



2023-2027 Strategic Plan

Driving Change to Improve Care

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Letter from the Board Chair

Anything is possible when people work together toward a shared goal. Whether that goal is to build a business or create a healthier community, a clear vision and roadmap on how to get there are vital to success. With this in mind, HRI created a strategic plan to define our shared goals and objectives for accomplishing them. We established guiding principles and measurable outcomes to help ensure that HRI's new strategic plan is at the heart of everything we do.

This plan is the product of a full year of collaboration, research and engagement with our stakeholders. After conducting an environmental scan of the mental health and substance use landscape in Canada, we assembled an advisory group of six members to oversee the development of the strategic plan, while the HRI Board of Directors provided critical guidance and support. HRI staff, scientists, trainees, funders, people with lived and living experience and others provided input on where to focus our attention and efforts over the next five years.

In total, over one hundred people and/or organizations contributed to the development of this strategic plan. We are grateful to each and every person who participated.

HRI continues to drive change and improve care for mental health and substance use health. Our niche enables us to bridge the gap between new knowledge and practice, improving outcomes for our friends, our families and our communities across Canada.

“At HRI, we turn applied research into solutions for the real world, we advance treatment innovations and we catalyze change. Together, we can ensure no life is held back or cut short by mental illness and/or substance use issues.”



Ronald P. Schlegel, OC, PhD, LLD, FCAHS
Board Chair and Director,
Homewood Research Institute



Introduction

Homewood Research Institute (HRI) is an independent charity that drives innovation and applied research to improve mental health and substance use services in Canada and around the world. We do this through strategic partnerships with leading scientists, service providers and people with lived experience.



Vision

No life held back or cut short by mental illness and/or substance use issues.



