

BAYCREST BULLETIN

A snapshot of Baycrest news and events / March - April 2024

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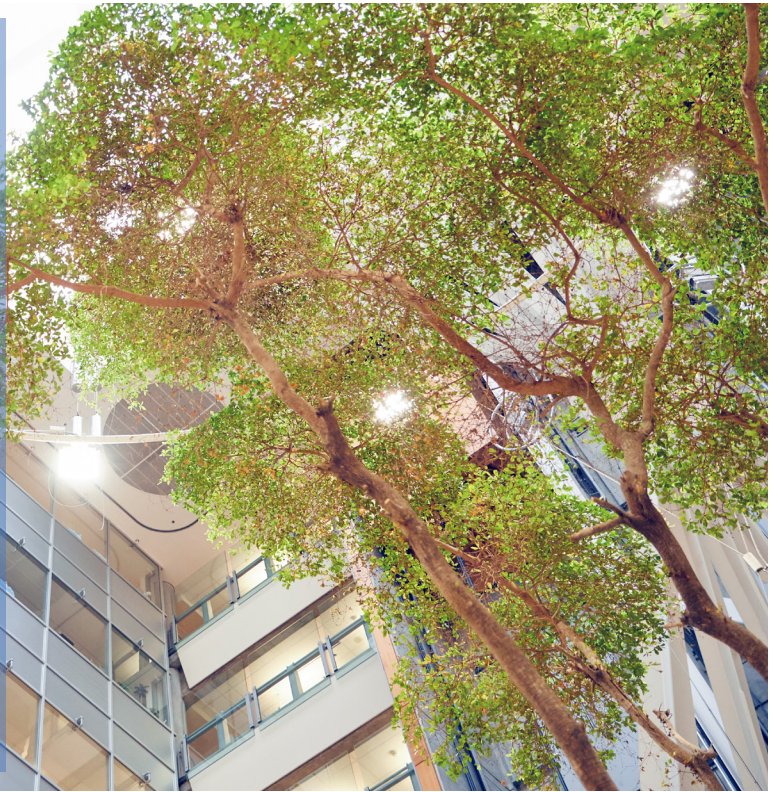
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Baycrest Study Shows Talking Faster Is Linked to Better Brain Health



As we get older, we may start to notice it takes us longer to find the right words. This can lead to concerns about cognitive decline and dementia.

However, a new study by Baycrest and the University of Toronto suggests that talking speed is a more important indicator of brain health than difficulty finding words, which appears to be a normal part of aging.

“Our results indicate that changes in general talking speed may reflect changes in the brain,” says Dr. Jed Meltzer,

Baycrest’s Canada Research Chair in Interventional Cognitive Neuroscience and the lead author on this study. “This suggests that talking speed should be tested as part of standard cognitive assessments to help clinicians detect cognitive decline faster and help older adults support their brain health as they age.”



Dr. Jed Meltzer

In this study, 125 healthy volunteers aged 18 to 90 completed three different assessments. The first was a picture-naming game, in which they had to answer questions about pictures while ignoring distracting words they heard through headphones. For example, when looking at a picture of a mop, they might be asked, “Does it end in ‘p’?” while hearing the word “broom” as a distraction.

Next, participants were recorded as they described two complex pictures for 60 seconds each. Their language performance was then analyzed using Artificial Intelligence-based software, in partnership with Winterlight Labs.

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Finally, the research participants completed standard tests to assess mental abilities that tend to decline with age and are linked to dementia risk - namely, executive function, which is the ability to manage conflicting information, stay focused and avoid distractions.

As expected, many abilities declined with age, including word-finding speed. Surprisingly, although the ability to recognize a picture and recall its name both worsened with age, this was not associated with a decline in other mental abilities. Instead, how fast participants were able to name pictures predicted how fast they spoke in general, and both were linked to executive function.

Although many older adults are concerned about their need to pause to search for words, these results suggest this is a normal part of aging. On the other hand, slowing down of normal speech, regardless of pausing, may be a more important indicator of changes to brain health.

This research was supported by a Discovery Grant from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), an Internship Grant from the Mitacs Accelerate Program and a Connaught Innovation Award.

