to the table, research teams produce new scientific knowledge with the goal of improving client outcomes.
5. Clients and families are part of our research teams, not just participants. We want research outcomes to align with the real needs and experiences of those affected by mental health issues – that's why clients and families are integral members of our research teams from defining our research questions to implementing the results.