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## **Inaugural Health Research Chair in Diabetes at the University of New Brunswick named**

FREDERICTON – An expert in population health and former analyst at the World Health Organization has been named to a \$1 million health research chair in diabetes at the University of New Brunswick.

Dr. Neeru Gupta becomes the first person to hold the Canadian Diabetes Association-New Brunswick Health Research Foundation Chair in Diabetes Research. She previously worked to improve public health systems, researching the effects of chronic illness such as diabetes on society, and helping to inform evidence-based public health policy both locally and internationally.

“Today, 3 million Canadians live with diabetes and many more are at high risk of developing the disease. New Brunswick faces the second-highest reported prevalence in the country. This poses long-term challenges for which we need work together to find solutions,” says Dr. Gupta. “I hope through health research chair in diabetes we will build a better understanding of the causes and effects of diabetes and improve prevention, treatment, and care services.”

“Through this role, I’ll be able to build on government and stakeholder health data resources, to tease out how and where we should invest to have the largest impact and improve population health,” says Dr. Gupta. “There are also many unanswered questions about the possible links between diabetes and other chronic illnesses. This role will allow us to further investigate those links through evidence, which could lead to improved understanding of how to promote better health and quality of life for all.”

In November 2015, the Canadian Diabetes Association and the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation announced they were contributing \$1 million to the creation of this chair. In addition to hosting the chair, UNB committed to establishing a tenure-track position for the researcher. Dr. Gupta is now also an associate professor of sociology at UNB.

“We are pleased to be a key partner for this new chair in diabetes research as New Brunswick has been an important innovator,” says Rick Blickstead, president and CEO with the Canadian Diabetes Association. “This funding partnership brings together organizations that see the value in understanding and identifying how we can better support people living with, or at risk of, diabetes.”

Dr. Bruno Battistini, president, CEO and scientific director of New Brunswick Health Research Foundation, says this work stands to make a difference in the fight against diabetes.

“We now have access to big data and we can connect past observations, the current situation and project and plan for the future. This chair will cross-analyze the biomedical and social determinants of health that lead to diabetes using available administrative datasets to enable best practices,” says Dr.

Battisitini.

New Brunswick Health Minister Victor Boudreau also applauds the appointment of Dr. Gupta to this crucial role. “Our government commends this partnership between the Canadian Diabetes Association, the University of New Brunswick, and the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation for the creation of the Health Research Chair in Diabetes,” he says. “Having this new chair in diabetes research will provide crucial information and tools to advance sound government policy to help New Brunswickers living with diabetes.”

Dr. David Burns, vice-president (research) at UNB, is pleased to be welcoming Dr. Gupta to UNB.

“We’re excited and fortunate to have Dr. Gupta join the UNB community,” says Dr. Burns. “Over the past few years, UNB has established quite a network of health researchers that are making considerable impacts on our communities and beyond. Dr. Gupta’s work will contribute significantly to this network by providing crucial information to practitioners and policymakers working to help Canadians living with diabetes.”

Dr. Gupta has held a number of positions in demographics and health care over her career, including two stints with the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. At the WHO, she worked to improve public health systems through the generation and sharing of research and best practices and encouraging evidence-based approaches to health policy and planning.

She has also served as a lecturer-researcher at her alma mater, the Université de Montréal, a consultant in population health and development to international agencies, and as a senior epidemiologist focused on trends in chronic illness, including diabetes.

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