Sharing Our Stories - The Power of Storytelling in Everyday Life

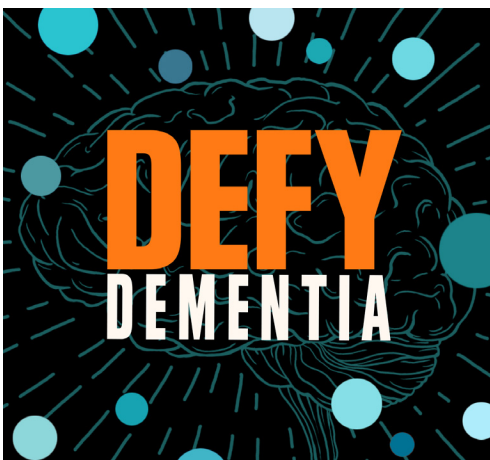
Did you know that humans listen to and remember stories better than any other form of information? Stories make us think and feel at the same time, so they are powerful ways to communicate and remember.

Join Baycrest@Home and professional storyteller Kathleen Smyth to learn how stories can connect us and tap into our imagination. Using music and prompts to elicit memories, this workshop is designed for older adults with memory changes and their family caregivers to participate together. All are encouraged to join and engage in the power of storytelling.

Register for this free workshop, which takes place on Wednesday, April 3 from 1 to 2 p.m. Space is limited so please reserve your spot by visiting <https://baycrestathome.ca/event/sharing-our-stories/>



Defy Dementia Episode 9 - Reducing Your Risk: Keep It Simple



This episode of Defy Dementia helps you sort through everything you've learned about dementia risk factors and identify those factors you can tackle in your life. First, hear from Ravi Venkatesh, an active 62-year-old who recently started making multiple lifestyle changes to improve his brain health after discovering this very podcast. Then, meet Dr. Sylvie Belleville (University of Montreal), who provides simple and practical advice to reduce your dementia risk.

Wherever you are in your brain health journey, don't miss this empowering new episode to help you defy dementia. Tune in at defydementia.org or anywhere you get your podcasts.

Employee Spotlight – Dr. Komal Shaikh



Dr. Komal Shaikh is a dynamic psychologist whose journey reflects her deep commitment to cognitive health and innovation.

Dr. Shaikh's story begins with a blend of curiosity and ambition. She holds a PhD from York

University and is a familiar presence at Baycrest, where she honed her skills and knowledge. Her love for neuropsychology burgeoned during her Master's program at York University, where she realized the practical impact of her work in everyday life. Her journey took her from the halls of York University to the Ottawa Hospital, a place she recalls fondly, before finally anchoring at Baycrest.

At Baycrest, Dr. Shaikh's role extends beyond traditional psychology. She specializes in neuropsychology, cognitive intervention and therapy. Her typical day involves assessing patients with cognitive difficulties, often stemming from life's various challenges. Dr. Shaikh's expertise lies in unraveling the complexities behind these cognitive struggles and developing tailored strategies for improvement and coping.

"I wear many hats, and that's what excites me every day," she shares. Her roles oscillate between healthcare, mental health, research and student training. This versatility is not just a job aspect for Dr. Shaikh; it's a source of constant motivation and fulfilment.

Baycrest stands out to Dr. Shaikh, not just as a workplace but as an innovation hub. "The Psychology Department here is like a close-knit family with excellent collaboration and work habits," she explains. Baycrest's unique approach to integrating clinical work with cutting-edge research was a significant draw for her, allowing her to pursue the clinical aspects she loves while engaging in innovative research projects.

Baycrest's perspective on psychology underscores its significance in our aging population's care. In addition to being therapists, psychologists at Baycrest are vital in diagnosing conditions like dementia and assisting patients and families with coping and planning.

Baycrest Senior Scientist Awarded Important CIHR Grant for Research on the Impact of Depression Treatment on Caregiver Brain Health



Dr. Jean Chen, Baycrest's Canada Research Chair in Neuroimaging of Aging and a Senior Scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute, has received an important grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to study how cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), the

gold-standard talk treatment for depression, impacts the brain health of older adult caregivers. This research is particularly significant considering caregivers of people who live with dementia are at greater risk of developing depression which may, in turn, reduce their ability to provide care.

