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**Dr. Elly Park Awarded ABJHI Postdoctoral Fellowship to Develop Best Practices for Managing Osteoarthritis in Patients with Obesity**

Elly Park has been awarded a two-year postdoctoral position with Alberta Bone and Joint Health Institute to develop best practices for managing osteoarthritis (OA) in individuals with obesity.

Dr. Park will develop innovative practices based on personalized medicine, a growing field in which treatment is tailored to the patient’s unique physical characteristics, personal health goals and desired quality of life. She will be under the supervision of Dr. Mary Forhan and Dr. Allyson Jones in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta.

“Our work with Alberta’s Bone and Joint Health Strategic Clinical Network has revealed growing interest in developing evidence-based methods of delivering care more effectively to osteoarthritis patients who have obesity,” Martin Ferguson-Pell, ABJHI Executive Director, said. “Through Dr. Park’s fully funded postdoctoral work, ABJHI will support the BJH SCN’s growing focus on improving public health care for this important and increasing patient group.”

**Dr. Elly Park**

An estimated one in eight adults in Alberta has OA. Individuals living with obesity are up to four times more likely to develop OA in the hips and knees, which are major load-bearing joints. Obesity and OA together present complex health challenges, including associated chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease as well as elevated risk of infection and subsequent surgery to repair problems with a hip or knee joint implant.

Dr. Park’s position is the third research fellowship funded by ABJHI using Music in Motion proceeds matched by Mitacs Accelerate. ABJHI has established postdoctoral positions to evaluate a new model of care for rheumatoid arthritis sufferers and to study the impact of obesity on care for patients with OA in the hips and knees.

Dr. Park holds a PhD in Rehabilitation Science and has clinical, research and academic experience. She has worked as an occupational therapist, conducted research in the areas of aging and dementia, autism, and learning disabilities, and has taught musculoskeletal function, assessment and intervention in the University of Alberta’s Occupational Therapy Program.

“I am looking forward to doing ground-breaking research that will build our understanding of the association between OA and obesity,” Dr. Park said. “This work has the potential to both improve outcomes for patients and reduce health care costs by enabling clinicians to identify and deliver treatment that is customized to the unique needs, characteristics and wishes of each individual patient,”

Dr. Park will develop methods of assessing individual patients’ ability to move around in their everyday environment, their strength and endurance, and the combination of genetic and environmental factors that influence their participation in everyday activities. “We will use this information to develop treatment strategies that will help patients achieve their personal goals for health and quality of life,” Dr. Park said.

ABJHI will lever the information in its large bone and joint data repository to advance the postdoctoral work. The secure repository has been built by ABJHI in partnership with physicians and Alberta Health Services and holds longitudinal data on more than 117,000 bone and joint patients in Alberta and 130,000 hip and knee replacement surgeries. It is the only bone and joint data repository in Canada that collects information along the patient journey from referral to treatment and long-term follow-up, giving researchers a valuable end-to-end picture of patient experience and outcomes.

“This new position signals further expansion of ABJHI’s role in research using the rich data repository and our expertise in analytics and knowledge transfer,” Dr. Ferguson-Pell said.