

## CELEBRATING THE INAUGURAL RECIPIENTS OF THE EMILY STOWE SCHOLARS PROGRAM



Niru Bhandari, Emily Stowe Scholars Program Emerging Leader

This past spring, Women's College Hospital (WCH) was thrilled to announce the inaugural Senior Fellows and Emerging Leaders of the Emily Stowe Scholars Program — a groundbreaking new initiative that provides major grants to students and scientists at various stages of their careers, with a special focus on women from equity-seeking communities.

Supported by WCH Foundation's Emily Stowe Society — a group of philanthropists committed to breaking down barriers to careers in the health sciences for women — the Emily Stowe Scholars Program strives to help emerging and established health care leaders identify and address health inequities through research, bold new strategies and improvements to existing initiatives.

**Niru Bhandari was named as one of the inaugural Emerging Leaders of the Emily Stowe Scholars Program.**

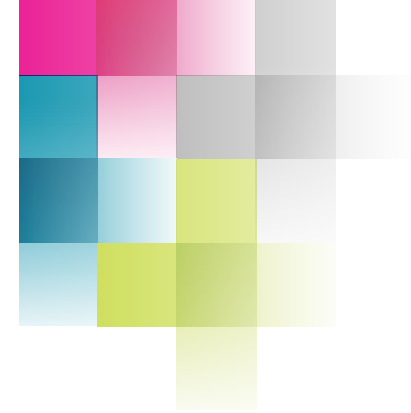
A nurse practitioner at WCH's Bay Centre, Niru is leading efforts to dismantle systemic racism and oppression in sexual and reproductive health care. Through her fellowship, she plans to advance research, design new strategies and improve existing initiatives to ensure all women have equitable access to the health care they need to thrive.

"Being selected for this fellowship has been a huge privilege," says Niru. "I plan to dedicate my time to advancing sexual and reproductive care for women, especially those women who are underserved in health care."

For more information about the Emily Stowe Society and how you can get involved, please visit [emilystowesociety.ca](http://emilystowesociety.ca).



Scan to read profiles on all five inaugural Senior Fellows and Emerging Leaders of the Emily Stowe Scholars Program!



## BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE SUMMIT

**As women, there are many issues pervasive within the healthcare system that impact diagnoses, access to care and even the understanding of women's health needs. Couple that with the intersectionality of race and far too many women fall through gaps in the system.**

Join experts from Women's College Hospital, Canada's leading hospital focused on women's health and equity, for a transformative evening of education and networking receptions. Informative panel discussions will centre around the unique needs of Black women's health and will inform and empower guests to become advocates for their own health and that of their families, to help everyone live longer and stronger.



**WHEN**

October 25th, 2022, 5:00 to 9:00 pm



**WHERE**

TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning, Koerner Hall



Follow the QR code to learn more and purchase your tickets today!



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

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- Call the Foundation at **416-323-6323**
- Visit [www.wchf.ca](http://www.wchf.ca) and click on **Ways to Give** or **Donate**
- Visit us on the fourth floor of Women's College Hospital (76 Grenville St., Toronto)

### **We love hearing from you!**

If you have any feedback about this issue of Women's Now, questions about donating or simply want to connect with a member of your Foundation staff team, please email [foundation@wchospital.ca](mailto:foundation@wchospital.ca).

### **Let's stay in touch!**

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# WOMEN'S NOW

GENEROSITY AT WORK. REVOLUTION IN ACTION.



## OUR RESEARCH ISSUE

Dr. Rulan Parekh, VP Academics, Women's College Hospital, is helping to turn research into action faster through a Learning Health System. **Read more inside.**

### **INSIDE**

**Celebrating the Inaugural Recipients of The Emily Stowe Scholars Program**



FALL 2022



WCH Cardiology Fellow Dr. Tosin Osuntokun leads the POTS Self-Management and Peer Support Program online.



# INNOVATIVE CARE TO REACH PATIENTS WHEREVER THEY ARE

While Kaitlin Fairman was in university, she began experiencing unexplained bouts of extreme dizziness and an abnormally fast heartbeat. A generally healthy young woman, her symptoms progressed until she struggled almost every time she stood up.

“I knew something was wrong,” says Kaitlin. “My symptoms were vague but very debilitating, and my doctors struggled to find a diagnosis.”

After years of appointments and tests, Kaitlin finally received a diagnosis: Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, also known as POTS.

Primarily affecting premenopausal women, POTS impacts a patient’s heart rate and blood flow, which can lead to light-headedness and fainting, among other symptoms. Sadly, delayed diagnosis is common. In fact, it can take patients considerable referrals to multiple specialists before a diagnosis is confirmed.

While POTS remains vastly under-researched, Dr. Paula Harvey, world-renowned cardiologist and head of the Department of Medicine at WCH, and her team, in partnership with the Women’s Cardiovascular Research Initiative, have been working to expand the dysautonomia program at WCH – one of only two specialized programs in Ontario – to better support these profoundly underserved patients.

