

In wake of COVID-19, CABHI conference makes quick pivot to virtual



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As COVID-19 started to escalate globally and in Canada, the Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation (CABHI), powered by Baycrest, pivoted to deliver its annual What’s Next Canada conference as a global webinar. The decision to switch from an in-person event to an online platform was prompted by recommendations from the Toronto Region COVID-19 Healthcare Human Resources Working Group, and reports from the [World Health Organization](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

“The health and safety of all presenters and attendees, and Baycrest patients and residents, who are a particularly vulnerable population, is of paramount priority,” said CABHI’s Managing Director, Dr. Allison Sekuler, during her opening remarks on March 11.

As the world looks to virtual platforms to help combat the spread of COVID-19, What’s Next Canada 2020 stands as an example of how virtual technology can be used to create community, promote learning and build networks while maintaining public health and safety protocols.



According to the Longevity Economy Outlook, 1 in 6 people will be over the age of 65 in 2050.

Innovating with Seniors, for Seniors

On Wednesday March 11, What's Next Canada participants heard from some of the leading voices in the aging and brain health sector. The day was full of engaging speakers – from entrepreneurs and researchers to caregivers and people living with dementia.

The virtual conference platform offered a great solution for older adults to participate as experts on our **Lived Experience Panel**. Among the panelists were members of CABHI's [Seniors Advisory Panel](#) and advocates for people living with dementia. Some of the key takeaways of the panel included: decreasing the stigma around aging and dementia, understanding the burden on caregivers, and respecting the personhood and identity of older adults – especially those living with dementia.

The conference also featured an exciting global Pitch Competition and a special preview of *Sky Blossom*, a documentary about family caregivers created by [MSNBC](#) news anchor Richard Lui. The documentary is set to come out later this spring.

Dr. Jean Accius, Senior Vice President, [AARP](#) Global Thought Leadership, kicked off the conference with a keynote about the growing senior-led economy. According to the [Longevity Economy Outlook](#) report, the rapidly changing nature of the workplace requires a diverse workforce that involves seniors. Not only do seniors increase workplace productivity, they are also emerging as a significant spending power in today's economy.

Dr. Accius also identified key aging trends for 2020 and beyond. Trends show that:

- By 2050 one in six people in the world will be over the age of 65, which is significantly higher than one in 11 as reported in 2019^[i]
- In some countries, half of the children who are 10 years old today could live to be 104 years old^[ii]
- The number of workers aged 50 and older in the US has increased by 80% over the past 20 years

Additional Highlights from What's Next Canada Include:

- **Investor Panel: What Does It Take to Secure Funding?**, led by Mary Furlong, co-producer of



Jack York and Cruisin and Croonin' participants.

What's Next Canada and CEO of [Mary Furlong and Associates](#). Furlong was joined by panelists Sam Ifergan (Founder and Managing Partner, [iGan Partners](#)), Anna Han (Senior Lead, Industry Relations Portfolio Management, [Ontario Brain Institute](#)), and Mel Barsky (CABHI Director, Business Development, and former founding partner of Scotia Private Equity Investments) for a deep-dive discussion on securing funding from an investors' perspective.

- A candid discussion on closing the gap between research and innovation, spearheaded by Dr. Rosanne Aleong (Director Research, Translation and Innovation, [Baycrest](#).) Dr. Aleong was joined by an insightful roundup of panelists that included Dr. Ryan D'Arcy (Co-Founder, [HealthTech Connex](#)), Zayna Khayat (Futurist, [SE Health](#)), and George MacGinnis (Healthy Ageing Challenge Director, [UK Research and Innovation](#)). Each panelist shared their 5 big ideas to accelerate the integration of research and technology. Their ideas included: *people over products, pay-for-performance research contracts, innovation funding with strings* to name a few.
- **Living on Senior Planet: Community Through Technology**, an inspiring talk by Tom Kamber. In his session Kamber described the way his organization, [Older Adults Technology Services](#), is harnessing the power of technology to change the way we age.

- **Global Partnerships Panel: Tackling the Multinational Aging Challenge**, moderated by Mel Barsky, CABHI Director, Business Development. Barsky was joined by four panelists from around the world: Dr. Séamus O’Neill (CEO, [Northern Health Science Alliance](#), UK), Albert Chu (Innovation Consultant, [SOMPO Digital Lab](#), USA/Japan), Robby Spring (Trade Advisory Healthcare, [Royal Danish Consulate General](#)), and David Lindeman (Director Health, [CITRIS and the Banatao Institute](#), USA) to address the ways in which international partners can collaborate to share valuable experience in managing the global aging challenge.
- Jack York from [It’s Never 2 Late](#) teamed up with seniors from around the Baycrest community for a fun-filled video segment that involved karaoke and tons of laughs.

Real Solutions Making a Real Impact

We ended the day with an exciting rapid-fire Pitch Competition. Seven companies presented their innovative aging and brain health solutions to our panel of judges. Congratulations to [AudioCardio](#) for winning the 2020 CABHI Innovation Award, and [Rendever](#) for winning the People’s Choice Award!



2020 CABHI Pitch Competition

All seven companies received a combined total of ¥500,000 in prize money for participating, generously sponsored by [SOMPO Digital Lab](#).

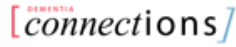
With its roster of insightful speakers and engaging presenters, What’s Next Canada 2020 proved to be a marketplace of ideas – one that will equip the Ontario, Canadian, and global aging and brain health ecosystem to envision a brighter future for older adults.

What’s Next Canada was co-produced by Mary Furlong & Associates, and sponsored by:





Marketing Partners:



[i] <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/ageing/>

[ii] Human Mortality Database