



Waypoint
Research Institute

2025/2026

Year in Review Impact Report



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The year in brief

In 2025/2026, the Waypoint Research Institute secured \$2.9 million in competitive funding, grew to a team of 65, and expanded into clinical trials, launching our first trial in February 2026. We supported eight embedded research interns and continued to build more cross-sector partnerships in the areas of gender-based violence, child and youth mental health, and criminal justice policy. We brought together 150 researchers, clinicians, and people with lived experience at InSPIRE, our first in-person conference in five years.

Behind those numbers: forensic patients co-led the creation of practical guidelines for participatory research in forensic settings. Survivors of intimate partner violence helped define the questions, methods, and priorities that shape the research about their lives. Across North Simcoe Muskoka hospitals, teams delivered more consistent, person-centred care for older adults with dementia. An AI-enabled early warning system advanced from concept to clinical pilot. Meanwhile, the Governor General's Innovation Award honoured 20 years of impact from the ODARA domestic violence risk tool.

This report tells the story of our work.

A message from

Dr. Nadiya Sunderji,
President and CEO

At Waypoint, our mission is grounded in improving lives and strengthening systems of care for individuals and families affected by mental illness and addiction. The work of the Waypoint Research Institute (WRI) plays a necessary role in advancing that mission. In 2025, WRI continued to demonstrate how research can serve as a catalyst for system transformation. From expanding patient-oriented research in forensic settings, to advancing integrated dementia care in North Simcoe Muskoka, to leading innovation in artificial intelligence and workplace trauma prevention, our teams are ensuring that evidence informs practice in meaningful ways. What distinguishes WRI is not only the quality of its science, but its commitment to partnership: with patients and families, clinicians, academic institutions, community organizations, and justice and policy leaders. Through initiatives such as the Breakthrough Fund and our growing clinical trials capacity, we are investing in the next generation of researchers and strengthening Waypoint's position as a leader in mental health innovation.

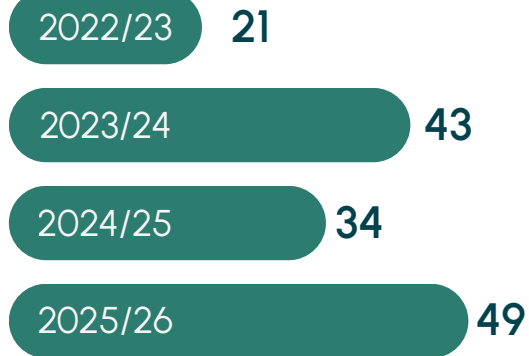
A message from

Dr. Bernard Le Foll,
VP Research & Academics and Chief Scientific Officer

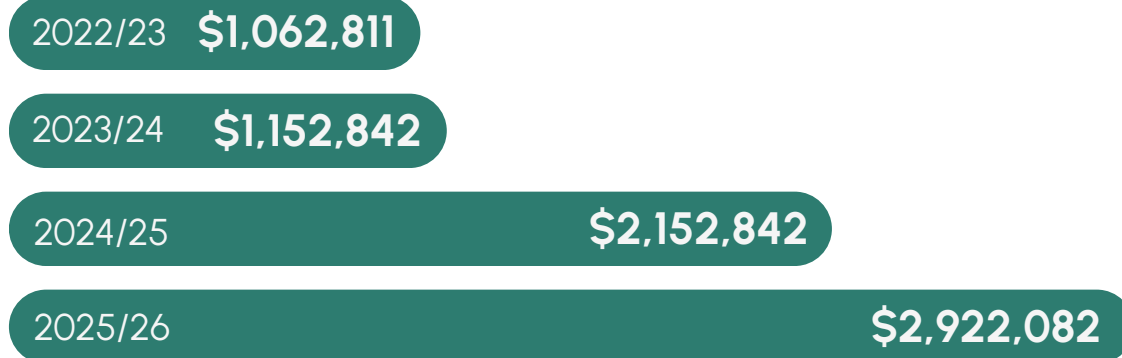
The past year has been one of strategic growth and consolidation for the Waypoint Research Institute. In 2025, our teams secured competitive funding, expanded multi-site collaborations, and delivered research that informs clinical practice, policy, and system design. We also advanced our infrastructure: from scaling the Behaviour Success Agent program and refining forensic patient-oriented research tools, to piloting an AI-enabled early warning system and expanding our readiness for clinical trials. These initiatives reflect our commitment to rigorous science coupled with responsible implementation. Equally important is our investment in people. Through Mitacs placements, the Breakthrough Fund, fellowships, and knowledge mobilization training, we are embedding trainees and early-career scholars within real-world clinical environments, accelerating the translation of research into impact. As we look ahead, our priority remains to produce high-quality, ethically grounded research that improves outcomes for patients, strengthens workforce safety, and contributes to a learning mental health system in Ontario and beyond.

