

Recognizing a Health Researcher who is **Changing the Face of New Brunswick**



Dr. Rima Azar

Dr. Azar is an Associate Professor and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) New Investigator Awardee in the Department of Psychology at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick (<http://www.mta.ca/faculty/science/psych/people/azar.html>).

Dr. Azar's field of research is Developmental Psychoneuroimmunology and her laboratory is called "Psychobiology of Stress and Health". She explores two lines of research. The first is called "the fetal programming of disease". It looks at maternal depressed and anxious mood and pro-inflammatory markers during pregnancy, fetal growth, and subsequent infant stress / immune responses. The second line of research aims to validate a salivary C-reactive protein assay in healthy youth and in the context of tobacco smoke exposure. The long-term goal, with both lines of research, is the prevention of coronary artery disease.

She is a M.Sc. and a Ph.D. graduate from the Université de Montréal, and did post-doctoral studies at the University of Toronto's Health Network. Over her young career, Dr. Azar has already raised almost \$1M in research funding, and has been a co-investigator on projects involving a further \$3M. She has trained and mentored over 13 undergraduate and graduate students. Dr. Azar has published over 22 articles, reports and abstracts, 10 media interviews and 15 presentations at national and international conferences.

Currently, Dr. Azar is heading up a clinical study examining the connection between depressive mood and anxiety in expectant mothers, inflammatory markers, and their newborn's low birth weight.



Dr. Azar says: "While this study will only look at the results during pregnancy, our long-term goal is to continue to work with these infants and examine whether there are any developmental cardiovascular health trends relating to our findings. We are in the early stages now but it is an exciting opportunity to work directly with expectant mothers and healthcare providers."

By recruiting talented researchers like Dr. Azar to New Brunswick, we are contributing to the global efforts to promote a healthy start to life for our children. We are also creating a robust research environment that will train our students to become the talented health researchers of tomorrow.

Please join us in saluting Dr. Rima Azar, whose work will have an impact on the health of New Brunswickers – and indeed the world – for years to come, through better understanding of the development of babies when they are in their mothers' wombs, which will affect the rest of their lives.

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(Health Research Scientist)

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