

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CBRC Welcomes Federal Funding for COVID-19 Study with LGBTQ2+ Communities**

*COVID-19 Immunity Task Force Announces \$660,000 Investment to Assess Impact on Sexual and Gender Minorities in Canada*

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia (Thursday, September 10, 2020)** – Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) welcomes the federal government’s COVID-19 Immunity Task Force announcement of \$661,542 in funding for a national study of the impact of COVID-19 on lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, Two-Spirit, and other sexual and gender minority people (LGBTQ2+). The LGBTQ2+ study is one of 22 projects supported by today’s announcement of \$12.4 million in funding, and will be led by Dr. Nathan Lachowsky, Associate Professor at the University of Victoria’s School of Public Health and Social Policy, and Research Director at CBRC. In addition to CBRC, the study will partner with other LGBTQ2+ community organizations in Canada, including Egale, Enchante, and YouthCO.

The study will include a national bilingual online survey of LGBTQ2+ people in Canada to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 and public health control measures on their health and wellbeing. The survey will also include an option to receive a finger-prick dried blood spot (DBS) collection kit that will be tested for COVID-19 antibodies in order to help determine the prevalence of COVID-19 within LGBTQ2+ communities, however participants will not receive their individual results, as the testing is for public health and research purposes only. The study findings will inform future public health actions for LGBTQ2+ communities, as well as contribute towards future COVID-19 testing strategies.

“This study will fill a major gap in COVID-19 related data on LGBTQ2+ communities, similar to the lack of data on other marginalized communities impacted by COVID-19 such as Black, Indigenous and other people of colour,” said Dr. Lachowsky. “This may be the first global study to specifically examine the prevalence of COVID-19 among LGBTQ2+ communities, so this research can inform regional, national, and international responses.”

Due to stigma and discrimination that lead to underlying social and health inequities, LGBTQ2+ people in Canada have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and public health control measures. For example, social and physical distancing requirements exacerbate pre-existing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts. The disruption to health care services such as HIV testing or gender-affirming care may also have a particularly negative impact due to the importance of these services for LGBTQ2+ communities.

“By directly engaging LGBTQ2+ people, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding of how COVID has impacted sexual and gender minorities in Canada, and will ensure that our communities’ will be represented,” said Jody Jollimore, CBRC Executive Director. “The findings generated will not only strengthen Canada’s response to the pandemic overall, but will also identify specific priorities for LGBTQ2 communities.”

**Lay Abstract of Research Study:**

Physical distancing may have especially negative effects on marginalized communities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, Two-Spirit, and other sexual and gender marginalized people (LGBTQ2+). LGBTQ2+ people are more networked socially and sexually compared with other groups. LGBTQ2+ also experience other health inequities such as cardiovascular disease, poorer mental health, and more substance use that may result in greater COVID-19 impacts. This study will determine how COVID-19 impacts LGBTQ2+ people across Canada. We will conduct an online survey of LGBTQ2+ people. Our findings will inform future public health action for LGBTQ2+ people to avoid unintended consequences such as intimate partner and family/domestic violence, anxiety, and depression. Participants will also be mailed a kit to collect a few blood drops to test for COVID-19. This approach may be an important tool for future COVID-19 testing, especially among rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

**About CBRC:**

Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) promotes the health of gay men through research and intervention development. We are inclusive of bisexual and queer men (cis and trans) and Two Spirit people.

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