

NEWS RELEASE

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Pre-eclampsia research clinic opens at BC Women's

VANCOUVER – Researchers at BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre have received \$98,421 funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for a pre-eclampsia research project and clinic that will help identify those women who may be predisposed to very high blood pressure during pregnancy.

"Pre-eclampsia is the number one cause of maternal deaths in North America," said Dr. Peter von Dadelszen, lead researcher. "It can also increase the risk of stroke, convulsions and temporary or even permanent liver damage." For baby it could mean a low birth weight, still birth or neonatal death.

"Pre-eclampsia is also the most common reason for deciding to have a very early cesarean section, even with the associated risk of complications that come with prematurity," said von Dadelszen. Ten to 25 per cent of preterm births are attributable to the mother's health being threatened by elevated blood pressure.

The funding will allow BC Women's to launch its Evaluating Maternal Markers of Acquired Risks for Pre-Eclampsia, or EMMA project. This project will provide an evaluation of risk of recurrence of pre-eclampsia for women who had either early-onset pre-eclampsia or severe pre-eclampsia in a previous pregnancy. Identifying women that are predisposed to pre-eclampsia early in their pregnancy will increase the likelihood that doctors can improve outcomes for both mom and baby.

"The EMMA project hopes to identify reliable predictors to tell us who is at risk of developing pre-eclampsia by looking at how the woman's body is responding to a baby growing in her womb," said von Dadelszen. "We think we'll find those predictors in blood samples taken between 10 and 13 weeks as well as between 15 and 20 weeks of pregnancy, which is when all women should have blood drawn for a triple marker screen."

The EMMA project will be integrated into a new clinical service being offered at BC Women's. The EMMA clinic hopes to identify 188 women who have early onset of pre-eclampsia or have had severe pre-eclampsia in a previous pregnancy and are again expecting. Women who are interested in participating can call (604) 875-2424, ext. 6359 for more information.

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Note to assignment editors: Dr. von Dadelszen and a patient are available for interviews.

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