

## **Social Engagement, Employment, and Work Ability in People Living with Long COVID**

### Keynote Sessions

Faculty:

Douglas Gross

From the perspective of those with lived experience, symptoms of Long COVID have a fluctuating, rollercoaster-like impact on social engagement, employment, and work ability.

The fluctuating nature of Long COVID symptoms and the potential for post-exertional symptom exacerbation have important implications on work ability assessment, rehabilitation, and return to work planning. Safe rehabilitation services for people with Long COVID should provide multi-disciplinary, flexible, patient-centred approaches that avoid symptom exacerbation while collaborating closely with workplaces to identify suitable accommodated duties.

When navigating Long COVID services within the public health and workers' compensation systems, participants encounter barriers to access around stigma, appointment logistics, testing and 'normal' results, financial precarity, and affordability of services. Recent practice guidelines recommend that return-to-work action plans include prolonged and flexible phased return, with environmental modifications at work as needed based on an individualised workplace risk assessment of personal capabilities matched to work requirements.

### **About Our Speaker:**

Douglas Gross

Douglas Gross is a Professor, College of Health Sciences, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. His scholarship focuses on preventing work disability in people with physical and mental health disorders. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of clinical and public health interventions, investigating determinants of work disability and return to work, as well as developing and testing outcome measures and clinical assessment strategies. He has been involved in over 150 peer-reviewed publications and contributed to funded research projects totalling over \$10 million, including projects funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, WorkSafeBC, Alberta Labour and Immigration, the Workers' Compensation Boards of Alberta and Manitoba, among others. He is a Killam Laureate, McCalla Professor, and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation.

