

Emerging and Pandemic Infections Consortium Symposium

October 16, 2025 at the Toronto Reference Library

Immunizations: sustaining progress and impact in a changing landscape

AGENDA

8:00 - 8:45 a.m. Registration

8:45 - 9:00 a.m. Opening remarks (EPIC Directors Scott Gray-Owen and Natasha Christie-Holmes)

9:00 - 9:45 a.m. **Keynote:**

VIDO: Canada's Centre for Pandemic Research

Trina Racine

Director, Vaccine Development, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization,
University of Saskatchewan

9:45 - 10:30 a.m. **EPIC Project Spotlight Talks**

Strategies to develop RNA-targeted antivirals

Amanda Hargrove (2025 EPIC Ignite Grant Awardee)

Professor, Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences, University of Toronto Mississauga

Advancing Pandemic Preparedness for Pregnant Individuals and Infants in Canada through
POPCORN: A Two-Year Project Plan

Costanza Di Chiara (2025 EPIC Convergence Postdoctoral Fellow)

Postdoctoral fellow, co-supervised by Shaun Morris (The Hospital for Sick Children) and Shelly
Bolotin (Dalla Lana School of Public Health)

Estimating Vaccine Efficacy: The Role of Transmission Modelling

Jesse Knight (2022 EPIC Mpox Rapid Research Response, Lead Trainee)

Research Associate, Imperial College London

10:30 - 11:00 a.m. COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 11:45 p.m. **Keynote:**

Measles at the Crossroads: What re-emerging infections reveal about global vaccine resilience and
Canada's preparedness

Natasha Crowcroft

Acting Chief Public Health Officer and Vice President of Infectious Diseases and Vaccination
Programs, Public Health Agency of Canada

11:45 - 1:15 p.m. LUNCH (Trainee connection tables in the Novella Room)

1:15 - 2:00 p.m. **Lightning Round**

EPIC trainees present their work (5 min/talk), see page 2 for details

2:00 - 2:45 p.m. **Keynote:**

Vaccination Under Pressure: Are Vaccine Mandates Coercive?

Maxwell Smith

Associate Professor, and CIHR Applied Public Health Chair in Ethics and Health Emergencies,
Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University

2:45 - 3:15 p.m. COFFEE BREAK

3:15 - 4:15 p.m. **Panel Discussion**

Natasha Crowcroft, Trina Racine and Maxwell Smith

Panel chair: Shelly Bolotin (Director, Centre for Vaccine Preventable Diseases)

4:15 - 4:30 p.m. Closing remarks

4:30 - 6:00 p.m. NETWORKING RECEPTION

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EPIC Trainee Lightning Round

Effector antibody-mediated protection against human cytomegalovirus in neonates

Clare Burn Aschner (2025 EPIC Career Transition Awardee)

Postdoctoral fellow, supervised by Jean-Philippe Julien (The Hospital for Sick Children)

Novel approaches for smart infection prevention in healthcare settings

Ali Barzegar Khanghah (2025 EPIC Doctoral Awardee)

PhD student, supervised by Atena Roshan Fekr (Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering)

Tuning immunogenicity of DNA-nanoscaffolded immune complexes

Shana Alexander (2025 EPIC Doctoral Awardee)

PhD student, supervised by Leo Chou (Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering)

Intranasal mRNA tuberculosis vaccines with airway-tailored LNP targeting mucosal immunity

Nicholas Solek (2024 EPIC New Connections Trainee)

PhD student, supervised by Bowen Li (Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy)

Evaluating the real-world effectiveness of the human papillomavirus vaccine among gbMSM in three large Canadian cities

Pranamika Khayargoli (2025 EPIC Doctoral Awardee)

PhD student, supervised by Ann Burchell (Dalla Lana School of Public Health)

Looking at HIV from inside and out; new tools for characterizing viruses and EVs

Deepa Chaphekar (2025 EPIC Doctoral Awardee)

PhD student, supervised by Christina Guzzo (Faculty of Arts & Science, University of Toronto Scarborough)

mRNA therapeutics for SARS-CoV-2 cardiomyopathy

Amin Ektesabi (2024 EPIC Convergence Postdoctoral Fellow)

Postdoctoral fellow, co-supervised by Claudia dos Santos (Unity Health Toronto) and Gilbert Walker (Faculty of Arts & Science)

Prophylactic strategies to reduce incidence of Pneumocystis pneumonia in individuals with cancer and autoimmune rheumatic inflammatory disease in Ontario, Canada

Omri Arbiv (2025 EPIC Doctoral Awardee)

PhD student, supervised by Andrea Gershon (Dalla Lana School of Public Health)

Assessing immunogenicity and protection against tuberculosis by a novel live Mycobacterium tuberculosis vaccine

Jacqueline Watt (2024 EPIC Pandemic Response and Resiliency Awardee)

Postdoctoral fellow, supervised by Jun Liu (Temerty Faculty of Medicine)