This includes the development of a first-of-its-kind POTS Self-Management and Peer Support Program. The six-week curriculum provides patients with invaluable information about their condition, and the opportunity to meet and hear from other people who are also living with POTS. Now in its fifth year, the program has continued to expand thanks to Dr. Harvey and her team’s commitment to putting research into action – an exemplary example of the Learning Health System at work.

“Because of their postural intolerance, coming into the hospital is no small feat for POTS patients,” says Debbie Childerhose, registered physiotherapist and program coordinator of the Women’s Cardiovascular Health Initiative. “Many of our patients travel from far outside of Toronto so in 2019, we made the decision to move the program online, hoping we could support more women.”

The move to virtual was a huge success: attendance jumped to over 80% and the team was able to reach patients as far as Ottawa and Elliott Lake.

For Kaitlin, whose care was transferred to WCH in early 2022, being able to access the virtual program from her home in Kingston has been nothing short of life changing.

“It’s made such a huge difference in my life,” she says. “I never would have been able to attend in person but now, thanks to the program, I’m back at work and I finally feel like I am getting the care and support I need.

Having a diagnosis and accessing this specialized care has made a world of difference.”

## PIONEERING INNOVATION

Earlier this year, Dr. Paula Harvey was recognized for her leadership in dysautonomia care and research when she was named a Syncope Healthcare Pioneers of 2022 by the Syncope Trust and Reflex Anoxic Seizures (STARS) program out of the United Kingdom – one of only five awards presented worldwide. Congratulations, Dr. Harvey!

# “Too often, sex and gender are missing from conversations about an individual’s healthcare.”

Jack Woodman, VP Strategy, Quality, Risk and Privacy, Women’s College Hospital



# THE FUTURE OF SEX AND GENDER IN HEALTH CARE IS HERE

Fuelled by donor support, Women’s College Hospital (WCH) is set to open Canada’s first national centre dedicated to integrated sex, gender and reproductive health services — a major milestone that will mark a new era for sex and gender in healthcare.

“Too often, sex and gender are missing from conversations about an individual’s healthcare,” says Jack Woodman, WCH’s vice president of strategy, quality, risk, and privacy. “Yet we know that sex and gender can directly influence an individual’s health, well-being and unique care needs — whether that’s related to contraceptive care, trans health care, gynecological care, mental health care and beyond.”

With a focus on offering safe, inclusive care for women and trans, gender-diverse, or intersex individuals across their lifespan, the new Sex, Gender, and Reproductive Health (SGRH) Centre will deliver new or enhanced services in areas like sexual function, menopause care, early pregnancy loss, abortion care and more.

Building on the existing range of SGRH services available at WCH, the centre will leverage the hospital’s strengths in research, education, community partnerships and advocacy to address this critical gap in the health care system: a lack of health services that take sex and gender into account, rather than treating sex and gender as a separate issue.

As a first step toward launching the new centre, the hospital is expanding its existing services in areas like abortion care and launching innovative research projects to better understand how health needs differ based on an individual’s sex and gender identity.

“Ultimately, our goal is to create a national centre of excellence where patients across the gender spectrum can receive SGRH services in a safe, integrated and inclusive manner throughout their lives,” says Woodman. “At this stage in our evolution as a hospital and academic centre, we are ready to move towards the next era of sex and gender in healthcare.”

For more information about the range of services offered at Women’s College Hospital, visit [womenscollegehospital.ca](https://www.womenscollegehospital.ca).



# ANNA’S STORY: WOMEN’S COLLEGE HOSPITAL IS MY HOSPITAL

Anna\* is a political refugee. She is seeking asylum from her home country in Africa, where she was a prominent activist in her community, fiercely advocating for human rights, gender equity, social justice and inclusion.

While the culture and politics of Africa are slowly shifting, Anna’s activism put her life in danger and she was forced to flee.

Following her arrival in Toronto, Anna was connected to the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) – a community-based organization that helps victims of torture, domestic violence, war, genocide and crimes against humanity access the treatment and support they need to heal.

Through CCVT’s partnership with Women’s College Hospital (WCH), Anna was referred to the Crossroads Clinic at WCH – a special treatment centre where refugees can receive primary healthcare before being transferred to a physician in their community.

When she heard the name “Women’s College Hospital,” Anna was filled with joy. “I thought, ‘Wow, I belong here,’” she says. “I have been

fighting so hard for the women in my country, and now I am a patient at a hospital that is focused on closing the health gap for women.

“I was inspired by the women who founded the hospital. I admired them and wanted to support their dream.”

Wanting to be a part of WCH’s vision and its position as a world-leader in women’s health research and innovation, Anna made the generous decision to become a monthly donor.

“I am so grateful for the care I am receiving; I knew I had to give back” says Anna. “I truly believe if you support women, you support the whole world. That’s the power of Women’s College Hospital.”

As a monthly donor to Women’s College Hospital Foundation, Anna’s unrestricted support is helping the hospital remain responsive to the highest priority needs in patient care, research and innovation. If you would like to learn more about becoming a monthly donor, visit [wchf.ca](https://www.wchf.ca) or call 416-323-6323.

\*For her safety, Anna’s name has been changed to conceal her identity.