



## OHTN Cohort Study (OCS) Quarterly Update

July 2022

### Changes on the study team

We are very excited to welcome two new co-investigators to the OCS study team. We are grateful for their leadership and ongoing contributions to the OCS.

Dr. Anita Benoit is Mi'kmaw and French Acadian with family living in Esgenoopeetitj First Nation and Brantville, New Brunswick. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Society at University of Toronto, Scarborough. Her research interests include Indigenous women's health, HIV pathogenesis, intervention research, health service outcomes and evaluation, chronic stress and mental health, harm reduction and determinants of health.

Dr. Lawrence Mbuagbaw is a Research Methods Scientist in Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics. He is an associate professor at McMaster University where he teaches courses in biostatistics and randomized trials; associate professor extraordinary of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Stellenbosch University; Director of the Biostatistics Unit of the Research Institute of St Joseph's Health Care Hamilton (SJHH) and co-director of Cochrane Cameroon. His research interests are infectious diseases, mother and child health, mHealth, health systems strengthening and the intersection of these fields.

We also welcome Ower Oberto, data collector at the Blue Door Clinic. Ower will be administering questionnaires to participants in both English and Spanish.

Agatha Nyambi, the OCS research coordinator will be leaving the OHTN to pursue her PhD at McMaster University. Congratulations Agatha! We are currently interviewing for her replacement.

### Setting OCS annual research priorities

The OCS team reviews the questionnaire annually and solicits feedback from data collectors, participants, researchers and leaders in the HIV sector. Our goal is to collect timely and relevant data that can inform programs and policies in Ontario and contribute to the HIV literature. Please complete this survey to provide your input on novel topics to include in the 2023 questionnaire: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/ocsresearch>

### OCS Custom Software Featured at Microsoft Inspire Conference

Working with Toronto based vendor, ObjectSharp, the OCS developed the OCS Data Administration Portal (ODAP), to manage all study functions at OCS sites. The platform was fully rolled out in January 2020, and features the highest level of security to maintain participant privacy, as well as custom functions to support participant monitoring and consent, questionnaire administration and chart extraction. ObjectSharp featured

### OCS Quick Facts

People living with HIV have complex lives and are often caregivers for others. In this newsletter, we recognize all the men living with HIV who are raising and caring for children.

In 2021, 1805 men living with HIV responded to questions about fatherhood and family planning. These men include gay, bi and straight men and single, partnered and married men.

#### Fatherhood

20% of men interviewed are fathers, with 7% having children <18 and 15% with children 18 or older.

#### Having Children

6% of men interviewed had children after finding out about their diagnosis.

16% have considered having children, but had not yet had children.

#### Family Planning

14% of men interviewed were interested in becoming a parent.



this project on their website <https://objectsharp.com/customer-stories/ohtn>, and was asked by Microsoft to share a video about our software solution at the Microsoft Inspire Conference this July. The video will be featured on the OCS website after the conference.

## **OCS at International Conferences**

### **AIDS 2022**

The OHTN OCS research team and external OCS researchers will be presenting several abstracts at AIDS 2022, the International AIDS Society Conference, in Montreal.

Hillier et al. Access to Indigenous Cultural and Health Services among Indigenous people living with HIV in Ontario, Canada: Findings from the Ontario HIV Treatment Network Cohort Study (OCS).

Light et al. Loneliness and ARV adherence: Results from a cohort study of people living with HIV in Ontario, Canada.

O'Brien et al. Reproductive health and parenthood among women living with HIV in the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) Cohort Study (OCS)

Burchell et al. Cluster-randomized trial of routine syphilis screening among men attending HIV outpatient clinics in Ontario, Canada

Abstracts can be found at <https://ohtncohortstudy.ca/research>. We thank co-authors who have contributed to these research efforts.

### **OCS at the Blue Door Clinic**

The Blue Door Clinic serves people diagnosed with HIV who are precariously insured, including people here on student or work visas or who do not have OHIP or insurance through the Interim Federal Health Program. The clinic provides initial HIV care and links patients to primary care clinics for ongoing care. Dr. Alan Li, the Principal Investigator of the Beyond Blue Door research study, is leading a research team, which among other activities, is enrolling Blue Door patients into the OCS. These participants will remain in the OCS after they are transferred to another clinic. If that clinic is an OCS site, they will be re-enrolled through that site; if not, they will continue to be followed by the Blue Door data collectors. Blue Door uses a peer model, involving both research staff and volunteer peers in research activities, including administering interviews in English and Spanish.

### **Public Health Ontario Linkage**

The OHTN and Public Health Ontario have renewed the agreement that allows OCS data to be linked with Public Health Ontario Laboratory data. An exciting change is that the data linkage process will employ a new application developed by the OHTN with ObjectSharp, which makes it easier to link participant information, while maintaining the highest levels of participant privacy. It also makes it possible to link data for participants who do not have OHIP numbers, which is particularly important for participants at the Blue Door Clinic and other OCS participants who do not have OHIP or insurance through the Interim Federal Health Program.

The **Ontario HIV Treatment Network Cohort Study (OCS)** is an ongoing research study that collects clinical, social and behavioural information about people living with HIV (PHA) in Ontario. Participation in the study is voluntary, and all personally identifying information of study participants is removed to ensure confidentiality. The OCS was established to improve our understanding of HIV and inform HIV prevention, care and treatment strategies for people living with HIV and groups at risk of HIV infection. For more information about the OCS, please visit [www.ohtn.cohortstudy.ca](http://www.ohtn.cohortstudy.ca) or email [ocs@ohtn.on.ca](mailto:ocs@ohtn.on.ca).