

Celebrating  
25 years of  
Partnership



the CTN  
CIHR Canadian  
HIV Trials Network

le Réseau  
Réseau canadien  
pour les essais VIH des IRSC

# BUILDING FUTURES

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THE CANADIAN FOUNDATION  
FOR AIDS RESEARCH  
(CANFAR) FELLOWSHIP  
AWARD



## Introduction

**This report is a celebration of the transformative impact that the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (CANFAR) has had on advancing HIV and STBBI research in Canada. Over the past quarter-century, the CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Awards program has flourished into a vital platform that collaborates with and nurtures the next generation of exceptional investigators in this field.**

The CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Awards Program was established with a clear mission: to empower early-career researchers, providing them with invaluable opportunities to expand their knowledge, and craft their own research programs and trials. Since its inception in 1992, this program has allocated over 100 fellowships, acting as a catalyst for the careers of some of Canada's most prominent HIV clinical investigators today.

Our collaboration with the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (CANFAR) has been instrumental in driving the success of this program. Together, we have recognized the importance of ensuring a lasting legacy of trained principal investigators in HIV research across the country. The CANFAR/CTN Postdoctoral Fellowship Award offers \$50,000 per fellow, with an additional \$5,000 travel allowance to support research-related expenses. The fellowships provide career support and are renewable for up to two years.

Our joint award has brought forth a new generation of investigators with half-fellowships granted since 1997, and full fellowships since 2011. The 17 researchers who have benefitted from this support have conducted innovative research initiatives that have yielded breakthroughs in HIV research, shaping the landscape of knowledge in our field.



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Within the following pages, you will get a glimpse of the extraordinary accomplishments made possible by your dedication. Through CANFAR's commitment, a wave of innovative research into HIV and STBBIs has surged across Canada, making a tangible difference in the lives of people living with and affected by these conditions. The advancements and discoveries highlighted here serve as a testament to the power of collaboration and the profound impact of your investments.

Your belief in our program and your generosity are enabling us to create a brighter and healthier future for those living with HIV and STBBIs. Together, we are shaping the face of HIV research in Canada and inspiring the next generation of scientists.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.

Since 1997:

**17**

CANFAR/CTN  
Fellowships

**\$50,000**

Fellowship Award per year



## Part of the CTN family

Several esteemed individuals who were once CANFAR postdoctoral fellows have become integral members of the national HIV research landscape as part of the CTN, collaborating and innovating across the country. Drs. Constance Finney (2010–2012), Mohammad-Ali Jenabian (2012–2014), Sarah Khan (2014–2015), Nathan Lachowsky (2015–2016), and Malika Sharma (2016–2018) have all become CTN Investigators, contributing their knowledge to our national network and making a significant impact.



### Dr. Mohammad-Ali Jenabian

Dr. Jenabian, an investigator in CTN's Vaccines and Immunotherapies Core, conducted postdoctoral research that led to [CTN 246](#), a study examining the effectiveness of a new treatment on CD4 T cell recovery. His expertise also played a crucial role in [CTNPT 028](#), which explored the effects of cannabinoid oils on immune function and inflammation in people living with HIV.



### Dr. Constance Finney

Dr. Finney, part of the Co-infections and Related Conditions Core, focuses her work on host-parasite interactions, polyparasitism, and their impact on immune responses and therapeutic approaches. Additionally, she conducts research on the influence of HIV on human papillomavirus (HPV) infections, offering valuable insights that will be explored further in later sections.



### Dr. Sarah Khan

Dr. Khan, working within the Clinical Care & Management Core, specializes in pediatric infectious diseases. Her research interests revolve around antimicrobial resistance and infection control, aiming to improve patient outcomes in these areas. Started as part of her fellowship, Dr. Khan recently led the publication of consensus recommendations for infant feeding for women living with HIV in resource-rich countries.



