

# Together for better health

YOUR IMPACT AT QUEEN'S HEALTH SCIENCES



## **A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE** FROM LISA TANNOCK, DEAN

As I embark on my first year as Dean of Queen's Health Sciences, I am filled with excitement about the possibilities that lie ahead and what we can achieve together. The entire Queen's campus features the generous marks of our donors—whether through buildings, plaques, or artwork—and their support has been invaluable.

Everyone at Queen's—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and regional partners—shares ambitious goals for the future of health sciences education and research. We envision training the next generation of practitioners and scientists who are prepared to work and lead on a global scale; conducting internationally recognized research that addresses critical issues in human health; and creating an integrated healthcare system that provides the care our community requires.

Great ideas are just the beginning of building a healthier world. To bring them to life and keep them going, we need the necessary resources.

That's where you play a vital role. Thanks to your generous support of Queen's Health Sciences, we have funding to help launch our bold collaborations. Donations to Queen's Health Sciences make a significant impact by enabling us to address urgent and unexpected needs, take advantage of new opportunities, and launch promising projects that might not have other sources of funding.

Throughout this document, you will see a few examples highlighted of donations that have driven progress in health sciences education, clinical care, innovative research, community involvement, and health equity.

Thank you for being a vital part of our community. Together, we can shape the future of health sciences education. I look forward to the journey ahead and what we will accomplish together.

Dr. Lisa Tannock  
Dean, Queen's Health Sciences  
Director, School of Medicine

# Students building a stronger QHS community

## Recent QHS student projects and initiatives:

- **Beaded Q project** - MD Indigenous students created a beautiful beaded Q that is on display at the Office of Indigenous Health
- **Project LETS** led by BHSc students aiming to make menstrual products available on campus
- **QueerMED** in collaboration with QHS walked in the Pride Parade
- Students are working on various **EDI health sciences education research projects** with the Office of Equity and Social Accountability and the Office of Indigenous Health.

**LEARN MORE:**

**Student Projects: Office of Equity and Social Accountability »**



QHS walked in the Pride Parade



Beaded Q project



**JENNA COWAN, BHSC (HONS) '25**

Health Sciences Research: Design and Methods (HSCI 591) and Health Sciences Research: Data Collection and Interpretation (HSCI 593) was definitely a highlight of my fourth year! I worked with Dr. Funnell and Dr. Valarezo to identify what cultural safety training resources are available for healthcare workers to help address the cultural needs of Indigenous aging populations for end-of-life and palliative care. One of my favourite aspects of this project was that it aids in improved information accessibility and increases awareness to an area often underrepresented.

**This work is grounded in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, addressing both the critical need for appropriate and equitable care for Indigenous individuals undergoing palliative care, as well as recognizing the systematic effects of colonization and colonialism in this country currently known as Canada as I strive towards allyship.**

As a part of this project, I was fortunate to engage with the Frontenac, Lennox, & Addington Ontario Health Team's (FLA OHT) Palliative Care Support Strategies Subgroup, a group focusing on community based participatory research with Indigenous communities in the FLA region to understand and address gaps. Here, I was able to deepen my understanding by collaborating directly with key interest holders in the community. The members of this group are co-authors on the final manuscript; a highlight for me was the feedback and ongoing editing process which helped polish the work further.

I formed great relationships with my research supervisors as well as the FLA OHT subgroup, and engaged with resources such as the Health Sciences Librarian, Angélique Roy. The collaboration aspect of this project was essential for seeing it come to fruition, and I am deeply grateful for everyone involved! At the recommendation of Dr. Funnell and Dr. Valarezo, I applied to present at a conference, and I am extremely grateful and proud to be presenting my HSCI 593 research poster at the Canadian Conference on Physician Health this month in Vancouver.

Jenna

**With support for experiential research opportunities, Jenna deepened her skills in culturally safe care and shared her findings at a national conference.**



**HALEY KOMBARGI, BHSCH '25**

My passion for health equity initiatives sparked in my first undergraduate year, where I was privileged to collaborate with diverse faculty and learners in co-creating the inaugural Racism and Health in Canada (GLPH 281) course. Since then, I have continued learning alongside the Queen's Health Sciences (QHS) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigeneity, Accessibility (EDIIA) Action Committee. After conducting environmental scans and focus groups with admissions personnel, a gap in evidence-based, equity-informed admissions practices was identified. This inspired my leadership in research informing QHS admissions guidelines, including implementing Black Student Admission Pathways and co-leading an interdisciplinary working group. Unpacking my own unconscious bias, I took accountability for practicing cultural humility to ensure culturally relevant and responsive recommendations. I learned from community with lived experience and transparently included statements of positionality in all research presentations and papers.