As such, it is critical to treat depression not only for the individual's own well-being but also, in the case of caregivers, for the care recipient. Additionally, depression can increase dementia risk by up to five times, and up to 12 per cent of Canadians will suffer from depression at some point in their lives.

With this new grant, Dr. Chen and her Baycrest co-investigator Dr. Nasreen Khatri will use blood tests, neuroimaging and symptom-based assessments to study how CBT changes the brain. CBT is an evidence-based, short-term, collaborative, problem-solving therapy that helps people to turn maladaptive patterns of thinking into adaptive ones. They will also look at inflammation levels in the brain, which are often correlated with depression.

Dr. Chen is a pioneer in the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to examine vascular fluctuations in the brain as an indicator of brain health, and is currently leading research into the use of non-invasive therapies to improve brain health at home. Her crucial work is helping improve the lives of older adults both nationally and around the globe.

Baycrest Scientist Invested Into the Order of Canada for Groundbreaking Memory Research



Dr. Morris Moscovitch, a founding Senior Scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute, has been invested into the Order of Canada for his critical contributions to the fields of clinical neuropsychology and cognitive neuroscience, and especially for his

groundbreaking research on memory. Baycrest congratulates Dr. Moscovitch on this wonderful achievement.

Take Charge of Your Digital Skills with Our Free, Weekly Program



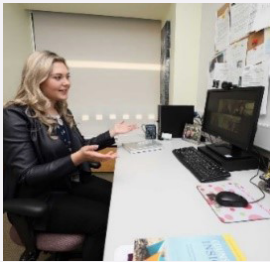
session called Technology Support for Older Adults.

To help older adults take control of their digital literacy, Baycrest's Patient, Family and Consumer Education (PFCE) team has started a weekly drop-in

Every Wednesday from 2 to 3 p.m., a technology expert is on hand to address inquiries regarding digital technology at Baycrest's Centre for Health Information, situated on the first floor of the Apotex Centre. All are welcome, and registration is not necessary. For further details, please contact Suzanne Pede, Project Coordinator, Patient, Family and Consumer Education, at spede@baycrest.org.

Innovation Updates

Caregiving 101: Courses for Family Carers - Learn about Dementia Skills Training



Join Social Worker and Dementia Coach Yuliya Goloida to learn the fundamentals of caring for someone living with dementia. This course is designed for spouses and partners, as well as adult children of older adults experiencing cognitive changes.

This course provides opportunities to share and connect with others in similar situations, and get tailored recommendations and resources, as well as clinical guidance to support participants' own unique experiences. To register or inquire, visit <https://baycrestathome.ca/member-plans/#caregiving-101>

Discover the Baycrest Innovation Office (BIO)



BIO strives to foster a culture of innovation amongst Baycrest staff and industry seeking support in advancing client care at Baycrest. BIO identifies practices, technologies and services developed by Baycrest innovators or emerging in the market that can improve the effectiveness of our programs and the experience of older adults.

By assessing novel ideas, innovations and technologies, BIO effectively guides, tracks and supports innovation at Baycrest

with the goal of dissemination, adoption and potential commercialization of new technologies and services. Current high-impact innovation projects include Possibilities by Baycrest™, Virtual Reality, and Interactive Gaming Projectors for Seniors to name a few.

For more information on BIO or to schedule a tour of our office and get introduced to all the exciting technology being used at Baycrest, contact: innovation@baycrest.org.

BUBBY'S BLOOMS

Passover Drive-thru Pick Up Flower Sale

Monday, April 22, 2024 | 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Kimel Entrance, Baycrest

100% of all proceeds support Baycrest programs

baycrestfoundation.org/bubbysblooms

Pre-order a beautiful bouquet for \$20.

Please place your order by Friday, April 19.

For more information, contact

Joanne Gittens at **416-785-2500 ext. 2023**
or JGittens@baycrest.org.

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