

**2025 Shaw Centre for Paediatric Excellence (SCPE)
Paediatric Catalyst Grant Awardees**



Principal Applicant: Dr. Gemma-Ann Benskin

Project title: Assessing Caregiver Burden among Caregivers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Barbados

Project Description: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, behaviour, and social interaction. Parents of children with ASD often face significant caregiving challenges that can lead to psychological, physical, social and financial strain — collectively known as "caregiver burden." In small island developing states (SIDS) such as Barbados, the burden may be magnified by

limited access to specialized services, financial constraints and cultural stigma. This project aims to explore and better understand the levels of caregiver burden experienced by parents of children with ASD in Barbados. It will identify the key factors that contribute to caregiver burden from the parents' perspective, describe the coping strategies and informal support systems caregivers rely on, and evaluate the availability and effectiveness of existing local support systems and services. The findings will be used to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve caregiver support and services. This research will support efforts to strengthen family resilience and mental health, advance equity in health and education to help benefit children with autism and generate data for policy development.



Principal Applicant: Dr. Diane Brathwaite

Project Title: Transition Intervention for Mental Health and Education in Diabetes (Type 1) - (TIME-D)

Project Description: The TIME-D project will explore pathways towards improved educational and mental health support for youth living with Type 1 Diabetes during their transition years, as they progress from paediatric care to a more autonomous model of adult care in Barbados. Information garnered from the two phases of the project will serve to inform long-term interventions and can be used as a model to deliver such interventions in different age

groups living with Type 1 Diabetes in Barbados and the broader Eastern Caribbean region.



Principal Applicant: Dr. Chantelle Browne-Farmer

Project Title: CareLink Kids: A Prototype Mobile App for Parents of Children with Chronic Illnesses

Project Description: Children living with chronic illnesses such as asthma, sickle cell disease, paediatric cancers, diabetes and epilepsy in Barbados often face complex care pathways requiring active home monitoring, timely medication adherence and early recognition of clinical deterioration. Parents are the frontline caregivers, yet many feel underprepared to track symptoms or identify early warning signs. Delayed visits to the hospital may occur when parents or guardians are attempting to manage symptoms at home but fail to recognize when symptoms have become more severe and poor outcomes

are possible. The project team aims to design, develop and pilot a culturally relevant, user-friendly mobile application called CareLink Kids. The app is intended to help parents and caregivers monitor, manage and respond to their child's chronic condition at home and support them in confidently seeking advanced medical care when needed. The project will include co-design workshops with parents, nurses, clinicians and youth to define the app's features, collaboration with local software developers to build the initial prototype and a pilot with 25 to 30 families caring for children with an initial chronic disease, likely sickle cell disease. The project will also evaluate usability, caregiver satisfaction and the app's potential impact on care-seeking behaviour.



Principal Applicant: Dr. Paula M. Lashley

Project title: From Clinics to Playgrounds: A Proposal for Reintroduction of Annual Diabetes Camps for Children and Adolescents with Counsellor Training

Project description: This project aims to reintroduce and sustain an annual diabetes education and wellness camp for children and adolescents in Barbados. The program will integrate the training of camp counsellors as ongoing peer support officers to ensure long-term sustainability, a peer support ecosystem and psychosocial support for youth living with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The project aims to create a model that moves beyond a

one-time intervention toward a self-perpetuating, community-anchored initiative.



Principal Applicant: Dr. Ashleigh Parris

Project Title: An Assessment of Maternal and Child Health Providers' Capacity to Support Breastfeeding and Breastfeeding Mothers in Barbados

Project Description: Despite recommendations of international health agencies that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, a 2024 study found that only 15 per cent of Barbadian mother-infant pairs met this target. Through this project, the research team aims to assess the current level of knowledge, attitudes and practices of maternal and child health practitioners toward breastfeeding and examine the perspectives of these workers regarding the provision of breastfeeding support in Barbados

in 2025. This information will be used to identify knowledge gaps and priority training areas to support the Barbados Ministry of Health and Wellness and The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in guiding policies and practices related to breastfeeding support across all health institutions.