### Drs. Nathan Lachowsky and Malika Sharma

Dr. Sharma, a member of the Prevention Core alongside Dr. Lachowsky, centers her clinical and research efforts on diversity and inclusion within medical education, harm reduction, and the social determinants of health. Dr. Lachowsky's primary research area focuses on social and behavioural epidemiology. He emphasizes the significance of developing and analyzing mixed methods data to inform public health practice, health service provision, and policy decisions.

The contributions of these accomplished fellows, along with their colleagues, demonstrate the breadth of expertise and dedication within the CTN that has been fostered with CANFAR's support. Their collective efforts drive progress in HIV/AIDS research and ultimately shape the development of innovative approaches to prevention, treatment, and care for the benefit of all individuals impacted by HIV.



## Contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the face of the unprecedented global challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, CANFAR/CTN postdoctoral fellows stepped up making significant contributions and providing valuable insights to navigate the new virus.



One of these people is Dr. Abdu Sharkawy, a renowned infectious diseases specialist and a CTN postdoctoral fellow from 2003 to 2004. As CTV's infectious disease expert, Dr. Sharkawy was a familiar face on our television screens, providing regular updates and interviews, keeping the nation informed and reassured.

Dr. Sharkawy, an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto and an infectious diseases consultant at the University Health Network, has over 20 years of experience. His expertise covers a range of infectious diseases, including HIV, viral hepatitis, invasive bacterial infections, and multidrug-resistant organisms. His presence in the media has been instrumental in disseminating accurate information, dispelling myths, and offering expert analysis on the evolving COVID-19 situation.

While Dr. Sharkawy was seen regularly in our living rooms, other CTN postdoctoral fellows were also researching the impact of COVID-19 behind the scenes.



Dr. Mohammad-Ali Jenabian, currently the Canada Research Chair in Immuno-Virology, was a fellow from 2012 to 2014. He has been collaborating with his colleagues at the CTN on several studies investigating the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines among people living with HIV ([CTN 328](#)). Their important work aims to ensure the safety and effectiveness of vaccination strategies for vulnerable populations.



Meanwhile Drs. Nathan Lachowsky (2015–2016) and Kiffer Card (2018–2020) looked at socio-economic factors at play. Dr. Lachowsky's work has looked at the impact of the pandemic on the LGBT community in Canada to find out why this group was more affected by reduced hours and layoffs, amongst other disproportionate impacts of the pandemic. Dr. Card reported that COVID-19 testing levels were dependent on social conditions and government capacity





## Spearheading the fight against cervical cancer

As a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Global Control of HPV-related diseases and prevention, Dr. Gina Ogilvie (1999–2001) has dedicated her career to advancing the understanding of reproductive health, sexually transmitted infection, the groundbreaking field of HPV screening and vaccination, and HIV in women. Her findings have been highly influential in setting and directing health policy both in Canada and globally.

She is also Senior Public Health Scientist at BC Centre for Disease Control and Assistant Director at the BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre. With an impressive track record as a principal investigator, Dr. Ogilvie has secured over 5 million dollars in research grants from esteemed institutions such as PHAC, CIHR, Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, Canadian Foundation for Innovation, and private foundations.

Driven by a passion to eradicate cervical cancer, she has been at the forefront of changing Canadian practices regarding HPV vaccination. She is now working toward the eradication of cervical cancer with a single-dose vaccine.

With an extensive publication record of over 150 peer-reviewed manuscripts, Dr. Ogilvie has been a catalyst for knowledge dissemination and education in her field. Her expertise has provided advice and consultation to national and global institutions, including the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Public Health Agency of Canada, the World Health Organization and Ministries of Health globally on STI, HIV and HPV vaccine policy and programming. She speaks widely at international and national research and education conferences and has mentored and supervised numerous medical students, residents, and graduate students, nurturing the next generation of researchers. She also developed and leads ASPIRE (Advances in Screening and Prevention in Reproductive Cancers), a global health research program. HPV testing and vaccination are the biggest breakthroughs in preventing cervical cancer since the Pap smear and Dr. Ogilvie's research has made her a world leader in the fight to end it.

