



As the mother of two sons who faced drug addiction, Nichola Hall knows first-hand the importance of having more trained addiction specialists in BC.

A Fellowship for Change

A transformative \$3-million gift from Goldcorp Inc. has helped launch a new addiction medicine Fellowship that will meet a critical need for trained addiction medicine specialists.

by **Melissa Edwards**

When Nichola Hall's two teenaged sons became addicted to heroin, she at first thought her family was alone in its struggle to keep the boys safe. "Our community is not a place where we expected to find addiction," she says. "But we discovered, to our surprise, that other people in our church were experiencing the same struggle. Businessmen, schoolteachers, lawyers and doctors were also going through this with their children."

A year ago, *Promise* described the difficulties that families like Hall's faced in accessing effective drug and alcohol treatment due to the lack of physicians in British Columbia trained in addiction medicine.

Shortly thereafter, Goldcorp Inc. announced a \$3-million donation to address this need through the creation of the St. Paul's Hospital Goldcorp Fellowship in Addiction Medicine, led by Drs. Evan Wood and Launette Rieb of the BC Centre for Excellence (BC-CfE) in HIV/AIDS at St. Paul's Hospital.

Now, the Fellowship – the first in Western Canada to be certified by the American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM) – is ready to transform the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens as it begins training its first four physicians and one nurse practitioner.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM

Drs. Wood and Rieb designed the Fellows' training to balance exposure to diverse clinical settings with academic research.

Goldcorp's donation will fund training for a certain number of physicians per year over the course of the next five years. The six-month nurse practitioner fellowship, the first of its kind, was established through a partnership between St. Paul's Hospital and the University of British Columbia School of Nursing. It is also scheduled to continue for at least the next five years. The 25 Fellows trained over this period will not only provide world-leading treatment to patients, but, with graduates engaging in research, care and teaching themselves, will also advance that

care through the development of an academic addiction medicine program.

"We're not just trying to put a thumb in the dike; we're trying to change the system from the bottom up," says Rieb. "Our purpose is to reduce suffering for those in need – on a personal, multigenerational and societal level."

To Nichola Hall, the new program represents a spark of light in a long history of shadows. Today, 15 years after addiction first touched her family, Hall still volunteers with From Grief to Action, a support organization she helped found.

"Whenever I speak somewhere, people come up to me and whisper: *my brother, my sister, my child, my mother*. There is way more addiction out there than people know, but affected families don't want to speak out because they are ashamed," she says. "Addiction is so complex, and it needs to be tackled from so many angles. We need a huge amount of new research. Anything that St. Paul's can do will be gratefully received." □

Continued on page 8 >>>

To find out how you can support care, research and teaching to benefit patients with addictions, contact St. Paul's Hospital Foundation at 604-682-8206 or visit www.helpstpauls.com.

**THE FIRST
ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL
GOLDCORP FELLOWS
IN ADDICTION
MEDICINE OFFER
INSIGHT INTO WHY
THEY'RE IN THE
PROGRAM**



Dr. Pouya Azar

Continued from page 7

Dr. Pouya Azar
Psychiatry resident

"It's difficult to address psychiatric disorder without addressing the substance induced disorders that often concurrently exist. The Fellowship will provide me with the tools to address both aspects in my patients."

Monica Gregory
Nurse practitioner with a degree in pharmacology

"In all the years I've been nursing, I have to say that addiction is one of the most devastating diseases for both patients and their families. My goal with this Fellowship is to gain the knowledge and skills to provide excellent evidence-based addictions care."



Monica Gregory



Dr. John Koehn

Dr. John Koehn
Family physician who has practiced medicine at a federal prison in Abbotsford

"The inmate population is over-represented with substance use disorders ... I jumped at the chance to learn new techniques and make improvements to the treatment of inmates struggling with these disorders."

Dr. Seonaid Nolan
Internal medicine fellow

"I wanted to train in addiction medicine to bridge the gap between addiction medicine insights and applying them to clinical care. I also hope to acquire the tools to educate future physicians, increase awareness and improve overall care for people struggling with addictions."



Dr. Seonaid Nolan



Dr. Nitasha Puri

Dr. Nitasha Puri
Family physician

"There is a huge need in this province for systemic change in the way that addiction care is provided, and the appeal of this program is that it starts to meet that need."

For information about the St. Paul's Hospital Goldcorp Addiction Medicine Fellowship, please visit www.addictionmedicinefellowship.org.