

# RISING ABOVE



**Annual Report  
2016 - 2017**

**realize**

FOSTERING  
POSITIVE CHANGE  
FOR PEOPLE LIVING  
WITH HIV AND OTHER  
EPISODIC DISABILITIES

# Rise With Us

Please help **realize** to help others – and spread the word

Be a **realize** advocate and tell someone about our work

Send us a note about how involvement with **realize** has touched your life

Be a friend of **realize** and consider becoming a monthly donor

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POSITIVE CHANGE  
FOR PEOPLE LIVING  
WITH HIV AND OTHER  
EPISODIC DISABILITIES

(formerly CWGHR)

1240 Bay Street, Suite 600, Toronto, ON M5R 2A7, Canada

email: [info@realizecanada.org](mailto:info@realizecanada.org) | web: [www.realizecanada.org](http://www.realizecanada.org)

facebook: [HIVandRehab](https://www.facebook.com/HIVandRehab) | twitter: [@HIVandRehab](https://twitter.com/HIVandRehab)

Established 1998, Incorporated 2002

Charitable registration number 85699 5535 RR0001



# Message from the Co-Chairs

On September 14, 2016, to the sound of change dropping into a jar, we heard our Executive Director Tammy Yates and Board member Paul Curwin officially announce that the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR) was to be called **realize** from that point on. The sound of change dropping to a jar? We are serious about our name change at CWG...oops, **realize!** I guess we Co-Chairs will once again be dropping a coin in the jar!

Already having a proud history of innovation and excellence, and an international reputation for the work we do, we are now moving forward with **realize** as our new name, as it is more reflective of our current and future efforts towards improving the lives of people with HIV and other episodic disabilities.

The Board of Directors recognizes that much of our project work is reliant on grant monies received through the public sector, and that for **realize** to continue with other discretionary work requires us to continue to raise funds for these diverse purposes. In 2017, we will be adding a Fundraising and Engagement Officer to our team to assist in this effort.

Staff and board members are dedicated not only to **realize's** own projects and efforts, but also to those of our partners and members, both organizational and individual. Collaboration and partnership are wonderful words to use when reflecting on one's relationships. We appreciate and thank you for the many opportunities we have to work with all of you. Throughout this Annual Report, you will find stories and reports of the many ways our collective work and partnerships benefit so many who are involved in them.

The **realize** Board of Directors are an incredible group of individuals dedicated to guiding the organization, along with our Executive Director, in fulfilling its mission and goals by using our assets and resources in the best possible way. As Co-Chairs, we are honoured to work with them in providing leadership to the organization, and we thank them for all of their efforts.

During the past year, as part of our ongoing commitment to excellence, a Governance Committee was established to oversee regular reviews and evaluation of our Board procedures. This is only one example of a Committee where **realize** volunteers are involved, and we especially want to acknowledge and thank them for their assistance as they fill gaps and provide needed expertise at so many levels.

The next stage in our journey started with becoming realize last September. Much work has been identified as being necessary and to continue on with it requires the support of an organization who understands the work to be done and its importance. We know that **realize** is that organization and with your support, like the phoenix, we will continue to rise to meet the challenges ahead.

~Stéphanie Claivaz-Loranger and Dave Skitch  
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors



# Access to Rehabilitation

**Realize** continuously strives to create awareness around, and promote access to, rehabilitation for people living with HIV. This year we were pleased to facilitate the first role-emerging physiotherapy placement in Canada at a community-based HIV organization. This successful placement introduced two physiotherapy students to the world of HIV and rehabilitation, and people living with HIV to the role physiotherapy can play in their lives.

In March, we hosted our annual Think Tank: "**How can rehabilitation lead to better health for people living with, and vulnerable to, HIV? Thinking, Doing and Feeling Beyond 90-90-90**". Participants came from across Canada and included people with lived experience of HIV and/or other chronic health conditions, rehabilitation specialists, and researchers. Within the group it was acknowledged that rehabilitation has a role to play in enhancing the 90-90-90 treatment cascade. Based on the Think Tank discussions, 'ABCs' for next steps were developed:

**A**dvocate more strongly and more strategically for rehabilitation,

**B**e creative and think outside the box, and

**C**onnect the dots between organizations, and people to ensure that comprehensive, patient-centred care is provided to all people living with HIV.

Since the Think Tank, **realize** has started to incorporate the 'ABCs' into our access to rehabilitation initiatives.