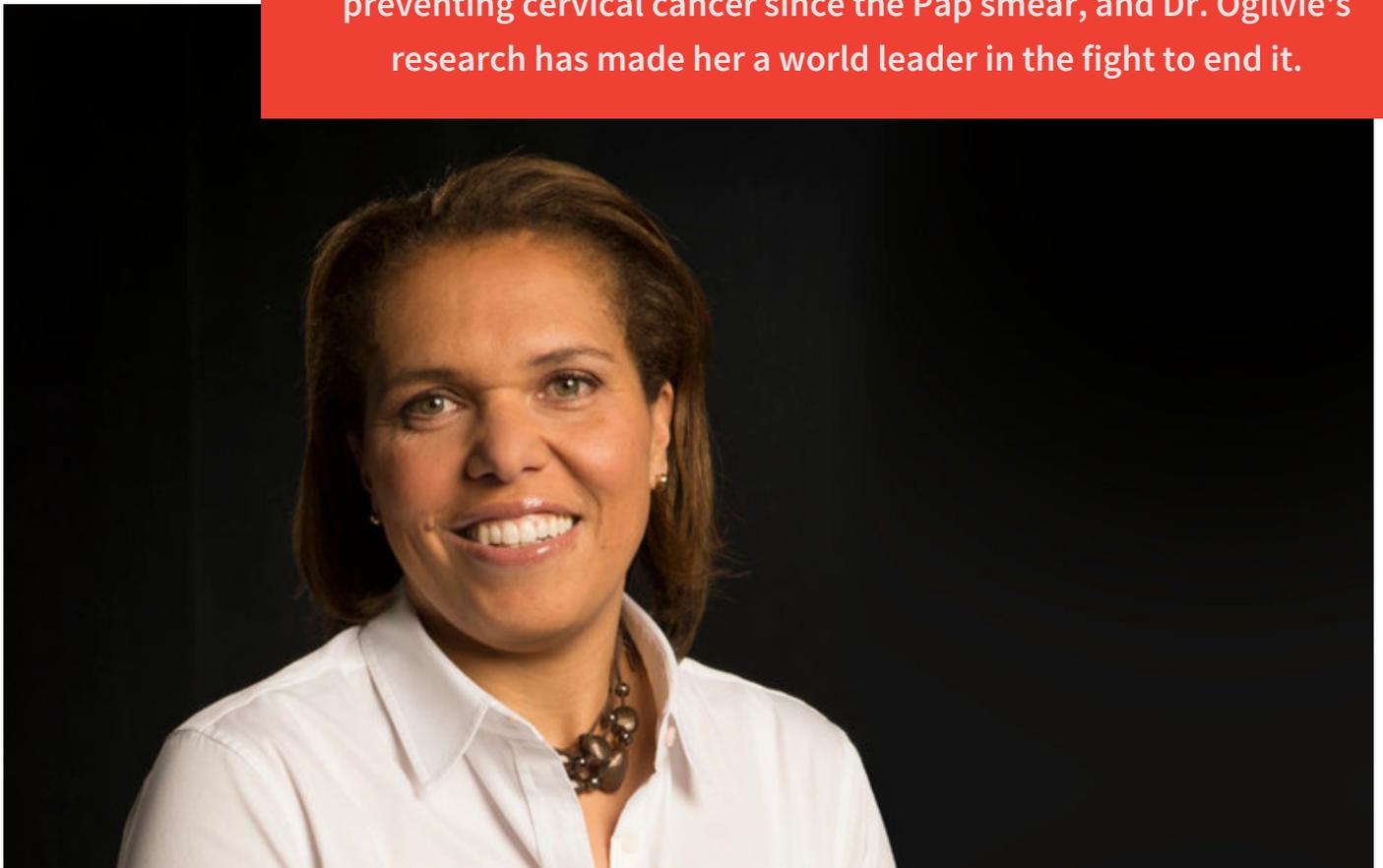


## Spearheading the fight against cervical cancer

However, Dr. Ogilvie is not the only researcher from the CANFAR/CTN postdoctoral program to focus on HPV.