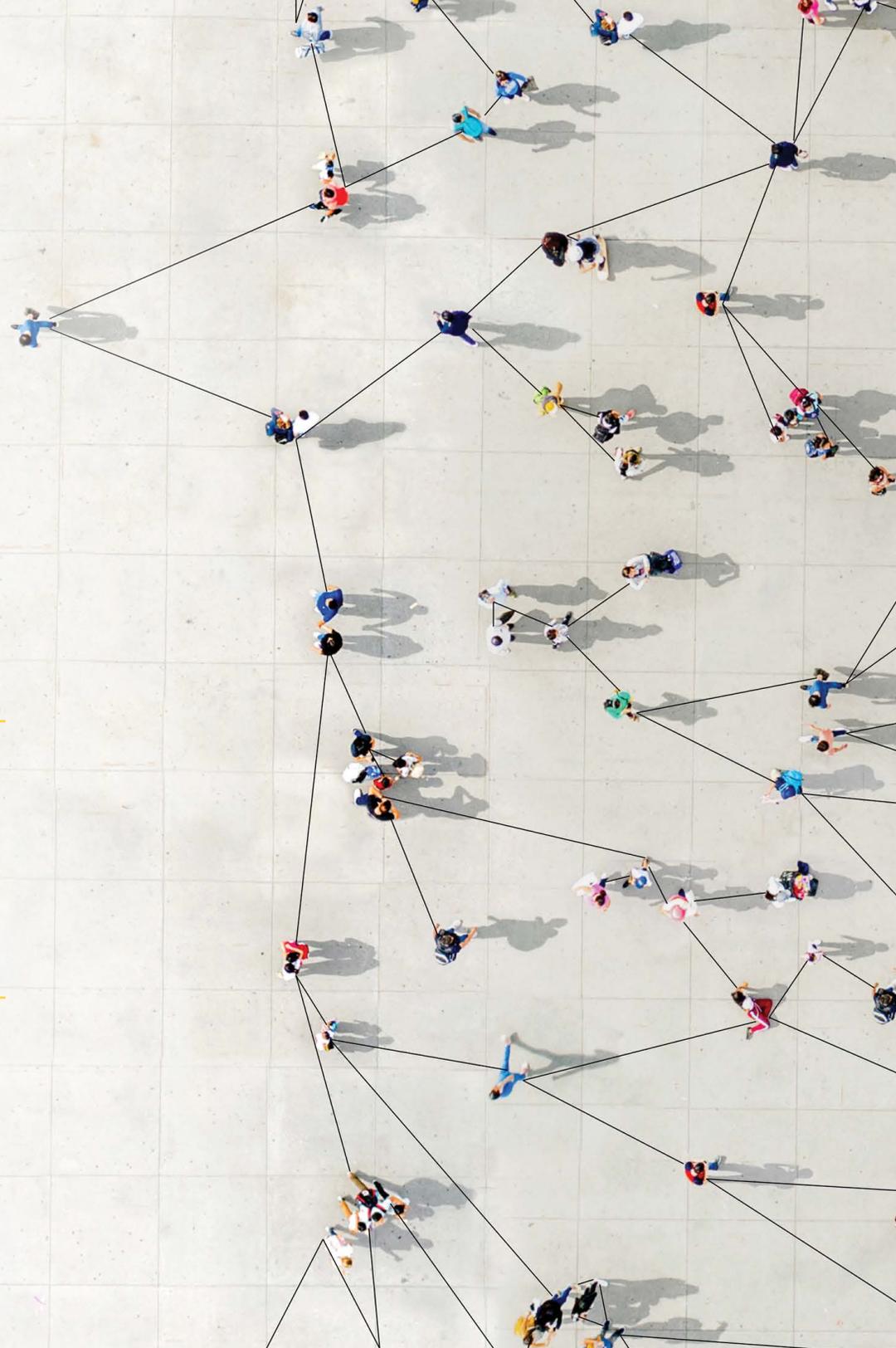
Mission

We collaborate with key stakeholders to improve mental and substance use health through applied research and knowledge translation.



Values

Partnership & Collaboration
Discovery & Innovation
Real-World Impact & Excellence