*"Rehabilitation can lead to better health for PLWHIV by facilitating community development, and providing people with the skills they need to connect, feel included, and decrease loneliness."*  
-Think Tank Participant

# Mental Health

This year, **realize** has continued our work in affecting positive change for people living with HIV and experiencing mental health issues. Our new mental health course **Positive Outlook: Supporting Front-Line Workers in Helping Relationships** was piloted and is ready for broader dissemination. One of the valuable lessons learned through the development of this course is that there exists a large divide between the mental health and HIV sectors in Canada.

Although we know that people living with HIV experience higher levels of mental health co-morbidities, there are no current initiatives aimed at addressing the gap between the two sectors. **realize** intends to bridge the divide through the development of a national HIV and Mental Health Network that will bring together mental health professionals and HIV sector workers to learn from each other and move towards providing better care to people living with HIV.



# Workforce & Income Support

In 2016-2017, **realize** worked with community partners and researchers to deepen our understanding of the complex barriers to work faced by people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities.

Throughout the year, **realize** was an active partner in a coalition looking more closely at existing data on disability in Canada with the aim of uncovering the stories of people with episodic disabilities. The partnership developed methods to query the Canada Survey on Disabilities (CSD) and found that many people in Canada who identify as having a disability experience episodic disability. In fact, what we found was that **1,882,490 Canadians, or 82% of the adult population aged 18-64 with disabilities, has an episodic disability**. These numbers mean that episodic disability is much more prevalent than thought and suggest that our ways of thinking about disability as only static are outdated. Findings from this work were highlighted at "Managing Uncertainty: Living and Working with an Episodic Disability in Canada Mini-Symposium" organized by **realize** at the Centre for the Relief of Pain and Disability Conference in Vancouver.

This year, we also finalized a new soon-to-be-released online course for managers and supervisors on understanding and supporting employees living with episodic disabilities.

The concept of episodic disability continues to develop and evolve. **realize** remains committed to ensuring that people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities are visible and are reflected in the labour force and income security policies and programs developed in Canada.

## HIV and Aging

In 2016/2017, **realize** continued to work alongside community leaders and organizational partners, in particular the National Coordinating Committee on HIV and Aging, to propel the faces, needs and care preferences of older adults living with and vulnerable to HIV to the foreground of the positive aging movement in Canada and beyond.

This year we kicked off production of a series of short video vignettes on growing older with HIV. The snippets released so far shine a spotlight on three older people with a combined total of more than 70 years lived with HIV. **realize** will use these tools to build empathy and increase knowledge among service providers in home care, long term care and seniors' services whose support will be critical to people aging with HIV in the coming years.

**realize** also amplified the voices of people aging with HIV on the world stage. At AIDS 2016, **realize** and ACRIA co-hosted a satellite symposium titled Ageism, Aging and HIV: A Call to Action which attracted a sizeable crowd as it was one of only a handful of conference sessions focused on an aging demographic. At the heart of this event was a panel discussion featuring four older adults living with HIV from diverse geographic and cultural contexts who spoke of the people and things that provide them with hope and support, and their most daunting challenges as the first generation to age with HIV.

*"I am still a valuable person. I've got a life that I want to live. I've got children, I've got grandchildren and I want to grow old. I want to be part of their lives."*  
-Mary, 62 year old woman living with HIV



# realize

## Elisse Zack Award for Excellence in HIV and Rehabilitation

### 2016 Recipient: Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation

The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation is a non-profit organization that raises funds to support innovative health care at the Dr. Peter Centre in Metro Vancouver. The Dr. Peter Centre is British Columbia's only HIV day health program and 24-hour nursing care residence.



The only program of its kind in Canada, the Dr. Peter Centre is a leader in HIV care, particularly for individuals with multiple medical conditions and social barriers.

*"The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation has provided outstanding dedication, excellence and innovation towards advancing the field of HIV rehabilitation. Rosalind Baltzer Turje and Patrick McDougall dedicate countless hours to numerous research and educational initiatives in HIV and rehabilitation that goes above and beyond their overwhelmingly busy workload at the Dr. Peter Centre. This organization is a perfect example of an entity tirelessly working... to achieve the vision of collectively helping improve the lives of people living with HIV."*

-nomination letter of support

## Thank You

To our dedicated Board of Directors, staff, members, donors, and partners for contributing to our success.

To our funders including Theratechnologies Inc., the M-AC AIDS Fund and the Public Health Agency of Canada for making our work possible.