

University of Toronto and Green Shield Canada Partner to Create Canada's Largest-Ever Dental Public Health Research Program

\$6.15M, Multi-Year Partnership Aims to Bridge the Gap on Delivering Dental Care

TORONTO, ONTARIO, NOVEMBER 24, 2020 – The University of Toronto and Green Shield Canada are teaming up to create the largest-ever dental public health service and research program in Canadian history.

Powered by a philanthropic gift of \$6.15 million, Green Shield Canada, through its Green Door Project, is funding the Green Shield Canada Clinic, to be located within the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Toronto. The clinic will offer cost-free care for up to 2000 families in the GTA who don't currently have access to regular dental care – and allow a multi-disciplinary team of researchers at the University of Toronto to investigate the long-term impacts of access to quality oral health care.

GREEN SHIELD CANADA: BRIDGING THE ORAL CARE GAP

"Despite strong evidence that oral health is directly linked to overall lifelong health, one-in-three Canadians have no coverage for dental care," explains Zahid Salman, president and CEO, Green Shield Canada. "We are committed to start the process of filling that gap by providing care to those in need and by funding programs like the Green Shield Canada Clinic. Of equal importance is the University of Toronto's generation of research-based evidence on the importance of oral health to overall physical, mental and financial health so that we can convince other public sector payors and private sector donors to join us in funding increased access over time", added Salman.

ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE IS A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE THAT REQUIRES RESEARCH

"We want to determine how access to dental care impacts individuals, their families, the healthcare system, and society overall. This research program is ultimately aimed at informing policy debates around the universal coverage of dental care in Canada, and maybe even around the world," explains Dr. Carlos Quiñonez, a dental public health specialist, associate professor and program director at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto.

"Oral health and access to oral health care are significant public health issues, not just dentistry-related issues, and need to be treated as such," says Dr. Quiñonez, adding that a team of University of Toronto researchers (representing a field of 13 subject matter areas) will study the long-term effect of regular oral care on stress, nutrition, inflammation, wellness, and chronic disease — as well as the overall impacts on the economy and health care system.

"Green Shield Canada believes that poor oral health can contribute to many serious physical, social, and financial problems, including infection, low self-esteem, barriers to employment and education, and more," explains David Willows, EVP, Innovation at Green Shield Canada. "Canadians in lower-income brackets are four times more likely to avoid seeing a dentist due to cost — and twice as likely to have worse oral care outcomes. Our partnership with the University of Toronto reflects our ongoing commitment to improving Canadians' access to quality health care — and to advancing the importance of dental public health," says Willows.

ABOUT THE GREEN DOOR PROJECT

The Green Door Project is on a mission to fill the gaps in our health care system by helping Canadians get access to the health care they need and deserve. Launched by Green Shield Canada in 2020, the Green Door Project partners with academic institutions and community health providers to provide no-cost care to those in need, and fund key research that will help us change the health care system – for good. Together, we’re building a better and healthier future for all. Join us. Visit greendoorproject.ca for more info.

ABOUT GREEN SHIELD CANADA (GSC)

GSC is Canada’s fourth-largest health and dental benefits provider, and is uniquely structured as a social enterprise with the purpose of making it easier for people to live their healthiest lives. From coast-to-coast, our service delivery includes drug, dental, extended health care, vision, hospital, and travel benefits for groups and individuals, as well as administration and benefits management services. Supported by outcomes-based sustainability strategies, advanced technology, and exceptional customer service, GSC creates innovative programs for nearly four million plan participants nationwide.

ABOUT THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Combining the rigours of biological and clinical research with a superior educational experience across a full range of undergraduate and graduate programs – with and without advanced specialty training – the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Toronto has earned an international reputation as a premier dental research and training facility in Canada. From the cutting-edge science of biomaterials and microbiology, to next-generation nanoparticle and stem cell therapies, to ground-breaking population and access-to-care studies, the mission of the Faculty of Dentistry is to shape the future of dentistry and promote optimal health by striving for integrity and excellence in all aspects of research, education and clinical practice.

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