

# Health Advocacy Projects



# Advocacy Groups

- Covid-19 Women's Health Initiative
  - Group of interdisciplinary students across the country
  - Co-founders: Karlee Seale and Aman Dhaliwal (University of Toronto MD Candidates)
  - <https://www.covidwi.com/about>
- University of Toronto Health Advocacy Group
  - Emma Skolnik- Resident Advocacy lead with over 40 residents involved in 4 main initiatives.



# Initiatives

## 1. Food Insecurity Initiative

- Raised >\$6000 “#donateyourdatenight” campaign, providing hundreds of warm individually packaged meals (in line with physical distancing) to Toronto women’s shelters

## 2. Intimate Partner Violence

- Created an IPV awareness campaign for patients and healthcare providers, while disseminating an evidence based Healthcare Provider IPV Screening Resource to clinical centres across Toronto

## 3. Contraception Access

- Created the Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Map; an online patient mapping tool used to access to contraception, abortion and STI screening during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - >1100 hits to the site within the first week of its launch, which led to media coverage by the Canadian Press, CTV and CBC.
- Secured partnership with Acton Canada and planning to release an Open Letter addressed to the Hon. Christine Elliot (MOH) advocating for 100% coverage of contraceptives

## 4. Maternal Mental Health at Mount Sinai Hospital

- Established a partnership between perinatal psychiatry and Obstetrics at Mount Sinai Hospital to successfully carrying out group counselling sessions for pregnant patients on a virtual platform
- Success demonstrated in attendance of >50 patients weekly



# Intimate Partner Violence Awareness

Get a copy of the below posters for your clinic by contacting the COVID-19 Women's Initiative.

## Subcommittee Chair

- Emma Skolnik
- Rebecca Zur

## Members

- Rebecca Cherniak
- Sara Porisky
- Elizabeth Miazga
- Anjali Kulkarni
- Marta Cybulsky
- Olga Kciuk

## Everyone says to **stay home** but what if home is not safe?

1 in 10 Canadian women are very concerned about the possibility of violence in the home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**You are not alone. It's not your fault.**

**There is help.**

If you feel there is immediate threat to your life or safety, please call 911.



Assaulted Women's Helpline available 24/7

**1-866-863-0511**

Call #SAFE (#7233) on your Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus Mobile  
or Visit: [Schliferclinic.com](https://www.schliferclinic.com)


**Barbra Schlifer**  
Commemorative Clinic  
Freedom From Violence

 Obstetrics & Gynaecology  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

COVID-19 WOMEN'S INITIATIVE   **Barbra Schlifer**  
Commemorative Clinic  
Freedom From Violence

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic



### THE FACTS

1 in 10 Canadian women are very concerned about the possibility of violence in the home during the COVID-19 pandemic

Most intimate partner violence occurs in a dwelling occupied by both the victim and accused

Women account for 80% of victims in cases of IPV

### THE IMPACT

Police-reported IPV increased 20%. Increased need for shelters, hotlines and other IPV-related services since the start of COVID-19

Physical distancing with an abusive partner at home creates new barriers for women to access services

### ASK EVERY PATIENT ABOUT IPV<sup>1</sup>

Now, more than ever, healthcare providers should be asking every patient:

- 1 Within the past year, have you been hit, slapped, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by someone?
- 2 Are you in a relationship with a person who threatens or physically hurts you?
- 3 Has anyone forced you to have sexual activities that made you feel uncomfortable?

### IF "YES" TO ANY

**ADVISE**

Your patient to call 911 if they feel an immediate threat to their safety

**GIVE RESOURCES**

Assaulted Women's Helpline

- available 24/7
- Call: 1-866-863-0511 OR #SAFE (#7233) on a Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus cell

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

- [www.schliferclinic.com](https://www.schliferclinic.com), 416-323-9149 ext 278

**SUPPORT**

Offer support and document

**FOLLOW UP**

Consider what is available at your centre

### IF "NO" TO ALL

Most women do not disclose IPV the first time they are asked. Keep the door open for future conversations

If you would like to help support community efforts to help those experiencing IPV, please visit: <https://www.covidwi.com/donate>

1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee Opinion #518: Intimate Partner Violence (2012)

# Food Insecurity Fundraiser

## Subcommittee Chair

- Siddhi Mathur
- Rebecca Zur

## Members

- Noora Alshamsi
- Anna Shishkina
- Azra Shivji
- Emma Skolnik



## FOOD INSECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### FOOD INSECURITY: WHAT AND WHO?



**1 in 8**  
(12.5%)  
**Canadian**  
Households



**Nearly 1 in 5**  
(18.5%)  
**Toronto**  
Households



Affects **64%** of households receiving **Ontario Social Assistance** as this does not cover basic costs of living

### AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSABILITY



Cost of nutritious food  
**increased 7.6%**  
between 2018-2019



A single pregnant woman, 19-30 yrs old, requires a **minimum of \$54.93/wk** for basic nutrition only  
**+** Add \$12/month if breastfeeding

### WHY WE ARE CONCERNED

In Canada, food insecurity affects:

**4.4 MILLION PEOPLE**  
including  
**1.2 MILLION CHILDREN**



**33%** of female-lone parent households experience food insecurity

Food insecurity is a **major HEALTH issue** leading to increased rates of:



- Chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, obesity, heart disease)



- Mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, mood disorders)



- ADHD, asthma, depression, suicide in children

### HOW HAS COVID-19 CHANGED THINGS?

Decreased Supplies



Increased Demand



Challenges with Making/Distributing Meals



If you would like to help support community efforts to fight food insecurity, please visit: [www.gofundme.com/covid19-womens-initiative](https://www.gofundme.com/covid19-womens-initiative)

# Maternal Mental Health Awareness

Subcommittee  
leads:

Shira Gold

Kinshuk Kumar

Members:

Emma Skolnik

Haniya Khan

Michal Sheinis

## COVID-19 WOMEN'S INITIATIVE MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

### What are the Baby Blues?

The Baby Blues can happen within hours after delivery and usually go away within 3 weeks.



### Symptoms

Tearfulness  
Irritability  
Sadness  
Moodiness  
Worrying

### What are postpartum mood & anxiety disorders?

These describe distressing feelings that last beyond "Baby Blues" and include conditions such as depression and anxiety. These feelings may occur up to 1 year after giving birth. Postpartum depression is the **most common disorder** after delivery.

### Postpartum Depression Symptoms

- sadness
- loss of pleasure
- lack of interest
- low energy
- crying
- guilt
- poor concentration
- poor decision making
- changes in sleep and appetite
- agitation
- anger
- thoughts of not wanting to live
- negative feelings about parenting or towards the baby



### Anxiety Disorder Symptoms

- racing thoughts
- imagining the worst case scenario
- uncontrollable worry
- avoiding certain situations
- asking for constant reassurance

## QUICK STATS

**80%** of new mothers experience the Baby Blues  
**6%** of pregnant and **10%** of postpartum women experience anxiety  
**10-16%** of women experience postpartum depression

### When Should you Seek Help?

Seek help if you feel that your symptoms are interfering with your day-to-day activities or that you could use some support.



### When to get Immediate Help

Seek help **immediately** if you are having thoughts of wanting to harm yourself or your baby or you are feeling confused or out of touch with reality.

### How can you get help?

- Talk to your family doctor, midwife, or obstetrician.
- Ask to speak to a social worker at your hospital.
- Call your local public health authority.
- Consider sharing your feelings with a partner or friend, if you feel comfortable.



### You Are Not Alone!

Perinatal mental health concerns can occur anytime during pregnancy, and up to 12 months postpartum. They are **common & treatable**.

**You are not a bad parent.**  
**You are strong for asking for help!**

## COVID-19 WOMEN'S INITIATIVE MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

### General Mental Health Resources

**Big White Wall**  
Online peer-to-peer support and interactive groups  
[www.BigWhiteWall.ca](http://www.BigWhiteWall.ca)

**Bounce Back Ontario**  
Depression and anxiety skill-building program  
[www.bouncebackontario.ca](http://www.bouncebackontario.ca)

**General anxiety support re: COVID-19**  
[www.virusanxiety.com/](http://www.virusanxiety.com/)

**Free online support groups**  
[www.relatinalcenter.org/online/support/](http://www.relatinalcenter.org/online/support/)

**Sleep Health Resource**  
<https://mysleepwell.ca/>



### Toronto-Specific Maternal Mental Health Resources

**Toronto Public Health Services:**  
For perinatal health  
<https://bit.ly/2YxQ32I>

For postpartum depression  
[www.toronto.ca/health/postpartumdepression](http://www.toronto.ca/health/postpartumdepression)

**Online prenatal and postnatal classes**  
<https://toronto.welcometoparenting.com/>



### About us:

**Obstetrics & Gynaecology  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

We are an advocacy group from the University of Toronto striving for the betterment of parental mental health!

The CWI is a student-led non-profit organization comprised of students, physicians, and community members in Canada. We are working together to advocate for gender equity throughout and following the COVID-19 pandemic.



For more information on women's health during COVID-19, please visit: <https://www.covidwi.com/>  
Sources: Mount Sinai Hospital, Women's College Hospital, Mother to Baby





# Contraception Access

## Subcommittee leads:

Emma Skolnik

Marta Cybulski

## Members:

Adam Rosen

Martha Smith

Haniya Khan

Alix Murphy

## ***Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRHS) Map***

This map can be used to find sexual and reproductive health services that are operating through the pandemic, and are located close to you. Some of these services include contraception and emergency IUD insertion, STI screening and treatment, abortion services, and pap testing. This map will be updated to reflect any changes in clinic hours and availability. We are currently in the process of expanding this map to other locations in Canada

Please call clinics to confirm service availability prior to making an appointment. **Please note that some family physicians and OB/GYNs continue to provide essential reproductive healthcare, so please keep in mind that you can contact your physicians and inquire as to whether they are providing these services.**

**To see a detailed list of the services offered by the clinic, please use the sidebar icon on the top left of the map.**

