



Health Care, Technology, and Place: A Transdisciplinary Research Training Program at the University of Toronto

*A Knowledge Translation/Institute of Health Services and Policy
Research/Institute of Gender and Health CIHR Strategic Training Program¹*

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Introduction: 21st century health care is characterized by unprecedented flows of information, mutable coalitions of care providers and new configurations of physical settings and cyberspaces. Technological connections blur boundaries between bodies and machines, life and death, public and private places, and geographic regions that hitherto were economically and jurisdictionally separate. A fusion of disciplinary perspectives and methods is required to address a range of issues pertaining this new health care order. The CIHR Strategic Training Program in Health Care, Technology, and Place (*HCT&P*) is the first academic program in the world to respond to this need for knowledge and research capacity.

Objectives: (1) To prepare a cadre of junior and senior researchers to understand, explain, and improve health outcomes associated with geographically-dispersed and technologically-mediated health care; (2) To bridge knowledge and communication gaps among health researchers, social scientists, and humanists concerned with the interconnectedness of bodies, places, technologies, and health care work; and (3) To foster a transdisciplinary, transprofessional, and transnational culture of research collaboration, involving researchers and decision-makers throughout the research process.

¹ *The CIHR Strategic Research Training Program is an ambitious new initiative to enhance transdisciplinary health research capacity in Canada. For more information visit www.cihr.ca.*

Mentors: Representing all four academic divisions at University of Toronto, and linking nodes of national and international expertise, the Mentor team brings superlative transdisciplinary experience, demonstrated by their wide range of collaborative research and supervisory accomplishments.

Curriculum: Five integrated curricular segments will enhance skills in research leadership, teamwork, and knowledge transfer: (1) Team-taught, transdisciplinary core graduate courses addressing (a) *Health Care Technologies, People & Places*; (b) *Health Care Settings & Sites*; (c) *Health Care, Embodiment, and Personhood* and (d) *The Organization & Provision of Health Care Work*; (2) Monthly seminars; (3) Mentorship in grantwriting, publishing, and knowledge transfer; (4) Transdisciplinary research supervision; and (5) An annual International Research Workshop.

Lines of Research: Two broad lines of research initiatives can be identified:

Descriptive Research and Theories of Explanation: Sample projects include: explanations for and assessments of regional variations in health care practices and associated outcomes; examination of the impact of health care settings and technologies on communication patterns among care recipients, providers and decision-makers; explorations of the role of gender, class, ethnicity and occupation in hierarchies of power in health care work; ethical issues associated with technologically mediated care; and descriptions of and explanations for the geographies of care provision.

Applied Evaluative Research: Sample research initiatives include: evaluation of technologies to enhance effective translation of health information to new settings for care; evaluation from multiple perspectives of the adequacy of Canadian homes as sites for long term care; evaluation of arts-based health care information dissemination; evaluation of setting-specific decision aids; assessment of health service use and care-giver costs associated with ambulatory, home-, and internet-based care; the assessment of discharge planning activities for continuity of care across various health care settings; the examination of public-private policy shifts on responsibilities for the provision and financing of health care; the impact of geographical and technological factors on medical errors; and the effects of technologies on care-giving and independence for care recipients.

Planning & Evaluation: An elite Program Advisory Committee plans strategically for the program's long-term academic leadership. Program performance indicators include: graduate placement; funded awards, grants, and publications – particularly those involving trainees; active research collaboration from a range of disciplines; and the diversity of trainees attracted to the program, including academics, clinical practitioners, managers, and policy decision-makers.