**Through this, I learned health equity neither begins nor ends at the application cycle. To ensure sustainability, my research recommendations centred on longitudinal initiatives, including pre-admission outreach, holistic admission review, and post-admission retention through community building.**

I learned facilitators to effective inclusive admissions practices, like inter-institutional collaboration and community-centred collaboration. I feel honoured and grateful for the opportunity to have learned alongside diverse learners, faculty, staff, and community members to collectively champion health equity.

Kindest regards,  
Haley

**Haley's research examined gaps in equity-informed admissions practices and developed long-term, community-centred recommendations to make QHS more inclusive and accessible.**



# Queen Elizabeth Scholarships (QES)

## Expanding global research capacity through QES:

With your support, Queen's Health Sciences and the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research-International) partnered to bring six Ghanaian collaborators to Kingston for the 2023 Queen Elizabeth Scholar-West Africa Summer Institute. Together with ten QES Scholars, they began research that will translate into meaningful impact in their home regions. Unused funds will be directed to a 2024 follow-up institute to continue this important international partnership.



**LEARN MORE:**

**Global Engagement: Queen Elizabeth Scholarships 2025 »**



**HOLLY BURROWS, NSC'25**  
PRESIDENT, NURSING SCIENCE SOCIETY

As President of the Nursing Science Society, I have seen firsthand the profound impact that financial aid and donor support have on our students. Nursing is a demanding program, both academically and personally, and the financial pressures can be overwhelming for many of us. For some students, balancing the cost of tuition, textbooks, and living expenses with the rigorous demands of clinical placements and coursework would be impossible without the vital assistance provided through financial aid.

**This support doesn't just relieve financial stress—it enables students to fully engage in their studies and clinical training, helping them to focus on what matters most: becoming compassionate, skilled nurses who will go on to make a difference in the health and well-being of our communities.**

Additionally, funding that enhances the student experience, whether it's for professional development opportunities, wellness initiatives, or student-led projects, makes an enormous difference. It fosters a sense of community, encourages leadership, and helps us grow both as individuals and future healthcare professionals.

On behalf of all the Nursing students at Queen's, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to you for your generosity. You are making a difference in our lives and in the future of healthcare.

Sincerely,  
Holly

**Your generosity eases financial pressure for nursing students and enables them to fully engage in their studies, clinical training, and leadership opportunities.**

# Advancing research in immunology with a new state-of-the-art laboratory

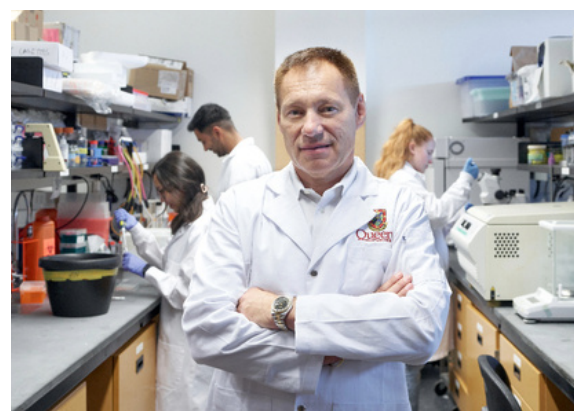
Uncovering the mysteries of the immune system requires highly specialized tools. Dr. Kubes has made significant progress in setting up an advanced laboratory that is specially designed to support highly detailed imaging.

**"My goal is to build the best imaging centre in Canada here at Queen's," says Dr. Kubes. "An imaging centre that can do in-vivo imaging, and take it not just down to the cell, but a single molecule."**

This new infrastructure will enable the exploration of innovative approaches like CAR-T (Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell), a form of immunotherapy that involves modifying a patient's own T cells to better recognize and attack cancer cells, enabling more precise and effective treatments.

To support this work, he's hired eight postdoctoral researchers with diverse skill sets, some of whom received training under Dr. Kubes at the University of Calgary before joining the Queen's lab, and others who were trained internationally in China and Brazil. The team is already running experiments that will inform the next generation of immune-based therapies.

