

Lakeridge Health earns one of Canada’s most prestigious health research grants

(OSHAWA) – When someone develops septic shock, a life-threatening condition caused by a severe infection, every minute matters. It remains one of the most serious medical emergencies treated in intensive care, despite advances in treatment.

Now, research led by a nationally recognized team at Lakeridge Health could help change that.

Lakeridge Health has been awarded a \$543,150 Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Project Grant, one of Canada's most prestigious and competitive health research awards. The grant, administered through Queen's University, will support the next phase of the BLUSH (Adjunctive Methylene Blue in Septic Shock) study.

Ranked among the top 10 per cent of applications nationwide, the study supported by the Canadian Critical Care Trial Group (CCCTG) will now expand into a multi-centre clinical trial involving hospitals across Ontario this fall, with the potential to include additional sites across Canada.

The study builds on a successful pilot trial developed at Lakeridge Health by Critical Care physicians Dr. Shannon Fernando and Dr. Karim Soliman. Known as the BLUSH study, researchers will evaluate whether adding methylene blue - an existing medication that may help restore dangerously low blood pressure caused by severe infection - can give critically ill patients a better chance of recovery. If successful, the findings could change how septic shock is treated in hospitals across Canada.

Early work on the project by Dr. Fernando was funded through Lakeridge Health's Research and Education Fund. Grants are awarded by the Research and Education Council to eligible applicants, drawing on the Research and Education funds of the Ajax Pickering Hospital Foundation and Lakeridge Health Foundation.

"Every day in Critical Care, we ask ourselves how we can provide even better care for our patients," said Dr. Shannon Fernando, Critical Care Physician and BLUSH lead researcher. "That's how this research began. Receiving support from CIHR is incredibly meaningful because it recognizes the potential of an idea that started here at Lakeridge Health. I'm proud of what our team has accomplished and grateful to be part of an organization where curiosity, collaboration and innovation are part of everyday care. Together, we now have the opportunity to generate evidence that could improve care for critically ill patients across Canada."

"Receiving this level of national recognition shows that world-class research can happen in a community hospital," said Dr. Karim Soliman, Critical Care Physician and BLUSH co-lead. "Our patients benefit when research is part of everyday care, and that's only possible because of the remarkable collaboration across Lakeridge Health and with our research partners. We're excited to launch the next phase of this study and generate evidence that could help improve care for critically ill patients across Canada."

While nationally competitive research has traditionally been associated with Canada's largest academic health centres, community hospitals like Lakeridge Health are playing an increasingly important role in advancing medical discovery. A centralized Research Department and clinical trials infrastructure provide physicians and clinical teams with the expertise, specialized personnel and research support needed to transform promising ideas into high-quality clinical studies. This model has enabled nationally competitive research, including the BLUSH trial. Across the hospital, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, researchers, and clinical teams work together to turn new ideas into better care. That means patients in Durham Region receive care in a health system that is not only adopting new evidence but helping create it.

"This achievement reflects the calibre of physicians, researchers, and clinical teams we have at Lakeridge Health," said Dr. Randy Wax, Chief of Staff, Lakeridge Health, and co-investigator on the grant. "It's inspiring to see our medical team members leading research that is recognized nationally and has the potential to influence how critically ill patients are cared for across Canada. This is exactly the kind of innovation we want to foster as we continue building a leading learning health system."

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Today, Lakeridge Health supports more than 170 active research studies, welcomes approximately 3,600 learners each year and collaborates with more than 50 academic institutions, strengthening its role as a leading learning health system.

"This is about much more than receiving a research grant. It reflects who we are becoming as an organization," said Cynthia Davis, President and CEO, Lakeridge Health. "Our Strategic Plan challenges us to lead in education and research, and this achievement brings that vision to life. Every day, our teams are embedding research into the care we provide so innovation leads to better outcomes for patients. That's One System. Best Health. in action, and I'm incredibly proud of everyone whose passion, curiosity and collaboration made this possible."



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