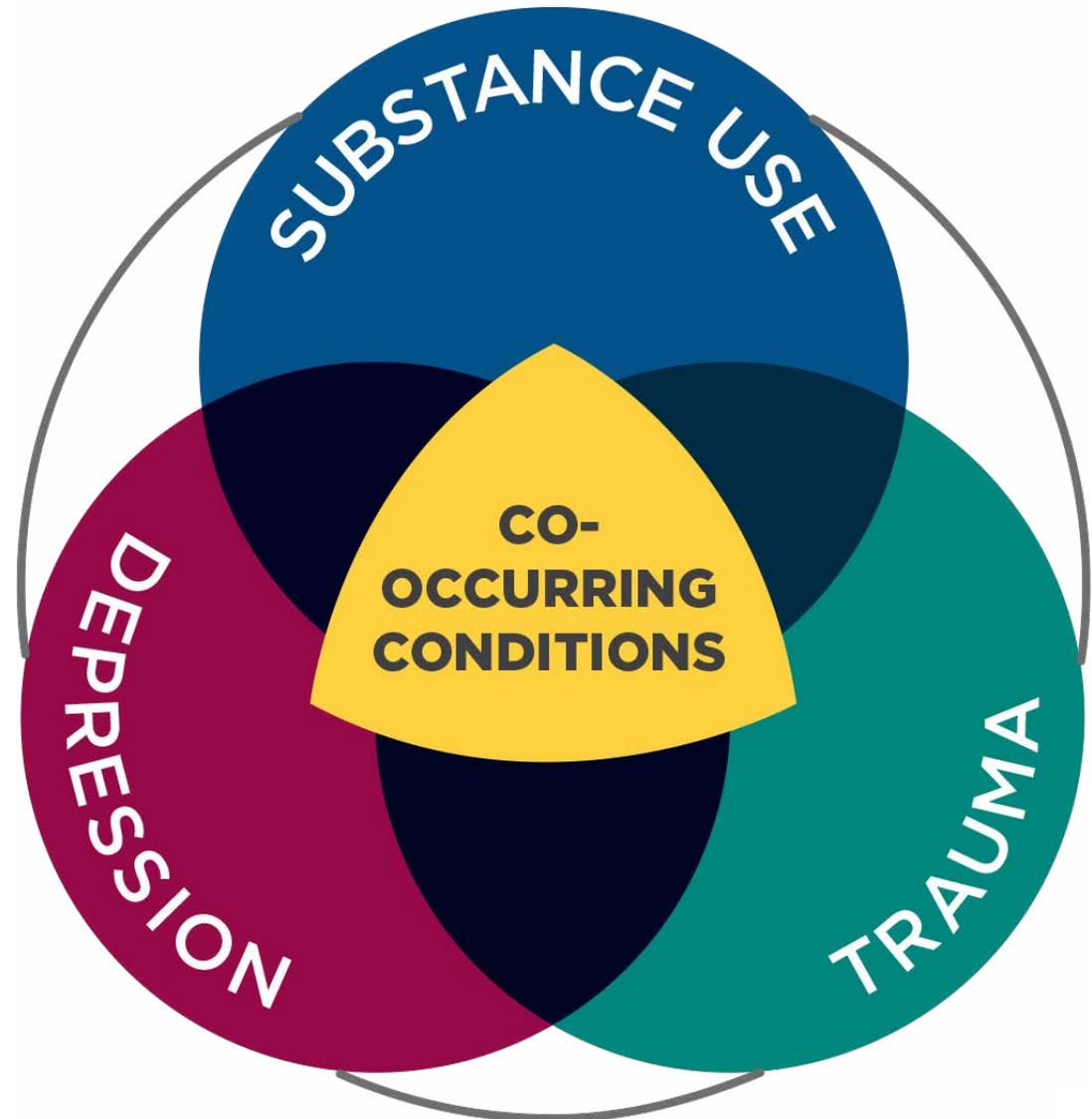
HRI's Niche

Focus Areas

This strategic plan builds on HRI's ongoing research in the areas of substance use and trauma, and adds depression as a new focus area.

Many people who experience substance use disorders, trauma or depression have more than one of these diagnoses at the same time (co-occurring conditions). Higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, medical illness and premature death are associated with co-occurrence. Economically and socially disadvantaged groups are especially vulnerable, a problem that has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

HRI's plan over the next five years is to build on our strengths and extend our research to better understand how these conditions interact and how we can improve outcomes through the delivery of enhanced treatments for people living with mental illness and/or substance use issues.



The Gap

Despite knowledge that substance use, trauma and depression frequently co-occur and can be life altering, they are under-researched, under-diagnosed, and under-treated. When care is provided, conditions are often treated separately rather than in an integrated way. Clinicians are forced to rely on treatment guidance derived from evidence on single conditions. Indeed, research studies frequently exclude individuals with co-occurring conditions because their complexity makes it difficult to design robust studies and draw clear conclusions.

“Focusing on the links among substance use, trauma and depression is very important. These co-morbidities are the rule rather than the exception in many patients”.

Dr. Linda Lee, family physician

Mental illness or substance use disorders will affect

1 in 3 
Canadians in their lifetime

It is common for people to experience **2+** or more mental health and/or substance use issues at the same time

AMONG CANADIANS:

People diagnosed with PTSD are

7x 

more likely to suffer from anxiety or depression.²

People diagnosed with a substance use disorder are

3x 

more likely to suffer from depression.³

¹ Statistics Canada, 2013

² Statistics Canada, Survey on Covid-19 and Mental Health, 2020

³ Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction and Mental Health Commission of Canada, Mental Health and Substance Use During Covid-19, 2020 Morris et al, Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 2011

The Approach

In the next five years, HRI will allocate 60% of its time and resources to research and evaluation activities (knowledge generation), and 40% to knowledge translation. Knowledge translation activities will go beyond typical dissemination strategies like scientific publications to ensure uptake and application of knowledge into practice, through education, training, and implementation strategies.

Practice-informed research. HRI is uniquely positioned to conduct applied, real-world research with a focus on co-occurring conditions. We bring together a wide range of stakeholders including, but not limited to: clinicians, researchers, policy makers, service providers and people with lived and living experience. We do this within a unique structure that includes core partnerships with McMaster University and Homewood Health, as well as affiliations with other academic institutions and clinical centres.

As our primary practice partner, Homewood Health is a major mental health treatment organization in Canada with locations and services across the country. Its comprehensive stepped care continuum is trusted by thousands of organizations and utilized by millions of Canadians. With Homewood Health's national suite of mental health services, including Homewood Health Centre in Guelph Ontario, Ravensview in Victoria, British Columbia and a national network of outpatient services, HRI has access to a rich patient/client base that provides a foundation to address research questions that are informed by practice. This client base has been expanded through emerging partnerships with St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, Canadian Biomarker Integration Network in Depression (CAN-BIND) and a growing network of other clinicians and researchers who can help to replicate our results across broad population groups.

Through our partnerships and collaborations, we are able to test, evaluate, and retest novel treatments to generate new knowledge in understudied areas, enhancing the lives of many Canadians.

