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Comox Valley Patient-Oriented Research (POR) Dementia Care Fellowships 2024-25

Patient-Oriented Research (POR)¹ is done in partnership with patients (for this call, the term ‘patient’ is inclusive of individuals with personal experience of dementia, as well as their informal caregivers, family, and friends), responds to patient-identified priorities, and aims to improve health outcomes.

This Comox Valley POR Dementia Care Fellowship opportunity is sponsored by the Comox Valley Community Foundation who made a generous contribution from the Robert and Florence Filberg Fund held at the Vancouver Foundation, and facilitated by the Comox Valley Healthcare Foundation.

In September 2023, people with lived experience (PWLE) of dementia, including caregivers, families and friends; researchers; community organizations; and health system leaders came together to identify priority areas for improvement and research in dementia care in the Comox Valley.

This call for applications is based on the priorities they identified.

Comox Valley POR Dementia Care Priority Areas

1. *Staying at Home Longer:* This priority area emphasizes choice, autonomy and support systems that enable PWLE of dementia to stay home longer. POR applications with a focus on day programs, transportation, housing options, home supports, social isolation, Indigenous Elder perspectives, and early identification of risk factors are all in alignment with the priority area identified by the Comox Valley community.

2. *Caregiver Supports and Respite:* This priority area highlights the need for a different style of adult day program dependent on level-of-care, caregiver education and training, access to emergency and long term respite beds, and reduced waitlists for programs and services.

3. *Dementia-Friendly Communities:* Community engagement and building on existing community supports, dementia education and awareness in community, infrastructure and transportation, and stigma were identified as priority areas for POR.

4. *Navigating Supports:* Coordination of current dementia care resources (Island Health Resource Guide, for example), educating general practitioners about the current resources for patients and families, nursing student placements in community, improved access to services, mapping of available services, and public-funded transportation services beyond medical appointments were identified as priority navigation supports that warrant POR.

1. <https://www.islandhealth.ca/research-capacity-building/patient-oriented-research>

Description of Funding

The Comox Valley POR Dementia Care Fellowships are for students who are enrolled in or have been accepted to a full-time thesis-based Masters or PhD program as of the application deadline, and who are interested in undertaking POR. Fourth year undergraduate students or students conducting supervised research projects are also eligible and encouraged to apply. Students at any of the academic institutions (Camosun College, North Island College, Royal Roads University, University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University) within the [Island Health region](#) are eligible to apply.

The objectives of this funding opportunity are to:

- Provide students with training and support in the principles and practice of POR;
- Develop dementia care POR capacity in the Comox Valley through collaboration between research partners (e.g., PWLE, students, supervisors, clinicians, community members, and health system decision-makers);
- Create opportunities for research partners to work together, from conceptualization of the research question through to dissemination and implementation of results;
- Demonstrate the impact of the Fellowship for recipients and patients; and
- Encourage recipients to use patient-oriented approaches to research in the future.

Funds Available

The total funding envelope is \$50,000, and the competition will provide one-time funding for Undergraduate and/or Masters' students at up to \$10,000 and PhD students at up to \$15,000. The number and value of awards given will be determined based on the number and quality of applications received. Funding can be used for salary and/or expenses directly related to the research project. The funding term is twelve months in duration, with the awards beginning August 1st, 2024.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be enrolled in, or accepted to, an undergraduate or graduate program at a Vancouver Island institution **by the award start-date (August 1, 2024)** and must be undertaking or planning to undertake dementia care-related undergraduate or graduate research.
- Applicants must be registered as a full-time, regular (not on-leave) student during the one-year term of the Fellowship.
- International students are eligible for this Fellowship.
- Applicants must have a confirmed research supervisor who is an established faculty member at their home institution.

- As health is influenced by numerous and varied determinants, students in all departments or faculties are eligible to apply.
- Activities undertaken during the course of the award must address the Comox Valley Research Priority areas listed below and/or be directly relevant to that population.
- Projects that involve Indigenous communities must demonstrate meaningful and culturally safe engagement throughout.
- Applicants must ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion in the team, for all participants, and the design and implementation of the project.

