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Less pain for the littlest ones

➤ MAKING A **REAL** DIFFERENCE IN **PEOPLE'S LIVES**

It was almost a decade ago that Dr. Marsha Campbell-Yeo returned to school to get her PhD. “I made a career change from clinician to researcher,” she says. “I wanted to make more of a global impact.”

The NSHRF has helped her do just that. “I have a long history with the Foundation,” Marsha notes. “It has been pivotal to my success as an early career researcher.”

An assistant professor in the School of Nursing, the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Dalhousie University, Marsha received a doctoral award from the NSHRF as she prepared to undertake her doctoral studies at McGill University in Montreal. Such early support is critical, Marsha says. “The NSHRF funding really did lay the foundation for all my future success. It makes you much more competitive at a national level.”

“None of this impact would be possible without the NSHRF. Their support catapulted me to the national and the international level. Now we are helping parents around the world help their children reduce pain.”

Today Marsha’s research is focused on how to help parents contribute to the care of their babies. Much of her work has been on non-pharmacological ways to reduce pain and distress in pre-term or sick newborns. Something as simple as holding one’s baby, skin-to-skin, can significantly reduce the pain infants feel when they undergo procedures such as being vaccinated. Now in the final year of a major study – the first of its kind in the world – involving 258 pre-term infants, Marsha says, “We will be able

to answer questions about the sustained impact of skin-to-skin care provided during early exposure to pain which we will examine at discharge and throughout the first two years of age.”

Those answers, she adds, will be available thanks to ongoing support from the Foundation. “This study would not have happened without partnership funding from the NSHRF.”

As a clinician scientist, Marsha has a strong commitment to ensuring that her research impacts patient care, she recently released a two-minute YouTube video for parents on strategies to manage their newborn baby’s pain. The Power of a Parent, which won first prize in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) video competition, helps parents understand the significance and impact of how “kangaroo care” – an infant in only a diaper against a parent’s bare chest during a procedure – can safely and effectively reduce pain. In less than six months, almost 83,000 people in 52 countries have watched the video. “People are using this as a means to help parents advocate for their babies,” says Marsha.

“None of this impact would be possible without the NSHRF,” she notes. “Their support catapulted me to the national and the international level. Now we are helping parents around the world help their children reduce pain.” ♦

1 In 10 babies are born pre-term and undergo on average 10 painful procedures per day, with less than half receiving little to no pain management.