**"The progress we've made this past year is just the beginning," says Dr. Kubes. "I'm incredibly excited about the potential of our imaging centre and the discoveries we can make with this team. There's so much left to uncover about the immune system, and I look forward to contributing to breakthroughs that could transform how we approach health challenges worldwide."**



Dr. Paul Kubes with students in a research lab.

## LEARN MORE:

**Full Article: Pushing Research Boundaries »**

**Full Article: Cancer research transformed by landmark gift to Queen's University »**





**BRITTANY PONNIAH, OT'25**  
PRESIDENT, REHABILITATION THERAPY STUDENT SOCIETY

As President of the Rehabilitation Therapy Student Society, I want to express how deeply grateful we are for the financial support that has been provided to students in our program. Rehabilitation Therapy students face unique financial challenges, particularly when it comes to the costs associated with fieldwork placements, travel, and accommodation. These placements are essential to our hands-on training and professional development, but they often come with significant personal expenses.

**In addition to placements, many students in our program benefit from attending conferences, engaging in research, and participating in extracurricular activities that enrich our student experience. These opportunities not only enhance our education, but also allow us to grow as future rehabilitation professionals, learning from experts in the field and contributing to ongoing research and innovation.**

On behalf of my fellow Rehabilitation Therapy students, thank you for your continued support. Without donors like you, many of these experiences would be out of reach.

Sincerely,  
Brittany

**Support from donors helps level the playing field by removing financial barriers to fieldwork, travel, and career-building opportunities that many students would otherwise be unable to afford.**

# Research Chair & Innovation

## Nurturing health from the very beginning

### Advancing perinatal mental health through the Sally Smith Chair in Nursing

When we invest in nursing research, we invest in healthier beginnings—for mothers, babies, and families everywhere. As the Sally Smith Chair in Nursing, Dr. Shahirose Premji is leading groundbreaking work that connects the dots between mental health, premature birth, and early child development.

This year, Dr. Premji and her team secured a national New Frontiers in Research Fund grant to design an innovative wearable technology for breastfeeding—a device that strengthens the bond between parent and baby while addressing the complex interplay between prematurity, feeding challenges, and postpartum depression. This work not only supports mental and physical health, but also reflects a commitment to affordability and environmental sustainability.

Beyond this project, Dr. Premji's research is shedding light on how maternal mental health shapes biological outcomes—from gestational diabetes and hypertension to fine motor and learning development in children. Her collaborations span AI-driven predictive modeling, genetic and epigenetic research, and global mental health interventions, all aimed at one goal: ensuring every family has access to the care and support they need in those critical early months.

Building on this momentum, Dr. Premji is now laying the foundation for a new Centre for Perinatal Mental Health—a hub that will bring together clinicians, researchers, students, and community partners to create a learning health system across Southeastern Ontario. This visionary initiative will bridge research and practice to improve care pathways for pregnant and postpartum women, advancing both health equity and family wellbeing.

**Thanks to visionary donors like Brit Smith, this Chair is fuelling discoveries that reach far beyond the lab—transforming how we understand, support, and care for families from the very start of life.**



Dr. Shahirose Sadrudin Premji

#### LEARN MORE:

**Watch: Dr. Shahirose Sadrudin Premji, "The Journey to Better Mental Health During Pregnancy" »**



**SAMANTHA ROGERS, BHSC'27**  
PRESIDENT, QUEEN'S STUDENT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

As President of the Queen's Student Alumni Association and a Bachelor of Health Sciences student, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generous support of student financial aid. Your contributions make a significant difference and enable us to flourish at Queen's, ensuring that students like me can focus on our studies, experience all the amazing opportunities health sciences has to offer, and pursue our passions without the burden of financial stress.

**I was awarded an entrance scholarship, which not only enabled me to attend Queen's but also gave me a sense of belonging in this faculty, as I felt the Queen's Health Sciences community truly wanted to see me succeed and help me reach my aspirations.**

Your generosity helps us thrive both academically and personally, and it means the world to know that our community is behind us, supporting us and encouraging us every step of the way.

Thank you for your unwavering support!  
Samantha

**An entrance scholarship made it possible for Samantha to attend Queen's and feel truly supported in reaching their academic and personal goals.**

# Healthy aging health services (OASIS project)

## Finding connection, health, and purpose — together

### How Oasis is changing what it means to age well

Aging well starts with belonging — and thanks to donor support, the Oasis program is helping older adults across Canada find just that.

