



CHILD Cohort Study awarded \$1.7M to study impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian families

WINNIPEG, MB (25 June 2020)

A \$1.7 million award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Research Manitoba will allow CHILD Cohort Study (CHILD) researchers to study how individuals and families across Canada have been directly impacted by COVID-19 infection and indirectly impacted by the social and economic upheaval during the pandemic.

This one-year project will be led by Dr. Meghan Azad, co-lead of the CHILD Manitoba site, an associate professor and Canada Research Chair in Developmental Origins of Chronic Disease in the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, and a research scientist at the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM).

Funding was [announced today](#) by the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Canada's Minister of Health, as part of a \$109-million investment by CIHR and provincial partners to mobilize science to fight COVID-19. Research Manitoba contributed \$100,000 as part of the \$1.7 million CHILD award.

"Canadians have been profoundly impacted by COVID-19 and the public health measures put into place to reduce community spread of the virus," comments Dr. Azad. "Our project will study why some people infected with the virus become seriously ill, while others do not, and will help us identify risk factors for infection. We will also look at how physical distancing and school and business closures have affected mental health and wellbeing, especially in children. These are urgent questions that must be answered quickly to help control subsequent waves of transmission and minimize the unintended consequences of pandemic management policies."

The project is enabled by a ground-breaking Canadian research platform: AllerGen's CHILD Cohort Study birth cohort, which has been following nearly 3,500 Canadian children and their families across four provinces from pre-birth to school-age – participating children are now between eight and 11 years of age. Through home visits, questionnaires and clinical assessments tracking the children as they grow, CHILD has acquired an unprecedented pool of biological samples, such as stool, blood and breastmilk, as well as lifestyle, health, environmental and other information from participating family members.

"We are proud to be one of a few cohorts in the world that has recently collected pre-pandemic biosamples and psychosocial data," adds CHILD's Director, Dr. Padmaja Subbarao, a respirologist at The Hospital for Sick Children and a co-Principal Investigator of the CIHR grant. "This funding provides a unique opportunity to study how children's pre-pandemic health and immune status influences the risk and outcome of coronavirus infection."

The project will leverage the existing CHILD cohort of 3,500 families (12,000 individuals) to collect psychosocial data and biological samples, and will incorporate antibody testing using a home-sampling device.

“We are truly fortunate in Canada to have CHILD as a platform for novel health research. We are delighted to have the Public Health Agency of Canada and provincial public health authorities in four provinces as collaborators on this important research to generate rapid, real-time data about COVID-19 impacts in children and adults across the country.”

Co-Principal Investigators on the project include: Dr. Piush Mandhane (University of Alberta); Dr. Theo Moraes and Dr. Padmaja Subbarao (Hospital for Sick Children); and Dr. Stuart Turvey (The University of British Columbia).

About the CHILD Cohort Study: Launched in 2008 by CIHR and AllerGen NCE, the [CHILD Cohort Study \(CHILD\)](#) is tracking nearly 3,500 Canadian infants and their families to help determine the root causes of chronic diseases such as asthma, allergies and obesity. CHILD spans four provinces, involving over 140 multidisciplinary researchers, students and research staff. [Watch the CHILD Cohort Study videos.](#)

About the Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba: The Children’s Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba was established in 2001. [CHRIM](#) is the research division of the Children’s Hospital Foundation of Manitoba. At the Institute, more than 270 world-class pediatric medical researchers, technical staff, students and support staff are involved in over \$20 million of research and clinical trial activity each year.

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