Examples of POR

Students may consider some of the following patient-oriented approaches to research during the term of their Fellowship:

- Inviting PWLE with lived experience of dementia to be part of a POR project advisory group
- Convening a workshop with PWLE of dementia to explore their experiences, or to talk about their priorities for research.
- Inviting PWLE of dementia to collaborate on certain aspects of a POR project (e.g. defining/refining a research question; helping to determine study methods; assisting with data collection or analysis; co-developing knowledge translation products)
- Asking a patient partner with lived experience of dementia to be a mentor/external supervisor for a thesis or research project (university regulations permitting)

Key Dates

Deadline for application submission: May 19, 2024

Notification of results: July 15, 2024

Start of funding: August 1, 2024

End of funding: August 1, 2025

Fellowship Conditions and Responsibilities

Submission of an application implies acceptance of the following conditions by the applicant:

- *Letter of Agreement*: The successful candidate will be required to sign a letter of agreement with the Conditions and Responsibilities of the Fellowship before the award will be administered.
- *Disbursal of Funds*: Funding will be disbursed in a sub-award agreement to the student's academic institution (the Host Institution). The Host Institution must administer the funds for the benefit of each participating award holder in accordance with the Tri-Council Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions, and with any other relevant policies of the Agency, including those at:

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/TAFA-AFTO/index_eng.asp

The Host Institution will repay any unspent funds.

- *Acknowledgement:* Any formal presentation, publication, or thesis resulting from the Fellowship must acknowledge the support from the Robert and Florence Filberg Medical Research Fund, the Comox Valley Community Foundation, Comox Valley Health Care Foundation, Island Health Research Department, and BC SUPPORT Unit Island Centre.
- *Training:* Active participation in one or more of the CIHR National Curriculum for Patient-Oriented Research training modules will be encouraged.
- *Multi-disciplinary teams:* Successful POR requires the involvement of multiple interest holders; the BC SUPPORT Unit Island Centre will facilitate connections between successful Fellowship applicants and clinicians, healthcare professionals, and patient partners as required.
- *Interim Reporting:* The successful candidate will be required to give a short presentation or interim report to the Comox Valley Dementia Care Organizing Committee after five months of funding, to update the committee on the candidate's POR-related activities.
- *Final Report:* A brief summary of the activities and accomplishments achieved during the Fellowship will be submitted within six weeks of the end of the funding period.

Application Components

1. Application form
2. Applicant statement (max 250 words): Describe how your POR Fellowship application aligns with the dementia care research priorities identified by the Comox Valley community.
3. Patient-Oriented Research project plan (max 1,000 words): Provide an overview of your POR plan, including background on the topic, specific project aims, and proposed patient/stakeholder engagement methods, and how equity, diversity, and inclusion will be considered throughout the project.
4. Knowledge Translation plan (max 500 words): Describe how you will share, implement, and/or create impact with your proposed project.
5. Supervisor letter of support: Describe the applicant's suitability for this Fellowship; how they will benefit from training and support in the area of Patient-Oriented Research; how you (as a supervisor) commit to supporting their project (e.g. through funding, provision of facilities or equipment, or transfer of knowledge/expertise); and how you have been involved with projects over the course of your career which meaningfully include patient partners.



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Please note: Applications must use a minimum of 12-point font and 1-inch margins for all submitted materials. Documents may be submitted in Word or PDF form (or equivalents). Please do not include any additional materials in the application, as they will not be considered.

Selection Process and Review Criteria

The Comox Valley Dementia Care Organizing Committee (comprised of patient partners, community members, and representatives from academic and clinical partner organizations) will follow a formal selection process and will evaluate each of the submissions, taking into account the following:

- Quality and promise of the applicant (25%)
- Alignment with Comox Valley dementia care research priorities, quality and clarity of the proposed POR activities (25%)
- Research environment (e.g. supervisory excellence, resources required and/or available to conduct the POR project) (25%)
- Potential impact, as demonstrated by Knowledge Translation Plan (25%)

Application Submission and Support

Inquiries can be addressed to: islandcentre@islandhealth.ca.

Please email completed application packages to islandcentre@islandhealth.ca no later than 4pm (PDT) on May 19th, 2024.