



OCS

OHTN COHORT STUDY

OCS at Sunnybrook World Aids Day Community Appreciation Event!

To mark **World Aids Day** on December 1, 2025, our long-term partner, **Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre**, hosted a **Community Appreciation Event**, bringing together OCS teams at Sunnybrook and the OHTN, Sunnybrook OCS participants, and others who have been involved with the OCS since its inception.

Among the attendees was **Dr. Anita Rachlis**, who dedicated her career to HIV for 30 years, and was the recipient of the 1995 grant announced by **James Thatcher** that launched HOOD (the HIV Ontario Observational Database), which later became the OCS.

A milestone!

This event marked a milestone in the **thirty-year history of the OCS**, celebrating not only the study's longevity but the enduring commitment of its participants and partners.

It featured engaging presentations on the history of the OCS, highlights from key OCS publications, and shared OCS findings tailored to the Sunnybrook site. Sunnybrook OCS participants had an opportunity to see how their involvement in the cohort has contributed to HIV research that help improve HIV care in Ontario.



Sunnybrook & OHTN team

The event fostered meaningful **community dialogue** and **reflection**. Participants shared their feedback. Many also highlighted the study's role in building **community connections** and providing **psychosocial support**. Hearing from participants who have been part of the study for over fifteen years was particularly impactful, showing the importance of long-term engagement and trust in sustaining the OCS.

We look forward to our continued partnership with Sunnybrook and similar opportunities to connect and celebrate with the OCS community and thank to everyone who helped make this meaningful event possible.

- **OCS Coordination Team:** Preeti Sharma, Shahryar Murshed, Jorgina Jeresano
- **The Anita Rachlis HIV Clinic Staff:** Dr. Adrienne Chan, Dr. Brooke Fraser, Dr. Nisha Andany, Casey Wigg, Maureen Bratkiw, Nancy Vandenberg, Ulysis Antoine, Anja Mcneil, Serene Da Silva, Cathy McDowell
- **HOPE Research Centre:** Soo Jin Seung, Anisia Wong

OCS Seminar Series Continues with Strong Engagement!

Since September, we held four sessions, welcoming **134** attendees.

In October, **Dr. Catharine Chambers**, joined by **Tsegaye Bekele**, shared OCS findings on the uptake of influenza, pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccines among people living with HIV. In November, **Cassandra Freitas**, alongside **Dr. Ann Burchell**, presented on trends in COVID-19 vaccination and infection among people living with HIV. In December, **Megan McKenzie**, supervised by **Dr. Anita Benoit**, shared OCS findings on self-reported health-related quality of life outcomes among African, Caribbean, and Black people living with HIV in Ontario.

Upcoming Seminar Schedule:

- Tuesday, March 3 (Dr. Lawrence Mbuagbaw, OCS Chair, PI – Vision for the OCS)
- Monday, March 16 (Drs. Su and O'Brien – Disability and physical activity)
- Monday, April 20 (Drs. Xi and Thavron – Health Systems Costs)

OCS Site Research Associates Quarterly Meeting

The Quarterly Site Research Associates (formerly Data Collectors) meeting brings together the OCS team to share updates, discuss challenges and successes, and strengthen collaboration across sites to improve participant experience, and data acquisition processes and quality.

The October 29 meeting included updates on the 2026 Questionnaire, ethics submission timelines, and data collection at sites. Site Research Associates (RAs) also had the opportunity to meet Dr. Lonnie Embleton (Director, OCS) and Dr. Lawrence Mbuagbaw (Chair, OCS) for the first time following their appointments.

A key outcome of this meeting was the adoption of the title 'Site Research Associate,' better reflecting the scope of the role, which goes far beyond data collection to build and maintain relationships with OCS participants and play a vital role in the research process. We thank all Site RAs for their thoughtful input and continued dedication.

OCS Governance Committee Updates

New Member - John Goodhew joined the OCS Governance Committee in September 2025 and will serve a three-year term through September 2028. John is a HIV Primary care physician who works in Toronto at Church Wellesley Health -a multi-disciplinary, inner city clinic with an LGBTQ2S+ focus. He personally provides care and treatment to 340 people living with HIV, and HIV prevention services to many more.

Term renewal - Adrian Betts has graciously agreed to serve a second 3-year term, ending in January 2029. We thank Adrian for his ongoing commitment and valuable contributions to the OCS.

Term Completion - We extend our gratitude to, Barry Adam, Mary Ndung'u, and Viviana Santibañez, who completed their second terms on the Committee. Over the six years of service, they helped strengthen OCS research and expand our understanding of HIV in Ontario. For the full list of committee members, visit [here](#).

Call for New GC Members Still OPEN

Governance Committee is still recruiting new members to help guide one of Ontario's most important community-governed HIV research initiatives. If you are passionate about improving the lives of people living with HIV, community-driven research, advocacy, and making a meaningful impact, send a brief bio and descriptions of your experiences and contributions to ocs@ohnt.on.ca. See the poster for the call [here](#)

Welcome to our New Data Engineer

Riya Michael joined the OCS team as a Data Engineer in October 2025. She holds a Bachelor of Technology in Electronics & Communication from the College of Engineering Kidangoor. She is enthusiastic about transforming complex raw data into meaningful insights that drive impact, support decision-making, and enhance data quality. In her role, Riya will lead efforts to advance the OCS Data Warehouse and innovate how we transform, store, and use complex OCS data.

New Site Research Associates join the OCS team!

We welcome four new Research Associates across two OCS sites: Shirley Sarfo-Mensah at Ottawa General Hospital, and Kian O'Neil, Noelle Yee, and Nayomi Shalika Camilus at Toronto General Hospital (UHN). They will be working closely with existing teams to support smooth operation of the OCS.

We also wish our departing RAs -- Amara Umeh (Ottawa General Hospital) and Lianne Thai (Toronto General Hospital) -- all the best in their future endeavours.

To all OCS site teams, thank you for your dedication and commitment to the OCS.