Led by older adults themselves and supported through research and coordination by Queen's Health Sciences, Oasis transforms apartment buildings and community housing complexes into vibrant hubs of connection. Members gather for shared meals, exercise classes, health education sessions, and social activities that promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being — all within the places they already call home.

**With additional donor funding this year from the Waltons Trust, Oasis expanded its reach and strengthened its research backbone, helping communities design programs that meet local needs and sustain themselves long-term. The impact is clear:**

- Loneliness is five times lower among long-term Oasis members than new participants.
- Falls are dramatically reduced (from 26% to 5%) through improved strength, balance, and engagement.
- Nutrition and activity levels soar, with over 70% of members reporting healthy eating and daily exercise.

As one 86-year-old member shared, **“Oasis has made a huge impact on my life. I found loneliness hard on me, and then Oasis came along. I was able to meet new friends—it’s like a family where I can laugh again.”**

The model's success has inspired growth to 19 Oasis sites across 11 cities — from Kingston to Vancouver — and continues to guide new research on how community-led initiatives can ease pressure on the health system while improving quality of life for Canada's aging population.

**Through your generosity, you're helping older adults stay healthier, longer — in the places they love, surrounded by the communities that keep them thriving.**

#### [LEARN MORE:](#)

Watch: Dr. Catherine Donnelly, “Neighbours helping neighbours age well at home” »





**JEFFREY SUN, BHSC (HONS.)**

AESCLAPIAN SOCIETY PRESIDENT, QUEEN'S SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Since beginning my studies at Queen's University, one of the most striking and enriching aspects of my journey has been the vibrant diversity within our cohort. This diversity is reflected not only in the wide array of backgrounds represented but also in the distinct values, passions, and ambitions that each student brings to our shared pursuit of medicine. Whether through creative expressions like our class band's welcome performance for first-year students, the presentation of groundbreaking research with global impact, or the launch of initiatives to produce health education materials for local children, our community continuously demonstrates a dynamic blend of dedication and self-expression. Beyond our rigorous academic commitments, it is this collective spirit of openness and collaboration that truly defines our experience and unites us.

**On behalf of my fellow students, I want to express our sincere gratitude for your generosity. Your support enables us to explore our creativity, advance the field of medicine, and foster a strong, inclusive community.** Your investment in our development not only shapes us into skilled healthcare providers but also helps cultivate compassionate individuals with the integrity and dedication necessary to make meaningful differences in patients' lives.

We are profoundly grateful for the opportunity your support provides us—to be proud representatives of Queen's University and to contribute positively to the future of medicine.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support.

Sincerely,  
Jeffrey

**Your investment empowers medical students to grow as skilled healthcare providers while also nurturing the compassion, integrity, and collaboration that define the Queen's experience.**

# How exercise-linked molecules from muscle could help protect the brain from Alzheimer's

**Groundbreaking research at Queen's Health Sciences is revealing how exercise benefits the brain—and may one day help protect against Alzheimer's disease.**

Supported by the Ernest and Mayme Webber Endowment in Alzheimer's Research, Master's student Ethan Januszkiewicz (MSc, Neuroscience '25) has been exploring how molecules released by muscles during exercise might communicate with the brain to promote cognitive health. Working under the supervision of Dr. Fernanda De Felice, Ethan focused on tiny particles called extracellular vesicles (EVs)—microscopic messengers that carry signals between cells throughout the body.

Scientists have long known that physical activity improves brain function and reduces the risk of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's, but the biological "conversation" between muscle and brain has remained elusive. Ethan's work offers exciting new clues. Using fluorescently tagged transgenic mice models, his study provided the first evidence that muscle-derived EVs can reach the brain following exercise, suggesting a potential mechanism by which physical activity helps protect neurons.