Knowledge-to-action. HRI's access to Homewood Health's patient/client base positions us uniquely to mobilize research findings and rapidly inform practice change. We have the unique capacity to take a "learning health system" approach that iteratively integrates data and experience to generate new knowledge, for rapid application of new and improved approaches to treatment. HRI is committed to not only generating and evaluating this new knowledge, but also to sharing it through education and training. In short, we will integrate new knowledge into innovations in treatment and care in real time, implement programs embedding those innovations, and share our findings widely.

“HRI's access to clinical environments is unique and positions it nationally to do real-time research and impact treatment outcomes”.

Dr. Bob Bell
Former Deputy Minister of Health, Ontario Ministry of Health

A learning health system is one in which internal data and experience are systematically integrated with external evidence, and this knowledge is put into practice. As a result, patients get higher quality, safer, more efficient care and healthcare organizations become better workplaces.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

2023-2027 Goals

HRI is well positioned to address key goals, which will drive change and improve care in substance use, trauma, depression and co-occurring conditions for adults across the lifespan, including transitional youth.

The following five goals will guide our work:



1

Goal: Lead with innovative applied research for rapid knowledge translation

This goal is about deepening research in areas of strength (substance use and trauma), and expanding research to include depression. It is about integrating research between and across these areas and understanding how they interact and present as co-occurring conditions. It is about maintaining a laser focus on applied (real-world) research.

It takes on average 17 years to translate research findings into operational care standards⁴. We will reduce that time by approaching problems differently. Conventional research methods typically focus on a single question. We will use applied research methods to evaluate innovative treatments such as repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), ketamine and psychedelics to address issues and problems in their full complexity.

Key HRI assets and competitive advantages in this space are: 1) the development and testing of a Progress and Outcome Monitoring system to measure treatment outcomes across programs, and 2) a framework for evaluating digital mental health tools.

⁴Morris et al, Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 2011

Outcomes

1.1. By fiscal year (FY) 2024, complementary programs of research are in place across each of the key focus areas (substance use, trauma, depression, and co-occurring conditions), with each program addressing at least two of the following:

- Applying clinical screening and assessment tools
- Characterizing clinical populations
- Utilizing and evaluating digital innovations in assessment and care
- Measuring change in outcomes during and after treatment
- Identifying modifiable markers to guide treatment
- Evaluating the impact of novel treatment approaches.

1.2. By FY 2027, HRI secures \$3M to lead at least one next-level/large program of study that includes applied research, evaluation and knowledge translation and that integrates work across at least two focus areas.

1.3. HRI promotes progress and outcome-monitoring practices to provide clients, treatment providers, researchers, and decision makers with real-time data to inform treatment and drive system-level change.

2

Goal: Expand “living research environments”

This goal is about working with Homewood Health as our primary practice partner and leveraging their national clinical environment and data systems to address applied research priorities.

HRI is unique among research centres in its access to a rich patient/client base across Homewood Health’s national suite of mental health services. A major opportunity for HRI is through research and innovation, using Homewood’s digital mental health treatments, inpatient and outpatient health services. With this network, combined with excellence in measurement and outcome capture, we are poised for real-time research that brings with it impactful, timely innovations in care and delivery of mental health services.

This goal is also about honing our focus on the impact of research, through building key external relationships to scale up and spread promising findings.



Outcomes

2.1 By FY 2024, a formal partnership is in place with Homewood Health to define a shared research agenda and data infrastructure (i.e. access to data, storage and growth strategy, scientific interface, ethics and business model related to data use).

2.2. By FY 2026, data are mobilized and shared with an expanded group of researchers and collaborators to catalyze a learning health system approach to care and research in key areas.

2.3 By FY 2027, HRI builds on pan-Canadian research opportunities through partnerships with at least two national/international organizations granting access to secondary research data.

3

Goal: Build collaborative research teams that are national in scope

This goal is about building new and enhancing existing collaborative research teams in HRI's key focus areas (substance use, trauma, depression, and co-occurring conditions) to develop, execute and integrate programs of study. It is about engaging and expanding strategic partners to build out nationally, align and optimize efforts, and enhance impact.

Collaborative research teams will enable us to take a learning health systems approach to develop strategies for treatment and care that are patient-centred and can be scaled to large numbers of people.



Outcomes

3.1. From FY 2023 to 2027, HRI secures \$500K funding to support the development of scholarships, fellowships and training to expand early career opportunities and grow applied mental health and substance use health research.

3.2. HRI establishes a national research footprint through strategic growth by 10% annually, through the number and geographic representation of collaborating researchers, post-doctoral fellows and affiliated students.