Dr. Constance Finney, a CTN Investigator and former CTN postdoctoral fellow, focuses on investigating the impact of HIV on cancer-causing HPV infections. Dr. Natasha Press, a researcher in the AIDS Research Program and Clinical Assistant Professor at UBC's Department of Medicine, has contributed valuable research on HPV-related anal cancer in men living with HIV. Additionally, Dr. Elisabeth McClymont's research interests encompass HPV infection and vaccination in girls and women living with HIV, cervical cancer screening for women living with HIV, HPV's role in spontaneous preterm birth, HPV and the vaginal microbiome, and other reproductive infectious disease topics.

**HPV testing and vaccination are the biggest breakthroughs in preventing cervical cancer since the Pap smear, and Dr. Ogilvie's research has made her a world leader in the fight to end it.**



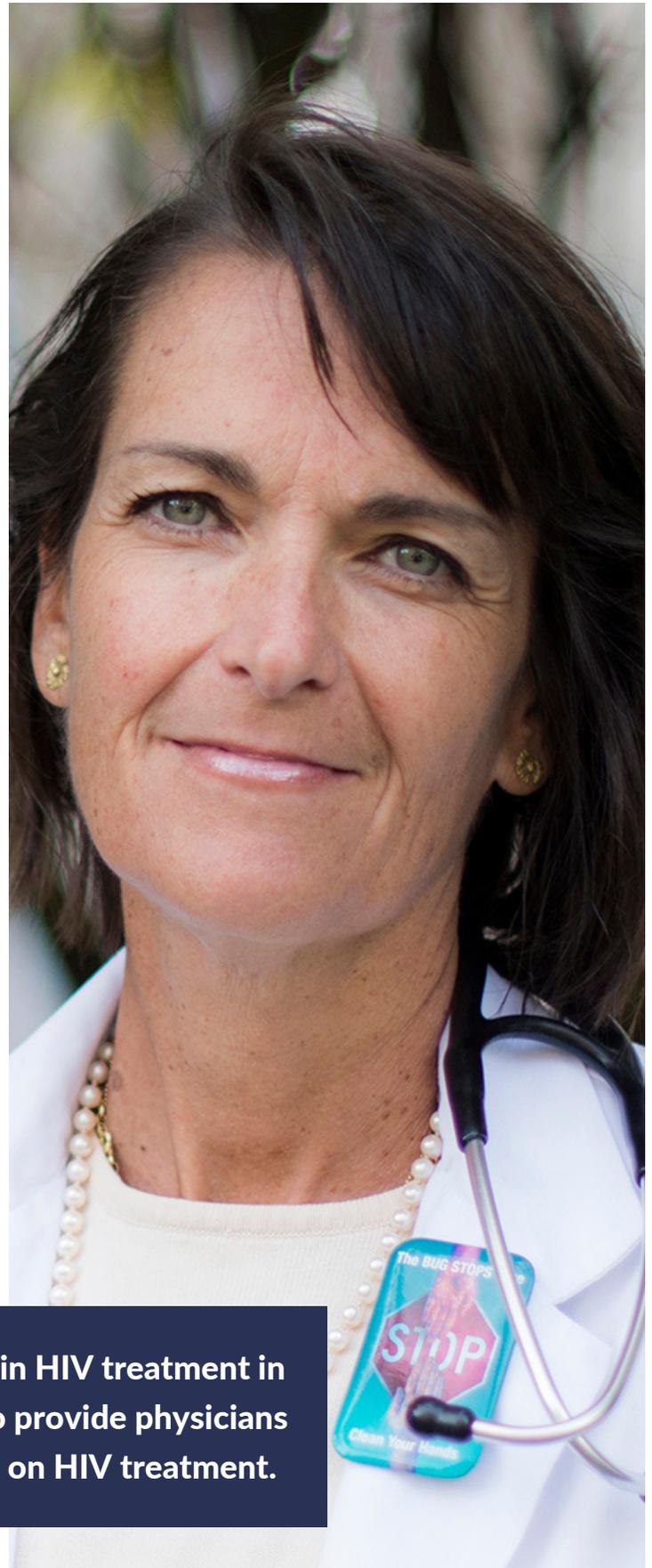


## Enhancing HIV care guidelines to inform treatment

Dr. Val Montessori (1998–1999), Head of Infectious Diseases at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, and Co-chair of the Therapeutic Guidelines Committee at the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, plays a pivotal role in HIV treatment in British Columbia. Her primary interests lie in infections among people who inject drugs, with a special focus on HIV and hepatitis C and her expertise drives the Therapeutic Guidelines Committee's mission to provide physicians with current information and research on HIV treatment.

