

# BAYCREST BULLETIN

*A snapshot of Baycrest news and events - February 2021*

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## Memory is Surprisingly Accurate Regardless of Our Age

In a recent Baycrest study examining people's ability to recall details surrounding past events, research participants scored an average of 94% on memory accuracy, regardless of the participant's age or the amount of time that had elapsed since the event took place.

"This study shows us that memory accuracy is actually quite good under normal circumstances, and it remains stable as we age," says Dr. Brian Levine, senior scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute (RRI) and professor of psychology and neurology at the University of Toronto. "These results will be helpful for understanding memory in healthy aging."

"These results are surprising to many, given the general pessimism about memory accuracy among scientists and the prevalent idea that memory for one-time events is not to be trusted," says Dr. Nicholas Diamond, the study's lead researcher, former graduate student at the RRI and current postdoctoral researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. In fact, about 400 academics (including memory scientists) surveyed as part of this study estimated memory accuracy to be around 40% at best, expecting this score to be even lower for older participants or with greater amounts of time elapsing since the events.

In the study, the researchers created an immersive, scientifically controlled event for their participants: a 30-minute audio-guided tour of art and other items displayed at Baycrest. Two days later, participants were asked to tell the researcher everything they could remember about the tour. The responses were recorded and then verified against the facts.

The results showed that participants' accuracy was high, though, as expected, the number of details they remembered decreased with age and time. Generally speaking, this means that the stories we tell about past events are accurate, even if details faded with time and age.



# FACING NORTH: Portraits of the Jewish Diaspora



The newest exhibition in The Ronald and Nancy Kalifer Culture Hub is now open. FACING NORTH is a group photography exhibition that highlights portraits and biographies of the Toronto Jewish community who have emigrated from over 23 countries to make Canada their

home. From the vision and creative direction of Bonnie Lawrence Shear, Baycrest's FACING NORTH: Portraits of the Jewish Diaspora exhibition was born.

Participating Photographers include: David Amoils, Debra Friedman, Meghan Richardson, Tom Sandler, Elliot Sylman and Hudson Taylor. The 27 individuals featured in this photography exhibition have shared their memories and experiences from when they immigrated to Canada from across the globe. Use your own device and experience a new innovation to the Culture Hub by scanning the QR code located beside each portrait installed in the Culture Hub. Viewers will discover and read the entire stories and events that helped shape the decision to make Canada their new home.

FACING NORTH will be on display in The Ronald and Nancy Kalifer Culture Hub until the spring of 2021.

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## Virtual Access to Specialists Improves Care for People Living with Dementia

A new virtual pilot program to assess and treat people with challenging behaviours caused by dementia and related cognitive disorders is helping acute care hospitals, long-term care homes and family caregivers better care for people living with dementia and improve their quality of life. Launched in April 2020, the Virtual Behavioural Medicine (VBM) Program is a collaboration between the Sam and Ida Ross Memory Clinic at Baycrest and the Toronto Central Behavioural Support for Seniors Program (TC-BSSP), which sees patients through virtual visits over the secure Ontario Telemedicine Network rather than in person.

### **Program reducing pressure on acute care beds.**

In just a few months, the program has helped to reduce the pressure on acute care hospital beds because patients with challenging responsive behaviours, such as physical and verbal aggression, agitation, hallucinations and paranoia, receive pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions to mitigate their behaviours and allow them to be transferred back to the community or to long-term care homes. "The VBM Program has assisted greatly in helping to manage some of the most challenging behaviours of our patients," says Dr. Sandra Black, Clinician Scientist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and Professor of Medicine (Neurology), University of Toronto. "This has improved not only their quality of life, but that of their caregivers and family."

### **Virtual visits reduce wait times for assessment and treatment.**

The same results have been experienced in long-term care, according to Shitu Wang, the Behavioural Supports Resources Team Lead in the Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged. "In April we had a new admission with behavioural symptoms of extreme aggression, both verbal and physical. We needed security and extra staff 24 hours a day."

A referral was made to Dr. Morris Freedman, Baycrest Behavioural Neurologist in the Sam and Ida Ross Memory Clinic, who explained that he could assess the resident without seeing her in person through the new VBM Program. There was no need to transfer her to an in-patient Behavioural Neurology unit for assessment and treatment, which can have wait times of up to one year. Based on the data from the VBM program to date, it is anticipated that the need to admit patients to the Behavioural Neurology Unit at Baycrest can be reduced by approximately 65 to 80 per cent.

### **Behaviours improve with two-pronged intervention approach.**

"Dr. Freedman came on board along with the Long-Term Care Behavioural Support Outreach Team," says Wang. "It took two months of sustained work with our team using medications and non-pharmacological interventions identified by the Behaviour Support Team, and the result was amazing. The resident went from having no quality of life



whatsoever, to being a completely changed person. She was pleasant and able to have a conversation and take part in activities. And it was all done virtually.”

The ability to see Dr. Freedman virtually on a daily basis removed the separation that is typically experienced between a care team and a specialist and allowed them to collaborate on the resident’s care.