**"It is well established that muscles release molecules during exercise that contribute to some of these positive effects [on the brain and neurological conditions]," says Januszkiewicz. "However, what is not well understood is whether or how these molecules are able to cross the blood brain barrier and reach the brain."**

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**"Without this endowment, my research wouldn't have been possible," Ethan reflects. It's incredible to know that donors like the Webbers are helping unlock answers to one of the greatest health challenges of our time. "I am eternally grateful for the support it provided me."**



Januszkiewicz's research is focused on the mechanisms behind the neuroprotective effects of exercise in neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. The beneficial effects of exercise are partially mediated by the actions of active molecules released by muscles (myokines). However, how and if these molecules reach the brain to exert their neuroprotective actions remain unknown. One hypothesis stems from extracellular vesicles (EVs) which play an essential role in cellular communication. More specifically it is hypothesized that skeletal muscle-derived EVs containing myokines are released into circulation during exercise and are essential to directly or indirectly translate exercise-benefits to the brain.

Januszkiewicz says, **"Our findings suggest that muscle-EVs may reach the brain following exercise albeit in low quantities"** - a discovery that could inform new therapeutic approaches for Alzheimer's.

Ethan's research has already attracted significant recognition. He presented his work at Queen's Health Sciences Research Day and at the 2025 Three Minute Thesis competition, where he earned the People's Choice Award and placed among the top 10 finalists. He also co-authored a review paper, **"Physical activity in Alzheimer's disease prevention: Sex differences and the roles of BDNF and irisin,"** published in *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* in April 2025.

The Webbers' foresight made this work possible. During their lifetime, Ernest and Mayme Webber created a fund to advance Alzheimer's research at Queen's—an area close to their hearts. They also planned a generous bequest in their estate to enhance the fund, ensuring its impact would continue for generations.

This thoughtful combination of lifetime giving and a future estate gift exemplifies how donors can create a legacy of discovery and hope. The Webbers' enduring generosity continues to empower emerging scientists like Ethan to pursue innovative research that could transform how we understand—and one day prevent—neurodegenerative disease.

**"Without this endowment, my research wouldn't have been possible,"** Ethan reflects. **It's incredible to know that donors like the Webbers are helping unlock answers to one of the greatest health challenges of our time. "I am eternally grateful for the support it provided me."**

#### LEARN MORE:

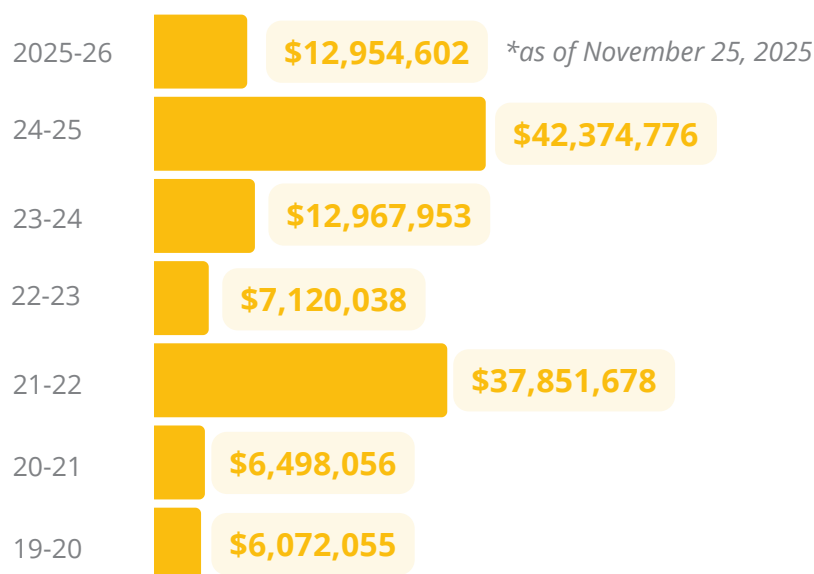
**Watch: Ethan Januszkiewicz, 3-Minute Thesis "Tracking Muscle Brain Communication: Extracellular Vesicles the Packages of Our Body's Postal System" »**



## By the numbers

**\$125,839,158**

Funds raised since the 2019/2020 academic year



### Looking ahead

Queen's Health Sciences is reimagining health sciences education, research, and patient care – and your support is crucial. The QHS Fund was established to support the faculty's ongoing mission to prepare the next generation of health scientists, partner to improve health in our communities, and drive world-renowned research that asks and answers the most pressing questions in health sciences. Our focus on interdisciplinary science and interprofessional education will improve health systems, quality of care, and patient outcomes. A gift in support of the QHS Fund will help enable us to build a healthier world in our classrooms, hospitals, clinics, and communities.

For more information, visit [givetoqueens.ca/healthsciences](https://givetoqueens.ca/healthsciences) »

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