2025 at a Glance

Number of publications 2022-2026



Funding Growth 2022-2026



Events & Knowledge Exchange

- **One** in-person conference reaching 150+ attendees
- **Three** project-based events reaching 100+ attendees
- **Nine** Waypoint Talks sessions reaching 300+ total live attendees

38 Total knowledge translation products

65 Total staff

Research with Impact

Youth & Community Mental Health

Youth-led solutions to managing screen time

Problem: Communities sometimes lack evidence-informed guidance on how screen use affects youth well-being. Most guidance is top-down and may not consider what young people experience.

What we did: The Screen Time Management Tool (STMT) project is engaging youth and parents in Simcoe County using a participatory design. Young people are contributing to the research design, data collection, and tool development. The co-designed tool will be made available to schools and community organizations.

Why it matters: Young people are building evidence-informed solutions that reflect youth realities and strengthen community-based mental health supports.



Forensic patients as research partners

Problem: Patient-oriented research (POR) is rare in forensic mental health. Security constraints, power imbalances, and a lack of practical guidance leave patients out of the research that defines their care.

What we did: WRI researchers embedded themselves in everyday hospital life, building trust alongside peer researchers and patient advocates. This team developed a practical toolkit and guidelines to support POR in forensic mental health settings. They are designed to provide a practical foundation for forensic POR based on lived expertise and acknowledged best practices.

Why it matters: Applying the toolkit and guidelines can create the framework for research projects that are equitable, safe, respectful and help build long-lasting relationships of trust in forensic settings.





Fairness at the Ontario Review Board

Problem: The shift to virtual Ontario Review Board (ORB) hearings was rapid. No evidence existed on whether virtual formats were fair, accessible, or emotionally safe for forensic patients.

What we did: The WRI interviewed patients and staff who had experienced both formats. Findings revealed that no single format works for everyone. Virtual hearings helped some patients engage; for others, they created distance and reduced the sense of legitimacy.

Why it matters: This evidence is now available to ORB administrators and policymakers. The case for flexible, patient-centred hearing formats is grounded in patient voices, not assumptions.



Preventing crises before they happen

Problem: Mental health care often responds to crises after they occur. Care teams have few tools to anticipate deterioration and intervene early.

What we did: WRI researchers developed an AI-enabled, early warning system trained on three years of patient data. Using machine learning and natural language processing, it identifies risk patterns up to 72 hours in advance. The system is now being piloted on select units at Waypoint.

Why it matters: This moves psychiatric care from reactive to proactive. Earlier intervention means fewer crises, better patient experience, and safer environments for staff.

Better dementia care in acute hospitals

Problem: Older adults with dementia admitted to acute hospitals often encounter fragmented care, restraint use, delirium, and prolonged stays.

What we did: Through the Behaviour Success Agent (BSA) program, trained clinical staff were embedded in hospitals across North Simcoe Muskoka to champion dementia best practices, mentor teams, and connect hospital and community care. WRI researchers evaluated uptake and effectiveness across multiple sites. Early results show improvements in care quality and patient flow.

Why it matters: Older adults with dementia are receiving more consistent, person-centred care. The model is being studied for regional scale-up.



Survivors shaping IPV research

Problem: Research about intimate partner violence (IPV) has historically been done on survivors, not with them.

What we did: WRI and Queen's University co-hosted Storytelling for Change, bringing together survivors, researchers, policymakers, and community organizations. Arts-based formats including poetry, dance, and facilitated dialogues were used alongside research presentations to centre lived expertise. Led by Dr. Elnaz Moghimi and funded by SSHRC, the Our IPV Story collaborative is changing how IPV research is conducted and communicated.

Why it matters: Survivors are now co-researchers, not subjects. Their expertise is shaping methodology, findings, and recommendations that reach practitioners and policymakers.



