

## **Up-and-Coming Calgary Researcher Earns Award for Development of Groundbreaking Tool to Help Athletes Overcome Sleep Disorders**

**Calgary, Alberta – EMBARGO TO NOVEMBER 21, 2017** – A University of Calgary researcher is being recognized for her groundbreaking work in developing a first-of-its-kind online tool that accurately identifies sleep disturbances in elite athletes and recommends effective treatment plans, ultimately improving their athletic performance.

The breakthrough work has earned Amy Bender, adjunct professor in the Department of Kinesiology, the Mitacs & NCR-IRAP Award for Commercialization, awarded by [Mitacs](#), a national, not-for-profit organization that partners companies, government and academia to promote Canadian research and training. The award will be presented at a ceremony in Ottawa on November 21.

Bender, 37 — who is collaborating with the Centre for Sleep and Human Performance (CHSP) — is set to launch the tool early next year via the CHSP website, with the goal of reaching a greater number of high-level athletes such as Olympians, professional sports teams, marathoners and triathletes globally.

Bender’s tool is the first sleep disorder technology to specifically target elite athletes. While sleep disorder screening programs exist for the general public, “they tend to over-identify athletes as having a sleep problem because they don’t take into consideration aspects specific to an athlete’s lifestyle,” she said. “Our technology targets issues related to athletes, such as travel and napping, and more accurately captures those athletes who really need help.”

Athletes respond to a questionnaire and based on their answers, a recommendation is automatically generated, outlining steps they need to take to improve their sleep patterns. Prior to commercialization, Bender’s tool was validated by a group of Team Canada Olympic athletes who were simultaneously seen by a sleep specialist.

“The goal of the study was to see how our recommendations compared to those of a professional, and we found really good results,” said Bender, whose work was funded in

part by Own the Podium. “We tested the athletes three months later to see if their sleep improved, and the answer was yes.”

According to CSHP Medical Director Dr. Charles Samuels, commercialization of the tool is expected to have a positive impact on the growth of the centre. “Amy’s work to develop a method for large-scale, automated screening of top athletes is unprecedented,” he explained.

The Mitacs & NCR-IRAP Award for Commercialization is presented to a Mitacs intern who has made a significant achievement in research and development innovation that is now available on the market or soon to be commercialized. Bender is one of six Mitacs award winners nationally, chosen from thousands of researchers who take part in Mitacs programs each year. The remaining five recipients were recognized for outstanding innovation, commercialization or exceptional leadership in other areas of research.

“Mitacs is passionate about creating a more innovative Canada through our partnerships with academia and industry worldwide,” said Alejandro Adem, Mitacs CEO and Scientific Director. “These award winners represent some of the best and brightest minds across our country whose work is at the leading edge of their respective fields, and Mitacs is honoured to provide a platform to help bring their research to fruition.”

For more information about the Mitacs awards and a full list of winners, visit [www.mitacs.ca](http://www.mitacs.ca).

### **About Mitacs**

Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization that has designed and delivered research and training programs in Canada for 17 years. Working with 60 universities, thousands of companies, and both federal and provincial governments, Mitacs builds partnerships that support industrial and social innovation in Canada. For more information on Mitacs, visit [www.mitacs.ca](http://www.mitacs.ca).

The Government of Canada, along with Alberta Innovates, the Government of British Columbia, Research Manitoba, the Government of New Brunswick, the Research & Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Nova Scotia, the Government of Ontario, the Government of Prince Edward Island, the

Government of Quebec, and the Government of Saskatchewan invest in Mitacs research.

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