

SPOR Evidence Alliance Seed Grant Impact Story



Lead:

GHAZAL FAZLI PhD
Post-doctoral fellow
Unity Health Toronto

Co-Investigator:

Gillian Booth

Project:

“Nothing about us, without us”: The need for trauma-informed intersectional analysis of diabetes risk during COVID-19 through patient and public engagement

What key learnings did your seed grant funded project reveal?

- The seed grant funding for our project provided us the opportunity to partner with representative members from racialized and marginalized communities who are at risk of developing diabetes as co-researchers.
- We used an equity, diversity, and social justice lens to understand their lived experiences and co-develop recommendations for potential policies and programs to prevent diabetes in these high-risk communities.
- In this process, we used concept mapping methods over four focus group sessions to solicit perspectives from broad viewpoints, including people from diverse communities.
- Across these four focus groups with our co-researchers, we applied a trauma-informed intersectional analysis to understand their lived experiences, priorities, barriers, and inequities experienced during COVID-19.
- Preliminary themes arising from our patient partner input included the impact

of the pandemic on mental health and the social determinants of health. These impacts were then discussed in future sessions to develop potential policy and program recommendations to address the burden of chronic disease on marginalized communities in times of health crises.

How will your findings benefit the health research environment?

- The findings of this study will guide future health research to consider co-designing new programs are initiated by the community – a ‘bottom up’ approach.
- This research calls for further action to address the critical gap in current research approaches by moving towards identifying research priorities and co-designing policy interventions that are carried out ‘with’ or ‘by’ those with lived experiences. Thus, reflecting the ethos of *‘nothing about us, without us’* to inform equity-driven priorities and policy actions.



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How did you disseminate your findings?

- As we are still in the process of our qualitative thematic analyses of the final engagements and preparing our dissemination material, we plan to engage with our project advisory committee and patient partners to disseminate the findings to diverse audiences via reports, presentations, and a published manuscript.
- This work is currently underway and we plan to wrap up the project and dissemination by late fall of 2023.

What influences did the seed grant opportunity have in your subsequent research endeavours?

- I am an emerging scientist who has developed an innovative research program with the aim of reducing the burden of diabetes, health inequities, and improving the health of Canadians. My goal is to lead an independent research program that will use innovative methodologies to contextualize the impact of health inequalities on diabetes.
- The world-class training that I received during my postdoctoral fellowships provided unparalleled opportunities to learn and apply novel methodologies, produce real-time evidence, and answer policy-relevant questions.
- This project has helped to launch my research program dedicated to producing impactful evidence for diabetes prevention by involving equity-driven methodologies and patient and community engagement.
- Previously, I have conducted population-based epidemiological studies examining prediabetes and diabetes among racialized and marginalized communities. In the current stage of my career, I am dedicated to uncovering how we can address the burden of diabetes in these communities.
- I believe it is important to develop knowledge dissemination and implementation projects by engaging with

patient partners, community members, and knowledge users while using an equity, diversity and social justice lens and trauma-informed intersectional analyses. This approach helps identify who is impacted the most by the pandemic; to what degree; and how can we respond from a public health and health care standpoint to impact the lives of those at risk of developing diabetes.

- Thus, this seed grant has allowed me to address a major knowledge gap in the current evidence and helped to launch my career as an independent scientist in this field.

What successes and milestones did the opportunity help you realize in your professional development?

- With respect to professional development, I was able to foster meaningful collaborations with community organizations and patient partners and establish long-term partnerships.
- I have learned key project management attributes of a research grant such as submitting REB applications, identifying external supports (i.e., transcriptions services), supervising students, engaging and delivering presentations to community organizations and patient partners, communicating our project goals and activities, and seeking input on the core activities of the project.
- This project has allowed me to gain and enhance my skills of becoming an independent researcher leading a research program dedicated to identifying equity-driven solutions for diabetes prevention and care.



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