The committee's recommendations encompass various aspects of HIV care, including PEP and PrEP medication guidelines, management of acute infections, primary care, and recently, COVID-19 treatment and vaccination guidelines. To ensure the provision of reliable and relevant information, the committee continuously reviews scientific studies, analyzes clinical data, and collaborates with experts.

**Dr. Val Montessori plays a pivotal role in HIV treatment in British Columbia, driving the mission to provide physicians with current information and research on HIV treatment.**





## Championing equity in health care

Dedicated to advancing equity and inclusivity, CTN Investigator and former CTN postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Malika Sharma (2016–2018) and current postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Cara Spence (2021–2023), are driving change in health care.

Dr. Sharma's focus on diversity and inclusion within medical education and harm reduction, alongside Dr. Spence's work on Indigenous women's HIV and HCV care in Saskatchewan, are reshaping the landscape of health care.

Dr. Sharma's clinical and research interests focus on diversity and inclusion

within medical education, harm reduction, and the social determinants of health. As an HIV and infectious diseases physician and clinician teacher at St. Michael's Hospital, Dr. Sharma's commitment extends beyond patient care.

Her teachings aim to foster anti-racist and feminist practices within medical education, empowering future health care providers to embrace equity. Her scholarly pursuits delve into the structural determinants of health, aiming to dismantle systemic barriers and promote health equity for all.

**“My past, present, and future work is committed to producing research that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a feminist scholar, my work will continue to advance policy and program development that advocates for social justice and enhances the lives and wellbeing of all people, locally and globally.”**

**Dr. Cara Spence**  
CTN Postdoctoral Fellow





## Championing equity in health care

Complementing Dr. Sharma's pioneering work, Dr. Cara Spence brings extensive experience working with Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan, spanning nearly 25 years. With a deep understanding of the complexities of Indigenous health, Dr. Spence brings into focus 'the work of truth and reconciliation' with Indigenous communities by highlighting the impact of HIV infection among Indigenous women. Collaborating closely with Indigenous women living with HIV or HCV, Dr. Spence seeks to establish a comprehensive clinical dataset to study care for this population, identify vulnerabilities, and advocate for tailored interventions.

As mentioned above, a CTN postdoctoral fellow who helps foster a more inclusive and equitable health care system for all is Dr. Nathan Lachowsky. As a renowned researcher specializing in community-based participatory health research, Dr. Lachowsky's focus lies in sexual and gender minority health. He serves as the Research Director at the Community-Based Research Centre in Vancouver, BC, and an Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria. Dr. Lachowsky has conducted influential studies on sexual health and HIV/AIDS among sexual minority men in Canada and New Zealand. His expertise lies in social and behavioural epidemiology, using public health data to inform practice, service provision, and policy. Beyond his academic roles, Dr. Lachowsky is actively involved in the health community. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Health Initiative for Men and Research Director at the Community-Based Research Centre for Gay Men's Health.

Dr. Lachowsky has a vibrant and dynamic program of research focused on community-based health equity research. His [Community-based Health Equity Research](#) (CHER) team focuses on empowerment of and social justice for marginalized communities such as 2SLGBTQIA+ people, Indigenous Peoples and ethnoracialized minorities, and those living with and affected by HIV, hepatitis C, and other STBBIs.

His research has helped improve the understanding of HIV prevention in Canadian gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. Understanding the experiences of gay men in Vancouver's PrEP public health program provides better insight regarding perceptions, social norms, behaviours, and barriers to PrEP program uptake and inform best practice.



