

Mitacs Internship Opportunity for Summer Term 2021

Project Title: Exploring Convalescent Plasma Therapy as a Potential Intervention in the Pandemic Response

Schedule: ~20 hours per week

Salary: \$10,000 for 16 weeks

Application Deadline: Friday April 23, 2021.

Planned Start Date: May 1, 2021

Project Overview

Convalescent plasma therapy is a transfusion treatment for treating and preventing infections, which has been studied during the COVID-19 pandemic in numerous randomized clinical trials (RCT). Convalescent plasma is typically the only treatment option available early on in outbreaks of novel pathogens, before more advanced treatments and vaccines are developed. However rapid deployment of the convalescent plasma is challenging due to complex logistical and operational issues involved in collecting, processing and delivering plasma to patients.

Our research project aims to document the implementation of COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma (CCP) in the context of a pan-Canadian clinical trial, specifically its rollout in British Columbia, to study whether and how convalescent plasma therapy may be delivered most efficiently, effectively and equitable to patients during outbreaks of novel infectious agents in the future.

The project will engage three Mitacs interns, who will work as a team during the summer term to investigate the following key components of the continuum of convalescent plasma delivery:

- (1) *Canadian Blood Services (CBS)* – Collection, processing and distribution of convalescent plasma by Canadian Blood Services (CBS)
- (2) *Health Care Settings* – The delivery of transfusion therapy in hospital and community settings
- (3) *Public Health* – Pandemic planning by Public Health stakeholders for using convalescent plasma as a pandemic intervention.

The interns will conduct literature and document reviews, interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and complete thematic analysis of the qualitative data to inform the development of a process map of the convalescent plasma delivery process in British Columbia. The team of interns will work together with research assistants and mentors who are experts in qualitative research, systems thinking, and transfusion medicine. The three positions will each focus on one key area within the continuum of convalescent plasma delivery.

Canadian Blood Services (CBS) – We are recruiting one intern to document the identification of convalescent plasma donors, the collection and processing of blood plasma and the delivery of the convalescent plasma product to the bedside. The intern will work directly under the mentorship of a transfusion medicine physician and will receive guidance from the larger team of researchers with relevant expertise. The deliverable for the project will be a report that will inform the development of knowledge translation products to communicate to stakeholders involved in convalescent plasma delivery and pandemic planning in BC; as well as how findings will inform future therapeutic trials.

How to Apply – To be eligible, students must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program, preferably in health science or a health-related field. Post-doctoral fellows are also welcome to apply. Experience with qualitative research methods (interviews, focus groups, thematic analysis) is an asset. Please send a current CV and a cover letter highlighting how your past experience and/or future research or education plans are aligned with this project to **Dr. Andrew Shih** at andrew.shih@medportal.ca.