

# FIRST EXPOSURE

The University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health is launching a groundbreaking network dedicated to reproductive and infant health, thanks to a \$5 million investment from the Vohra Miller Foundation.

**First Exposure** will support research, education and knowledge mobilization activities on exposures to medications, plants and environmental substances, for pregnant individuals and their families.

[Watch the announcement here](#) 

Watch for the [First Exposure](#) website launch in **November 2023**.

[First Exposure](#) will offer evidence-informed recommendations on exposures and risks to pregnancy, lactation, and infant development.

Created for primary care practitioners and the public, [First Exposure](#) will provide easy-to-access, up-to-date information where and when you need it!

**MERIC GERTLER,  
PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

"[First Exposure](#) will draw from U of T's world-leading expertise in public health to improve the health of pregnant individuals, parents, and infants across Canada, especially members of equity-deserving populations. On behalf of the University of Toronto, I would like to thank Sabina Vohra-Miller, Craig Miller, and the Vohra Miller Foundation for their vision, leadership and generosity in making this very hopeful initiative possible."



## A DIGITAL INFORMATION RESOURCE FOR PREGNANCY AND LACTATION SAFETY

**First Exposure** will improve digital access to crucial health information, focussed on pregnancy, lactation and infant exposures to medications, environmental substances and plant medicines.

Safe access to medication and substance information is needed on pregnancy, lactation and early infancy. It can be a difficult time for pregnant individuals and parents looking for reliable information on potential risks posed to themselves and their infants by a variety of everyday substances such as medications, household products, and pollutants in the air or water. Getting accurate information can be an even greater challenge for those with mental illness, obesity, diabetes and chronic hypertension; or who face income and housing issues; or are in remote and underserved communities with fewer available resources to help guide their decision-making.

A recent stakeholder survey showed health professionals and community members want a made-in-Canada information resource to fill this need, in a way that is equitable, inclusive of diversity and addresses the importance of a range of user needs.

**First Exposure** will be this resource.

**First Exposure** will begin with a bilingual FR/EN platform to serve Ontario's 150,000 pregnant individuals, their families and health care providers. We're working with subject matter experts including physician specialists, midwives, nurses and pharmacists to mobilize interactive knowledge generated from the **First Exposure** toxicology database. In accordance rigorous privacy and security protocols, **First Exposure** plans to provide more interactive and personalized services and to offer resources to Canadian, and eventually, international audiences.

### INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESS (IDEA)

Co-governance with academics and community leaders and an ongoing community engagement process has informed the design and implementation of **First Exposure**.

**First Exposure** will follow progressive data sovereignty principles for populations seeking governance over the way their data is collected, used, and interpreted.

**First Exposure** has established standards of conduct for culturally safe knowledge mobilization and team conduct to support inclusion, access, privacy, and health literacy. The **First Exposure** database is an asset to be maintained within an ethical and rigorous research/privacy framework.

## MEET THE TEAM

Strategic direction and business support for First Exposure are provided by the Office of the Dean at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH). DLSPH-affiliated staff and community representatives are working together to design the digital platform, operationalize the program and ensure internal quality assurance. The team is responsible for summarizing scholarly and grey literature reviews on each drug or substance, before they are vetted, translated and approved for curation on the public facing website.

Each newsletter will introduce a few [First Exposure](#) team members.

### Executive Director



#### **Wendy Katherine, BA, RM (retired), MBA**

Wendy Katherine is among Ontario's first registered midwives, a reproductive and children's health strategist and Executive Director of First Exposure and Health Nexus, a bilingual non-profit health promotion organization committed to knowledge mobilization on pregnancy and parenting health.

### Medical Content Director



#### **Dr. Cindy Maxwell, MD, FRCSC, DABOM (Obesity Medicine)**

Dr. Cindy Maxwell is a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at University of Toronto and Vice President, Medical Affairs & System Transformation at Women's College Hospital. Dr. Maxwell co-leads N-ABL, the provincial network to support Black medical learners and is a past-President of the Black Physicians Association of Ontario.

### Grandmother's Leadership Circle



#### **Katsi Cook, PhD Honoris causa**

Katsi Cook is a Mohawk Elder, Midwife and Indigenous Environmental Health Scientist.



#### **Wendy Phillips**

Wendy is of the Bald Eagle Clan; She is Pot-ta-wat-to-me and Ojibwa and a proud member of Was-sauk-sing First Nation in the heart of the Muskokas. She is a keeper of the 8th Fire Prophecies, Keeper of the Ancient Thunderbird Calendar, Ceremonial Leader, Spiritual Educator, Cultural Innovator and Traditional Indigenous Healer.