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## POGO RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

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### Background

The Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario (POGO) plans and coordinates childhood cancer services for Ontario and advises the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) on childhood cancer control. POGO is a multi-disciplinary professional network, committed to dialogue, surveillance, research (quantitative and qualitative), policy development and program evaluation. POGO addresses the development, organization, delivery and financing of childhood cancer control across the continuum of care within the province of Ontario. The organization also advocates on behalf of childhood cancer patients, their families and the professionals who care for them. Major components of current POGO activities include:

- A unique database on childhood cancer (POGONIS - Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario Networked Information System);
- A provincial program for the delivery of pediatric oncology care at satellite sites throughout the province in order to deliver cancer care close to home;
- A network of AfterCare Clinics for survivors for the surveillance, intervention, and investigation of the late effects of childhood cancer;
- Supporting families through the Pediatric Oncology Financial Assistant Program (POFAP);
- Assisting childhood cancer survivors to achieve their educational and career goals through the Successful Academic and Vocational Transition Initiative (SAVTI);
- A Conference and Education Events program providing frequent educational opportunities for health care professionals, including the annual POGO Symposium, Satellite Education Days and SAVTI Education Days; and
- An analytic centre, the POGO Research Unit (PRU), whose mandate is to: stimulate and promote pediatric oncology research; engage in collaborative multi-disciplinary investigations of childhood cancer; conduct research in the areas of tracking and forecasting within the childhood cancer population; undertake program evaluations (including utilization of health care resources); and assess the burden of illness in the form of long-term health status and health-related quality of life.

POGO provides a stimulating, educational environment for multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional policy development and analysis. It is linked via its health sciences based partners to five universities in Ontario and to the University of Toronto by a Chair in Childhood Cancer Control within the Faculty of Medicine. Please visit us at [www.pogo.ca](http://www.pogo.ca) for more information about POGO.

### POGO Research Unit (PRU)

The POGO Research Unit (PRU) undertakes research activities that focus on specific priorities (identified below) within the spectrum of childhood cancer control. The PRU has access to an extensive database maintained by POGO, encompassing a wide range of data elements referable to children diagnosed and treated within Ontario's academic health science centre based oncology units. In November 2005, POGO was designated as a 45(1) entity under the Protection of Personal Health Information Act (PHIPA, 2004). Under this legislation, POGO

is able to collect, use, and disclose personal health information for the purposes of “analysis or compiling of statistical information with respect to the management of, evaluation or monitoring of, the allocation of resources to or planning for all or part of the health system, including the delivery of services” (PHIPA, 2004).

The PRU promotes and actively sustains a collegial and supportive interdisciplinary environment that increases the quantity and quality of research in childhood cancer. These efforts improve communication and implementation of knowledge, resulting in informed policy development and enhanced delivery of care. The unit is committed to improving the care of children with cancer through research and evaluation of strategies that will diminish the morbidity and mortality associated with malignant diseases and their treatment. The PRU uses existing information and contributes to the generation of new knowledge in addressing this agenda.

Through current and future POGO research supported by the PRU, POGO achieves the following goals:

1. The creation of research expertise that can be utilized by investigators seeking consultation, advice and relevant expertise in developing research projects within the spectrum of childhood cancer control; and
2. The enhancement of research skills and output among all health disciplines in the childhood cancer community.

These goals are embodied in the following research areas:

#### A. Epidemiological Studies

- i. Epidemiology, including environmental and molecular interactions, especially relating to those cancers of increasing incidence in childhood (e.g. malignant lymphomas and brain tumors)
- ii. Disease distribution by cluster analysis
- iii. Trends analysis and projections, notably in regard to the anticipated increment in incidence and projections for resource utilization
- iv. Disease, treatment, system and sociological determinants of clinical outcomes (e.g. time to diagnosis).

#### B. Health Services Research

Including, but not limited to:

- i. Evaluation of innovative developments and determinants of success in health care delivery (e.g. "shared care")
- ii. Evaluation of practice guidelines
- iii. Studies of knowledge transfer – from science into care and policy, and from the professional to the public realms
- iv. Study of the application of new technologies to childhood cancer care.