When the Downsview Long-Term Care Centre in Toronto referred a resident with physical aggression to the VBM Program, they too were impressed with how quickly the resident was assessed and how the program worked collaboratively with their interdisciplinary team to develop and implement effective strategies to stabilize her condition. “The resident is now stable and no longer requires one-to-one monitoring,” says Roland Madrona, RPN and Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) Lead at the centre. “I highly recommend the program.”

### **Specialists and care teams co-develop care plans.**

Among the benefits of the VBM Program is that its team of specialists – including nurses, social workers, pharmacists, mental health professionals and the BSO team – can provide a rapid response where and when they are needed. They work with care teams in acute care hospitals and long-term care homes and with family members in the community to help them develop and implement care plans, access behavioural and social supports and provide follow-up.

“It’s like having a virtual Behavioural Neurology in-patient unit in each location,” says Dr. Freedman. “And just like on an in-patient unit, we have weekly rounds to talk about each patient as a team.”

The VBM Program has also implemented bi-weekly case review rounds involving the whole team to look at each case and ensure that any gaps are filled, all available resources are optimized and a transitional plan and supports are in place for a person’s discharge from the program.

“The program brings together for the first time, both specialists and Behaviour Support clinicians to work shoulder-to-shoulder as one team, and address responsive behaviours, using both pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions, allowing a comprehensive approach to behaviour management,” says Einat Danieli, Clinical Manager, TC-LHIN, BSSP.

### **Increase in referrals signals demand for program.**

Since the VBM Program began, there has been a steady increase in referrals from acute care, long-term care and the community. There were 150 referrals between April and November 2020 and none have been refused. Most were from the Greater Toronto Area, but patients have also been

seen around Ontario in places such as London, Orillia and Brampton.

“These figures demonstrate the need for this program and a growing awareness of what it has to offer,” says Fidelma Serediuk, Clinical Manager of Baycrest Ambulatory Medical Clinics and the Sam and Ida Ross Memory Clinic. “The concept for a virtual program was developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the pandemic has been an accelerator that has highlighted a need that was always there.”

### **Family caregivers receive support at home.**

For Josh and his 80-year-old mother, Margaret, the VBM Program is helping him manage her progressive neurological symptoms so she can remain living with him at home. Her symptoms include depression, not wanting to get out of bed and a delusion that she is falling, which causes her to shake and awaken at night from fear.

“My mom’s health went downhill quite quickly after my father’s death,” says Josh. “Taking care of her has been very challenging and stressful. When she was referred to the VBM Program, I was willing to take any opportunity for support.”

Josh and his mother were connected with Cara Macanuel, a Behaviour Support clinician from the Community Behavioural Support Outreach Team at Baycrest, who met with them regularly over a two-month period. “She provided resources for me to read and practical advice on how to engage with my mom, how to establish routines, how the room should be set up and what foods to avoid in her diet,” says Josh. “She definitely provided me with lots of useful information to help keep my mom comfortable and always followed up our sessions with an email about the things we discussed. I found it very comforting to talk with her.” His mother was also assessed by Dr. Freedman, and they are trying different medications to ease her symptoms. “I talk to a doctor every two weeks,” says Josh. “There is some improvement with her fear of falling, and she is not shaking like she used to, but she’s still clenching the bed rail and wakes up at night. Hopefully, we’ll see more improvements in the coming months.”

### **Program is integrated across three care sectors.**

Although he doesn’t want his mother to move into a nursing home, particularly during a pandemic, one of the objectives of the VBM Program is to help patients transition to long-term care when needed and to follow up with them through their care teams.

“The VBM Program is nimble, responsive and integrated across the whole spectrum of care – community, acute care and long-term care,” says Serediuk. “Patients can move from one sector to the other during their involvement with the program.”

# THE COVID-19 VACCINE

A critical next step in our fight against the pandemic



*"I feel so fortunate to be one of the first to get the vaccine and to help be a pioneer in the fight against the virus. To be able to protect the seniors I work with as well as my family was worth it."*

Mara Swartz  
Recreation Therapist

Baycrest staff are encouraged to express their interest and submit their name to Human Resources at:

[staffcovidvaccine@baycrest.org](mailto:staffcovidvaccine@baycrest.org)

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## Innovation Updates



### Innovation Rounds Webinar: Technology, Aging & Social Impact: On the Trail of Unicorns

Join us on Tuesday, February 16, at noon as Thomas Kamber, Executive Director of Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) shares actionable tips on helping older adults navigate their devices, develop digital literacy skills and overcome the digital divide. The event is free and all are welcome to attend. To register, go to [bit.ly/OATSInnovationRounds](https://bit.ly/OATSInnovationRounds)



### Baycrest@Home Caregiver Webinar: Helping Older Adults with Depression Cope during COVID-19

The pandemic has caused an increase in mental health concerns, especially for older adults. For older adults with pre-existing mental illness, the isolation and fear of contracting the virus has deeply affected their ability to cope. In this webinar, caregivers will learn how to identify mental health decline as well as mechanisms and techniques to aid in their caregiving role. This event takes place on Wednesday, February 17, at noon. It is free and all are welcome to attend. To register, go to [bit.ly/B@HMentalHealthWebinar](https://bit.ly/B@HMentalHealthWebinar)

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3560 Bathurst Street  
Toronto | ON | M6A 2E1  
416 785 2500 | [www.baycrest.org](http://www.baycrest.org)

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