Evidence reaching decision-makers

STREAM Lab - Supporting Transformation through Research, Evidence, and Action in Mental Health

The STREAM (Supporting Transformation through Research, Evidence, and Action in Mental health and substance use) Lab responds to questions posed directly by regional and provincial decision-makers in Ontario. STREAM uses structured rapid review methods to create outputs ranging from reports to data tables and infographics. In 2025/2026, STREAM produced 19 products on topics including:

- Integration of primary care and mental health care for common mental disorders
- Practices in compensation for people with lived experience who are engaged in system-level decision-making
- Use of artificial intelligence in assessment of mental health and substance use concerns
- Geriatric Emergency Management models of care

These reviews support evidence-informed mental health and substance use system planning. Summaries of selected reviews can be found [here](#).



Forensic Mental Health Research Chair Initiatives



Forensic Mental Health Research Chair (Dr. N. Zoe Hilton)

Dr. N. Zoe Hilton continued as the Research Chair in Forensic Mental Health in 2025. Her work on the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) earned the 2025 Governor General's Innovation Award, recognizing its transformative impact on justice and healthcare systems across Canada. She also continues to lead major projects in intimate partner violence and workplace violence prevention.



Mhaven Initiative

Mhaven is a \$2.3 million provincially funded program building Canada's first gender-based violence (GBV)-focused mental health hub. It integrates hospital and community services through trauma-informed, culturally safe approaches and includes the LEAP lived-experience partnership program. New partnerships with Huronia Transition Homes and Barrie Native Friendship Centre bring community expertise into the work.



WorkSafeBC Trauma Implementation Study

Funded by WorkSafeBC, this study examines barriers and facilitators to implementing workplace violence prevention in psychiatric healthcare. The output is a practical implementation manual for hospital leaders, grounded in evidence from the field.

Research highlights

The WRI's scientists and researchers reflect on highlights from their work over the past year that they feel has made an impact in their fields and the community.

Dr. Elnaz Moghimi

Dr. Moghimi's team launched Our IPV Story, a public awareness and knowledge mobilization initiative that used storytelling, art, social media, webinars, and community engagement to increase awareness of intimate partner violence and lived experience co-research. The initiative strengthened visibility and momentum for [Mhaven](#) – Canada's first mental health anti-violence hub.

Dr. Katie Bingham

As part of Dr. Bingham's [CIHR-funded, multi-site study](#), her team has developed the prototype of a co-designed and co-implemented caregiver-clinician toolkit for delirium prevention in hospitalized older adults, using a participatory research approach. Their next step is to hold a knowledge user in June 2026 to refine the toolkit, which will then be studied on a larger scale to evaluate its ability to empower caregivers of hospitalized older adults to take an active role in delirium prevention.

Dr. Barna Konkoly-Thege

Dr. Konkoly-Thege and his international team completed a multi-year evidence synthesis examining the effectiveness and implementation of nutritional interventions for reducing aggressive and antisocial behaviours. The findings from this mixed-method systematic review and meta-analysis were published in a [high-impact open-access journal](#) and have already received attention in European media.

Dr. Christopher Canning

As lead researcher of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's [national action plan](#) on justice and mental health, Finding New Pathways, Christopher played a central role in shaping a foundational framework for how system leaders understand and respond to the mental health needs of people involved in criminal justice and forensic mental health settings. The action plan's 68 recommendations provide a cross-jurisdictional roadmap spanning prevention, diversion, governance, care continuity, and system integration, positioning the field for meaningful reform across Canada.

Dr. Benedikt Fischer

Recently, Dr. Benedikt Fischer, together with Dr. Bernard Le Foll and other senior investigators from Canada and abroad, have published a series of reviews and commentaries on current issues on substance use-related interventions and policy. These articles have focused on topics such as: Involuntary treatment for severe substance use disorders; decriminalization and health-oriented drug policy; strategic approaches to reducing the substance use-related burden of disease in Canada; psychostimulant use and harms; and drivers of recent decreases in drug overdose deaths, published in journals including: *Lancet Regional Health — Americas*; *Psychiatry Research*; *Nature — Mental Health*, among others.

Dr. Soyeon Kim

Over the past fiscal year, Dr. Kim successfully led the cultural adaptation and implementation of the Preventive Online Mental Health Program for Youth (POMHPY) for Indigenous youth in partnership with GBNFC. By integrating Indigenous traditions, teachings, and community-informed approaches into the program, the initiative was well received by the community and successfully delivered to an adolescent cohort, with additional implementation planned for September.

Dr. Andrea Waddell

Dr. Waddell's team published the [validation study](#) of the Predictive Risk Identification for Mental Health Events (PRIME) tool. This machine learning tool alerts clinicians when a patient is at high risk of deterioration in hospital allowing them to intervene to avoid adverse events.



