

All Our Families Study

Understanding Development Across the Lifecourse

Fall 2016



Welcome to our new, **All Our Families** study eNewsletter! We are now online. Most of you have told us that email is the best way to connect with you. We hope that this eNewsletter meets your needs and helps us stay in conversation.

Our research team has accomplished a lot since our spring update and we are now entering the next stage of the All Our Babies Study: the transition to our new name, **All Our Families**, which better reflects you, our participant families. This coincides with the launch of the eight-year questionnaire (now online!) which you will receive around the time your child turns eight.

Being ready to launch the eight-year questionnaire means all of your children have turned five years of age, and you have helped with the five-year questionnaire. On behalf of our entire research team, thank you for your ongoing participation. Your candid contribution and support make our work possible and enable us to better understand how our children and families are growing and coping.

Thank you also to those who participated in our sub-study, *Parental perspectives on consent for participation in large-scale, non-biological data repositories*. We gained valuable insights on how parents consider consent and reuse of un-identifiable data. Data repositories are encouraged by our national research funders, like the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. They allow the sharing and reuse of publicly funded research data, enabling qualified researchers, with ethical approval, to address new research questions in a timely and cost effective way. Your contribution to this research project will inform the development of data repositories in Canada and beyond, and the findings have been presented both nationally and internationally by our master's student Shawn Dodd and Dr. Kiran Manhas, our Postdoctoral Fellow.

Our *Phonological Awareness Study*, led by Drs. Beverly Collisson and Susan Graham, has been completed and we are excited to analyze the data to better understand how language develops in early childhood and how daily activities like singing, reading, imitation games and, even, childcare influence this development.

Thank you, again, for being a vital part of the vast undertaking that is the All Our Families study. We look forward to your thoughts and comments about our transition and invite you to [email us](#) or reach us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Best wishes,

Dr. Suzanne Tough

PS: Please let us know if you wish to continue receiving the newsletter in print.

New brand roll out: we have a new name and logo

Working with you, we recognized that the name of our study, All Our Babies, was only going to take us thus far. After all, your babies became toddlers and now, eight years after we first launched, they have grown to be active and inquisitive children. It's time for a name change.



In the spring, we reported that we would transition to a more inclusive name, All Our Families. And now we're here. This newsletter is our first issue as the All Our Families study. Our new logo is inspired by our roots and is the result of extensive consultation with our community. We wanted to get it right and we hope you like it!

We're also transitioning our websites, social media accounts and every other platform that displays our name and logo. We appreciate your understanding as we complete this transition.

Good news: new blood test identifies women at risk of preterm delivery

Alberta has one of the highest preterm birth rates in Canada at 8.6 per cent. Infants born preterm, before 37 weeks gestation, are at increased risk for respiratory problems, hearing problems and learning challenges, all of which can be emotionally and financially stressful for families. Based on the data you provided, including the blood samples we took from some of you when you were pregnant, we are delighted to report that we have discovered some new biologic markers in women at risk of preterm birth. When we combine what we learn from your questionnaire responses, with these biologic markers, we can better predict which women are at risk of early delivery. This preliminary information will lead to more research to validate our findings and refine our ability to predict which women will deliver early and would most benefit from support and intervention.



This research was funded by Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions and involved a large team of us working together, including investigators from the Toronto Centre for Applied Genomics, Jan Heng and Steven Lye, and local investigators Donna Slater, Karen Benzies, Angela Vinturache, Sheila McDonald and Suzanne Tough.

The significant discovery also spotlights Canadian research on the international stage. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified preterm birth as the number one pregnancy and perinatal health problem in the world. The new test will help in the development of new drugs and interventions to delay preterm labour and prolong pregnancy for the benefit of babies in Canada and, eventually, around the world.

You can find out more in our [video](#) and [UToday](#).

Research to Real Life: Learning about self-regulation in children

One of our key mandates at All Our Families is sharing what we learn. Earlier in the year, we partnered with [Calgary Reads](#) to facilitate *Research to Real Life* consultations with a variety of professionals in the field of Early Childhood Development. We asked for input, insights, and feedback from policy stakeholders, educational experts, community services workers and practitioners to better understand how to build awareness of self-regulation and strategies for parents and other adults who have a stake in a child's life (in any setting) that will help children develop healthy self-regulation to meet life's challenges and rise to life's potential.



Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage emotions, attention, and interactions with others and the environment. From birth to age three is a crucial time for the development of a child's self-regulation skills.

Over 100 attended one of our two sessions, where we asked attendees to share our findings about self-regulation within their networks and, where appropriate, implement practices that support self-regulation among little children.

To foster the development of healthy self-regulation in their children, parents are encouraged to

- nurture **daily parent-child interaction**, for example reading and playing imitation games;
- freely utilize **community resources** for mom/parent and child, for example the library, recreation centres, and drop-in child care

- ensure they have some strategies for **social support** and
- learn and employ **maternal coping strategies** in the face of stressors.

For professionals, it's crucial to continue supporting **maternal mental health** in pregnancy and in the postpartum period.

Our partnership with Calgary Reads has helped our research team connect with professionals working with children and families. Calgary Reads acts as a bridge between home and school, working to create communities where reading matters. It offers free literacy-building and reading resources including games and books, and many programs and initiatives. Find out more by visiting their [resources for families](#) such as read aloud tips for parents, reading lists for children, games and other fun reading tools.

Scholar spotlight: Erin Hetherington

We are privileged to have exceptional scholars and researchers on our All Our Families team and proud to be able to support their important and ambitious academic research initiatives. It is especially exciting when one of these individuals is recognized on the national level with a major scholarship for her work and research in community-based solutions in preventing postpartum depression among mothers.



AOB researcher and PhD candidate Erin Hetherington was recently awarded the prestigious Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The Government of Canada scholarship program aims to establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning. To be recognized with this honour speaks to Erin's significant achievements as a highly skilled and innovative scholar and emerging leader. It also recognizes the importance of her research on determining how emotional, instrumental, and structural social support influence outcomes for children and families.

"I'm really interested in how women connect with others to build support systems. We know that having good social supports can help prevent depression," says Erin. "Specifically, I'm interested in challenging the 'one-size-fits-all' approach because every mother and every family is unique."

Erin's star power was first recognized back in 2014 when she joined the Cumming School of Medicine's Global Health Program and the All Our Babies study. She was selected for the University's Eyes High Doctoral Recruitment Award and in 2015 received the Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions Graduate Studentship.

"We are extremely proud of Erin and delighted to have her on our team," says Dr. Suzanne Tough, Erin's co-supervisor and Principal Investigator on the All Our Families cohort. "Her research into better understanding what types of social support make the most difference to mothers' mental health will have a 'real life' impact on how we provide resources to mothers and families. The longitudinal nature of The All Our Families study enables Erin to undertake this important research."

With files from [UToday](#).

Staff news: Communications Specialist

Our team has grown again. Niya Hurley recently joined All Our Families as a Communications Specialist. Among other things, she'll be managing our outbound communications, including this newsletter and social media accounts. Niya brings a breadth of experience in communications, engagement building and public relations having previously worked with small non-profit, complex public organizations and a number of PR agencies in Calgary and Toronto. She holds a BA degree in Mass Communications from York University. Niya is a mom to a 10-month old baby girl and keeps busy running after her, walking the family's two beagles and, if she's lucky, enjoying a quiet moment with a good read (or a nap!).

