



## OUR RESEARCHERS | DR. VALERIA RAC

**Thank you for your generosity. Diabetes Canada is grateful to our donors for supporting critical research that will end diabetes.**

**Through your support, Dr. Valeria Rac, scientist and Health Technology Assessment Lead with the Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research, Peter Munk Cardiac Centre at the Toronto General Hospital Research Institute, University Health Network, is bringing us one step closer to better and more equitable health outcomes for people living with diabetes.**

In Canada, who you are impacts how healthy you'll be. This is health inequity – when your ethnic background, level of income or where you live affects your health outcomes. This is unfair and unjust.

Diabetic retinopathy is a serious complication of diabetes that, if untreated, can lead to blindness. In Canada, diabetic retinopathy accounts for 80% of blindness in people with diabetes, and is the leading cause of blindness in working-age individuals.

Early detection through regular screening effectively prevents vision loss by enabling earlier intervention and timely treatment. Unfortunately, not everyone living with diabetes can see an eye care professional regularly. Screening rates are lowest amongst vulnerable groups: this includes younger individuals, people living in large cities in low-income communities, newer immigrants, people living in rural and remote locations, and Indigenous communities. Depending on where a person lives in Canada, up to 60% of people living with diabetes have not had their eyes examined within one year. While it is recommended that all people with diabetes receive regular annual screening, many do not – resulting in preventable vision loss and blindness.

To help address these health inequities, Dr. Rac will make provincial health data on who needs diabetic retinal screening available to community-based doctors and nurses, filling a current gap in community health records. She and her team will examine whether this will help improve screening rates across the country, and will evaluate the effectiveness, challenges, and differences in eye care provision. Dr. Rac's aim is to lay the groundwork for the creation of an equitable national diabetic screening programme, that will help save the vision of more people living with diabetes.

**Your support will help Diabetes Canada fund this project and many more, leading to a more equitable, healthier future for people with diabetes.**