3.3. By FY 2024, all research teams demonstrate that they have integrated diverse disciplines, perspectives, and expertise (e.g., people with lived and living experience, equity-deserving populations, clinicians, and researchers).

3.4. By FY 2027, three new HRI Research Chairs are in place, one in each of: substance use, depression and knowledge translation.

3.5. By FY 2027, collaboration and coordination across research teams leads to a major initiative in co-occurring conditions.

4

Goal: Influence the rapid uptake of evidence through knowledge translation, training and implementation

This goal is about working with HRI's national and international researchers and knowledge translation partners in substance use, trauma and depression to prioritize the translation, mobilization and implementation of research knowledge to encourage changes and improvements to care.

We apply new knowledge to treatment interventions and measure impact, first at Homewood Health. Where we see positive outcomes, we will follow-up with more extensive testing and knowledge dissemination.

We also listen closely to patients, families and clinicians. They are involved from inception of projects, informing research plans, research questions and research design. We see knowledge translation as an ongoing process with researchers, clinicians and patients collaborating every step of the way.



Balance of Activity

- APPLIED RESEARCH & EVALUATION
- KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION, TRAINING & IMPLEMENTATION



Outcomes

- 4.1. By FY 2024, HRI secures scientific leadership in knowledge translation (HRI Chair and staff leader).
- 4.2. By FY 2024, 100% of HRI-led Collaborative Research Initiatives are selected and funded with embedded knowledge translation plans. Teams universally include knowledge users up-stream and throughout the process.
- 4.3. By FY 2025, HRI staff and researchers complete training in knowledge translation.
- 4.4. By FY 2027, 40% of HRI's effort is dedicated to knowledge translation, training and implementation activities measured by staff and research time and dedicated funds.
- 4.5. By FY 2027, evidence from at least two programs of study will influence health system adaptation and transformation.

5

Goal: Build HRI organizational capacity

This goal is about ensuring the successful execution of HRI's plans and ambitions. It is about building organizational size and capacity to align with the effort needed to meet the goals and outcomes in this plan.

HRI has the potential and ambition to become a coordinating centre for large-scale, multi-site clinical research studies. This will require more staffing and infrastructure (knowledge translation, government relations, financial and compliance processes, ethics review management, computing and data storage systems, etc.).



Outcomes

5.1. Existing partnerships are expanded and new ones are built:

- Relationship with Homewood Health strengthens, as HRI's primary practice partner
- At least two new partnerships with national/international scientists.

5.2. In FY 2024, HRI receives \$2.5M for operations, from donations, service contracts, grants and other funding sources. This increases by 15% per year.

5.3. Organizational capacity plans are developed for management and governance to support growth and sustain HRI over the next 5 years including knowledge translation, legal and government relations.

5.4. The HRI Anti-Oppression, Equity and Inclusion values are put into action through multiple strategies, including: having diverse talent with the goal of increasing organizational representation, promoting inclusive behavior, and implementing activities that address research, culture change, and policy development.

5.5. The HRI voice is amplified and recognition built through 10% annual increase in press releases featuring people-centered success stories, hosting/co-hosting 10 symposia/conferences, and expanding HRI Talks to include 5 national/international thought leaders and researchers.

Conclusion

In this strategic plan for 2023-2027, HRI looks forward to accelerating our role in creating a world where no life is held back or cut short by mental illness and/or substance use issues.

The plan builds on the strengths and capacity accumulated to date and heralds the high impact phase of our development.

This strategic plan will yield direct improvements in care and drive system change for those living with mental illness and substance use issues.

We will achieve this by deepening and expanding our research and evaluation excellence, expanding our living research environments and growing our presence nationally.

We will substantially enhance our focus on influencing the uptake of evidence through knowledge translation, training and implementation.

In all that we do, we will remain true to our values of partnerships & collaboration, discovery & innovation, and real-world impact & excellence.





Acknowledgements

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Dr. Robert Bell, HRI Board Director
Rob Horne, donor and family/person with lived experience
Dr. Nick Kates, McMaster University, HRI Board Director
Jared Landry, Homewood Health
Dr. Martin Taylor, HRI Board Director
Dr. Margaret McKinnon, HRI Senior Scientist

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Sincerely,

The HRI Team

This report can be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact us for assistance at info@hriresearch.com or call 519-838-8104 ext. 32160.



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