

**For Immediate Release**

**August 4, 2020**

**COVID-19 and Frailty: \$800,000 dedicated to research for Canada's most vulnerable**

**(Kingston, Ontario)** – As we have seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults living with frailty have been disproportionately affected with devastating impacts. 97% of COVID-19 deaths in Canada have been in people over age 60, the majority of whom were over the age of 80 and living with frailty (Government of Canada, 2020). Frailty has recently been shown to predispose individuals to negative outcomes from COVID-19, but why this happens and how we can ameliorate these outcomes remain a mystery.

The Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) is funding key studies that investigate the interplay between COVID-19 and frailty. These studies will ultimately aid in finding solutions to improving care of older adults with frailty and COVID-19. An overwhelming number of proposals were received – covering a variety of care settings including acute, long-term and community care.

CFN committed half-a-million dollars to this competition and have proudly partnered with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Aging (CIHR-IA), who recognize the importance of this research, and have committed an additional \$300,000 in funding, enabling a total of \$800,000 in funding.

CFN is pleased to announce the projects that have received funding through this partnership.

- Dr. Douglas Lee-Institute of Clinical Evaluative Sciences, *Population-estimable frailty using 'big data' to predict Covid-19 infection and illness severity*--\$185,459
- Dr. Paul Stolee-University of Waterloo, Dr. Sara Mallinson-University of Calgary & Dr. Anik Giguère-Université Laval, *Exploring the care needs of Canadians living with frailty and the role of primary care during the COVID-19 pandemic*--\$85,500
- Dr. Amol Verma-St. Michael's Hospital, *Developing a Frailty Cohort in the Ontario COVID-19 Prospective Cohort Study*--\$183,231
- Dr. Esme Fuller-Thomson-University of Toronto & Dr. Karen Davison-Kwantlen Polytechnic University, *Frailty & the Incidence and Course of COVID-19 among 500,000 Older Adults in the UK BIOBANK*--\$118,377
- Dr. Allison McGeer- Sinai Health System, Dr. Melissa Andrew-Dalhousie University & Dr. Andrew Simor-University of Toronto, *Assessing the Association Between Frailty and Outcome of COVID-19 Infection*--\$132,644
- Drs. Rewa Oleksa, Darryl Rolfson, Sean Bagshaw & Carmel Montgomery-University of Alberta, *COVID-19 Associated Outcomes of Critical Illness in Patients with Frailty*--\$46,194

“Our work creates scientific evidence that is translated into practices and policies to fulfill our mission of improving care for older adults living with frailty. With the onset of the pandemic, we identified a need and, in fact, an obligation to investigate why older adults with frailty are differentially affected by COVID-19,” says Scientific Director and CEO, Dr. John Muscedere.

Dr. Lee of the Institute of Clinical Evaluative Sciences says, “We believe the lessons learned from our study will generate knowledge about COVID-19 infections and prognosis, and the unintended impacts of the healthcare system response to the pandemic on individuals that are frail. “

“What are the healthcare needs and experiences of older Canadians living with frailty, and their family caregivers, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how have healthcare systems responded? With this support from CFN, we can find answers to those questions so we can be better prepared for future pandemics and other emergencies,” says Dr. Stolee of his project based out of the University of Waterloo.

In Canada today, one in every four Canadians between the ages of 65-84 years is considered medically frail (1.5 million older adults), and by age 85 that number increases to one in two. As Canada’s only research network singularly focused on frailty in older adults, CFN’s mission is to improve care for older Canadians living with frailty and their caregivers through research, knowledge translation, training of the next generation of health care providers and public health initiatives such as the [AVOID Frailty-Take Control](#) program.

[Click here](#) to read more about the funded projects

Reference:

Government of Canada. (2020). Figure 4: Age and gender distribution of COVID-19 cases deceased in Canada as of July 12, 2020, 7pm EDT. Retrieved from: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html?stat=num&measure=deaths#a2>

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#### **About the Canadian Frailty Network**

Canadian Frailty Network (CFN) is Canada’s sole network devoted to improving care for older Canadians living with frailty and supporting their families and caregivers. We do this by increasing frailty recognition and assessment, increasing evidence for decision-making from the bedside to the policy making level, advancing evidence-based changes to care, training the next generation of care professionals and scientists, and engaging with older adults and caregivers. CFN is funded by the Government of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence program. For more information, please visit [www.cfn-nce.ca](http://www.cfn-nce.ca), or follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).