C. Health Economics

Including, but not limited to:

- i. Investigation of existing methodologies for estimation of costs attributed to childhood cancer, and development and applications of new measures
- ii. Study of cost, cost effectiveness and cost benefit of differing forms of therapy for similar diseases
- iii. Studies of economic burden of illness on children and families
- iv. Comparison of care programs delivered in different settings (e.g. inpatient, outpatient and community).

D. Status of Survivors/Quality of Life

- i. Evaluation of short- and long-term health outcomes
- ii. Identification and study of interventions intended to alter long-term health status, including preventive strategies and health promotion interventions
- iii. Measurement of health status and health-related quality of life during and after therapy
- iv. Assessment of family coping and survivors' late effects
- v. Measurement of health status and health-related quality of life during and after therapy.

**Dissemination of Knowledge**

The PRU ensures a clear, regularly renewed and widely disseminated statement of current priorities in childhood cancer research and fellowship activities. To promote the prompt application of new information to the care of children with cancer, the PRU prepares regular accounts of progress in its areas of endeavour and presents these to the members of POGO, partners of the PRU, the scientific community and the general public through professional bodies, meetings, the media, POGO's website and annual reports.

**Fellowships**

To enhance the PRU's mandate, goals and research agenda, POGO has established two research fellowships.

**PhD/Post Doctoral Fellowship: Up to 2 fellowships of 1 or 2 years duration**

The PhD/Post Doctoral Fellowship will be awarded to either an applicant working toward a PhD or to a post doctoral research candidate, with a background in any of the relevant disciplines. While applicants may have training and/or experience in areas not directly related to POGO activities, they will be required to demonstrate relevance to pediatric oncology. The award includes a \$45,000 yearly salary and the ability to apply for \$5,000 in project-specific one-time operating support.

**Clinician Scholar Award: 1 fellowship of 1 or 2 years duration**

The Clinical Scholar Award is open to licensed clinicians and health practitioners of any discipline working in the field of pediatric oncology. Applicants may have limited research experience although they have a strong interest in research. The award includes a \$55,000 yearly salary and the ability to apply for \$5,000 in project-specific one-time operating support.

## Applicant Eligibility

While POGO Research Fellowships are open to all applicants, primary consideration will be given to Ontario citizens and landed immigrants within the province. Projects should be conducted in Ontario, although applicants do not have to be permanent residents of Ontario.

The primary supervisor should be on staff at a Canadian university, teaching hospital or equivalent institution.

## Expectations of Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Spend a minimum of 10% of their time on-site at the POGO office (although fellowships may be completed in appropriate Host Institutions). Where this poses a geographic or other problem, alternative arrangements or equivalent commitment must be negotiated;
- Report on the progress of their work regularly;
- Attend POGO meetings as required;
- Provide POGO with a brief (one page) update on the work related to the fellowship by the end of each fiscal year;
- Prepare and present a poster at the annual POGO Symposium or other POGO educational events as required;
- Acknowledge POGO on all outcomes (publications, presentations, posters, etc.) relating to the project;
- Provide copies of all publications resulting in whole or part from the POGO Research Fellowship to the PRU; and
- Submit a 2- to 3-Page Summary Report to the PRU within two months of the project's completion.

## Review Process

Applications will be adjudicated by the Fellowship Review Panel following a review by external individuals who have recognized expertise in the area of study and who are not in any way involved with the project.

The Fellowship Review Panel will evaluate the applications based on the following criteria:

- Scientific merit and methodological rigor of the proposal;
- Relevance to the goals and objectives of POGO and the PRU;
- Potential impact on children with cancer and their families (present and future);
- Ability of the applicant to carry out the research project in accordance with POGO's standards and expectations;
- Clinical/academic potential of the applicant; and
- Suitability of the proposed research environment, including supervisor.

## Contact

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