## Where are they now?

CANFAR has supported 17 fellowships to date who now fill numerous roles around the country. Their current positions are outlined below.

| Name               | Fellowship Year | Present Position  |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|
| Dr. Stuart Rosser  | 1997-1998       | Associate Professor , Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, University of Alberta; EMH: PrEP #YEGguys; Former member of the Scientific Review Committee  |
| Dr. Val Montessori | 1998-1999       | Clinical Associate Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, Medicine, UBC; Head Infectious Diseases, St Paul's Hospital; Co-chair, Therapeutic Guidelines Committee for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS; Researcher, AIDS Research Program             |
| Dr. Gina Ogilvie   | 1999-2001       | Professor School of Population and Public Health, University of BC; Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Global Control of HPV related diseases and prevention; BC Centre for Disease Control Senior Public Health Scientist Assistant Director, BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre. PI of ASPIRE program |
| Dr. Natasha Press  | 1999-2001       | Clinical Associate Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, UBC; Researcher, AIDS Research Program, BC Centre for Excellence  |
| Dr. Abdu Sharkawy  | 2003-2004       | Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Toronto Infectious Diseases Physician, University Health Network, Toronto, Clinical Teacher University of Toronto  |



## Where are they now?

| Name                      | Fellowship Year | Present Position  |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Dr. Sardar Sindhu         | 2004-2006       | Scientist Immunologist & Virologist Dasman Diabetes Institute, Kuwait   |
| Dr. Gonzalo Alvarez       | 2006-2008       | Scientist, Clinical Epidemiology Program, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute; Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, School of Epidemiology, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, University of Ottawa; Staff Respirologist, Division of Respirology & Infectious Disease; Department of Medicine, The Ottawa Hospital |
| Dr. Richard Sloan         | 2008-2010       | Edinburg-Zhejiang Lecturer & Principal Investigator, Division of Infection and Pathway Medicine, Edinburgh Medical School with joint appointment at Zhejiang University in Haining China  |
| Dr. Eszter Papp           | 2010-2011       | Research Associate, Centre for Studies in Primary Care, Department of Family Medicine, Queen's University; CTN Investigator   |
| Dr. Constance Finney      | 2011-2012       | Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Calgary; CTN Investigator   |
| Dr. Mohammad-Ali Jenabian | 2012-2014       | Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences and the BioMed Research Centre, Université du Québec à Montréal; Canada Research Chair in Immuno-Virology; CTN Investigator  |



## Where are they now?

| Name                    | Fellowship Year | Present Position  |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Dr. Sarah Khan          | 2014-2015       | Assistant Professor, Division of Infectious Disease and Associate Medical Director for Infection Prevention Control, Hamilton Health Sciences, McMaster University; Board of Directors, International Pediatric Emergency Medicine Elective; CTN Investigator |
| Dr. Nathan Lachowsky    | 2015-2016       | Special Advisor, Health Research, Associate Professor, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria; Participant at MSM Working Group, CTN Investigator  |
| Dr. Malika Sharma       | 2016-2018       | Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, University of Toronto, Physician, Infectious Diseases. St. Michael's Hospital; CTN Investigator  |
| Dr. Kiffer Card         | 2018-2020       | Assistant Professor, Simon Fraser University; Director, Board of Directors, Island Sexual Health Society, Associate Researcher, Community-based Research Centre, Associate Researcher, Victoria Cool Aid Society  |
| Dr. Elisabeth McClymont | 2020-2021       | MSHRBC Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Pediatrics, University of British Columbia  |
| Dr. Cara Spence         | 2021-2023       | CANFAR/CTN Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, McGill University.   |



CANFAR's support of the CTN's postdoctoral fellowship program has contributed to brilliant minds growing and supporting national efforts to change the lives of people living with and affected by HIV. From treatment guidelines to vaccine effectiveness, CANFAR's support has fostered the next generation of researchers, directly impacting how we care. We look forward to seeing what amazing advances will be driven by the next CANFAR Fellows.

**We thank you for your continued support in our efforts towards better care and a future cure.**

**CIHR Canadian HIV Trials Network**

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