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The Value of “Together”: Canada’s Clinical Trials Training Ecosystem Unites for New Levels of Collaboration and Inclusion

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The Canadian clinical trials training ecosystem came together in a show of strength and forward-thinking creativity over three days in Vancouver, BC, for the [2025 Clinical Trials Training Summit](#). Attended by close to 400 participants from across Canada and the globe, in person and virtually, the Summit was organized by CANTRAIN in collaboration with [CAN-TAP-TALENT](#) (Canadian Training Platform for Trials Leveraging Existing Networks), [CBITN](#) (Canadian Behavioural Interventions and Trials Network), and [StrokeCog](#) (CanStroke Recovery Trials) platforms.

Through inspiring conversations by stakeholders across public and private spheres, the Summit explored how collaboration can advance and build capacity for clinical trials in Canada and beyond.

“There’s one word that is important in this Summit and that word is ‘together,’” said CANTRAIN Nominated Principal Investigator Dr. Jean Bourbeau at the Welcoming Reception, which also featured words of welcome from Shayla Jacobs of the Squamish Nation.

“Together” includes incorporating Indigenous knowledge and engagement. The Squamish concept of *Chén’chenstway* (which comes from canoeing), can provide a valuable framework for rethinking collaboration in research. “The waters can be quite dangerous if you are not in *Chén’chenstway*. We rely on each other to survive and to live,” explained Ms. Delhia Nahanee in the panel discussion on “Best Practices with Indigenous Groups as Research Participants and Partners.” “When you think about research, you think about working together with people. You depend on each other. You can develop this philosophy of *Chén’chenstway* through research and inspire each other to go forward and reach your goals.”



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“Together” involves enabling patients as active partners and leaders in clinical trials. Patient Advocate Eileen Davidson (AKA “[Chronic Eileen](#)”) offered a first-person perspective, explaining how empowering it can be to become an active patient partner.

Following her participation in a plenary session titled “International Perspectives on Meaningful Approaches to Patient and Partner Engagement”, Ms. Maria Duterte from EUPATI (European’s Patients Academy on Therapeutic Innovation) said “It was a fantastic experience, and I was delighted to get to meet you and representatives of your network face to face. I learned a lot about your work and the clinical trial landscape in Canada and clearly see the synergies and potential for further collaboration.” The panel also included Dr. Christine (Tina) Fahim (University of Toronto), Ms. Linda Hunter (CANTRAIN), Dr. Caroline Jose (UHC), Dr. Erin Holve (PCORI) and Dr. Annie LeBlanc (Passerelle SPOR).

“Together” necessitates new forms of *global* collaboration, explains another guest from across the ocean, in the plenary session “Building Capacity for Clinical Research: Optimizing Accessibility, Efficiency, and Relevance of Clinical Research in Canada.” “There are huge training needs in low- and middle-income countries,” explained Dr. Vasee Moorthy (World Health Organization). “I was in Pakistan last week, with a population of 235 million. They’re really looking at how to take forward that clinical environment, but they need in-country training resources. And it’s a similar story all around the world.”

Looking to the future “together” involves collaborating on new guidelines, approaches, and technologies, and Summit sessions such as the interactive Workshop “Novel Clinical Trial Protocol Designs and Methodologies” chaired by Dr. Angela Cheung (CAN-TAP-TALENT), updated Summit participants about modernizing clinical trials. Ms. Susan Marlin’s presentation “Collaborating to Build a Single Research Ethics Review System in Canada,” explained how CanReview, a pan-Canadian collaboration supported by the Accelerating Clinical Trials (ACT) Consortium, is creating a single ethics review platform for multi-site clinical trials across Canada, ensuring equity for patients in different provinces.

“Together” means also public and private cooperation, and the support and presence of corporate sponsors at the Summit was truly valuable. “Congratulations on a very



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successful meeting,” says Alison Batty Head, Site Management Canada Clinical Customer Engagement & Operations, US & CAN, Bayer Canada. “I was so impressed by the content, insightful presentations and positive collaborative atmosphere that you have created. You should be very pleased that your hard work is making this positive impact.”

“Together” means new ways of mentoring and training the next generation of researchers and trialists. “One thing that CIHR is doing great and CANTRAIN has done amazingly well is we invest in actually helping to train people,” said Dr. Hébert, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). “If we don't train people, we don't have a future. Collectively, our first investment should always be in people.”

For this reason, 70+ recipients of CANTRAIN, CAN-TAP-TALENT and StrokeCog's 2024-25 CTPP Studentship/Fellowship Awards were central to each day of the Summit. They received their awards on the opening night and participated in oral and poster sessions sharing their research and answering questions from attendees and judges. “The presenters highlighted the transforming role of their clinical trial training in their research and career progress, and highlighted the opportunity that the program has given them to engage in clinical trials,” says CANTRAIN Mentor Dr. Bertrand Jean-Claude.

CANTRAIN Graduate and Postdoctoral Trainees Stream Lead Dr. Emily Bell spoke eloquently on fostering community in a changing environment. “My favorite strategy for meeting people comes from an old mentor of mine and he always said, when it comes time to networking, you don't have to be the most impressive person in the room. Just ask great questions and be interested in the people that you're connecting to.”

Ultimately, the Summit was an unforgettable opportunity for learning, listening, and growing in the stimulating surroundings of downtown Vancouver. “The 2025 Clinical Trials Summit: not just inspiration!” concludes Dr. Bourbeau. “The hottest topics in clinical trials in just three days, unmissable presentations with actionable takeaways. Beyond all, it was a wonderful time for exchanging ideas, networking, and building valuable relationships. That's what 'together' can do!”



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