Developing the Next Generation of Researchers

Through the Breakthrough Fund, \$250,000 was raised at An Evening to Shine the Light Gala to embed six graduate students and postdoctoral fellows directly in Waypoint's clinical and research programs.

Leveraged through the Mitacs Accelerate program, this supports eight interns over three years. Their work is having a direct applied impact in the following areas:

Greg Procknow — Advancing patient-oriented research in forensic setting and exploring how patients understand education as part of recovery.

Liam Doyle — Evaluating and refining ODARA risk assessment tools used across justice and healthcare systems.

Valentina Tamayo Velasquez — Supporting development and piloting of the AI early warning system for adverse event prediction.

Linus Wilkialis — Evaluating virtual addiction care at Georgianwood, informing how the program adapts for accessibility and effectiveness.

Dane Mauer-Vakil — Using mixed methods approaches to understand substance use gaps and needs in forensic mental health care settings.

Andrea Krishnapillai — Conducting an environmental scan on equity-focused measurement frameworks and outcome indicators, with a particular emphasis on integrating the EDI lens into mental health research and evaluation

Connecting research to practice

InSPIRE 2025

In June 2025, WRI hosted the 8th Annual InSPIRE Conference at Blue Mountain, the first in-person event since 2019. More than 140 researchers, clinicians, policymakers, trainees, community partners, and people with lived experience gathered over two days. Sixty presentations were delivered. A keynote by Jesse Thistle on relational accountability and systems change set the tone for a conference grounded in equity and lived expertise. A panel discussion with Shauna Cronin, Shawn Fisk and Dr. Bendikt Fischer explored themes of advancing social change through research in health and substance use settings.



Waypoint Talks

Nine public knowledge exchange events were hosted by the WRI in 2025, reaching researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and community members on topics including clinical trials, crisis care, gender-based violence, and digital equity. Recordings extended reach beyond the 300+ total live attendees.

IPV co-research series

A four-part series on intimate partner violence co-research highlighted lived experience leadership, international perspectives, and future directions for the field. The series included presentations and collaboration with Waypoint's Patient/Client and Family Council. 76 attendees joined us for these sessions.



Awards and recognitions

Dr. N. Zoe Hilton, Elke Ham, and the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) team received the 2025 Governor General's Innovation Award for their development, validation, implementation, and evaluation of ODARA and its professional training programs. The award recognizes transformative Canadian innovations with measurable societal impact.

Dr. Andrea Waddell was selected as a 2025-26 AMS-Fitzgerald Fellow in Artificial Intelligence and Human-Centered Leadership, supporting advanced capacity-building in AI applications in health systems.

Dr. Le Foll was elected as a 2025 Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS), recognizing internationally distinguished leadership and scientific contribution.



Partnerships

In 2025, WRI expanded its collaboration network through new partnerships supporting community mental health, mental health policy, violence prevention, and youth well-being.

- **Huronia Transition Homes and Barrie Native Friendship Centre:** Community partner with the Mhaven project addressing gender-based violence and mental health.
- **New Path Youth and Family Services and Students Commission of Canada:** Partners on the Screen Time Management Tool (STMT) project, advancing youth mental health research.
- **Nova Scotia Department of Justice:** Collaboration on intimate partner violence risk management research.
- **Mental Health Commission of Canada:** Partners on an action plan on mental health and criminal justice in Canada

These collaborations strengthen WRI's ability to conduct cross-sector research and expand the reach of its findings across clinical, community, and justice settings.



Looking Ahead to 2026

Four priorities will drive the WRI's work in the year ahead:

Expanding clinical trials capacity — The WRI launched its first clinical trial in February 2026 and will build infrastructure to support additional trials in mental health and substance use research.

Scaling forensic patient-oriented research — The WRI will move from guidelines to implementation by embedding POR practices across hospital-based and other research projects.

Supporting our Research Chair — The work of Dr Zoe Hilton, Research Chair in Forensic Mental Health at Waypoint, will continue to advance to multiple areas of the forensic mental health system.

Building implementation capacity — The WRI will strengthen implementation science expertise across hospital departments to support the translation of research into practice at Waypoint.



Waypoint

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CENTRE *de* SOINS *de* SANTÉ MENTALE

Advancing Understanding.
Improving Lives.

Avancer la compréhension.
Améliorer la vie.