

Sasakawa Nursing Fellowship Progress Report 2025

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PhD program

March 31, 2026

1. Introduction

This report will describe my first-year experiences studying as a first year PhD student at the University of British Columbia (UBC), School of Nursing (SON) in Canada. I will be focusing mainly on the academic curriculum and extracurricular activities, highlighting learning, and providing the progress of study abroad and prospects and goals for upcoming year.

2. Self-Introduction

As for my professional experiences, I have experience working as a registered nurse at the university hospital and as a public health nurse (PHN) at a health authority and the Regional Federation of Medical Care for the Elderly. Especially as a PHN, I was involved in planning preventive care initiatives, conducting home visits, and analyzing disease-related data. Working in preventive medicine from both clinical and administrative perspectives deepened my understanding of community health and strengthened my enthusiasm to reduce health disparities driven by social factors.

Reflecting on these experiences, my research focuses on advancing frailty identification and interventions for older adults to promote healthy aging. I am currently supervised by Dr. Sabrina Wong (primary supervisor) and Dr. Rubee Dev (co-supervisor), who bring extensive expertise in frailty, primary care, and women's health. Their mentorship provides a rich learning environment, equipping me with the critical knowledge necessary to successfully pursue my PhD journey.

3. Curriculum

The first year of the PhD program is focused on coursework at UBC, SON. The first term consisted of courses in Philosophy of Evidence, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and a doctoral seminar. In the second term, we were required to take advanced research methods and knowledge translation. Each course was taught by faculty members with strong expertise, offering both academic depth and practical insight. I would like to highlight a few of the classes that stood out to me the most.

Philosophy of Evidence: This class aimed to create fundamental philosophical understanding to explain and claim about knowledge, theory, and evidence regarding the research phenomena. It also introduced the philosophy of science and evidence in the context of nursing scholarship. The

learning activities provide an opportunity for critical appraisal of the ways in which scientific activity is used within the applied health sciences, with a particular emphasis on nursing as a practical discipline, and distinguishing it from other forms of scientific activity.

In my final course project, I explored the history of nursing in Japan and analyzed the epistemic and cultural conditions that have enabled or constrained theoretical development, in comparison with Western contexts. Through this work, I developed a critical and philosophical lens that has strengthened my ability to engage in nursing-specific scholarly inquiry and to advance the theoretical foundations of nursing research.

Advanced Research Method: This course addresses key issues in both quantitative and qualitative research and extends the discussion to the design and conceptual complexities of mixed methods research. It offers an integrated approach to understanding the relationships among research questions, study design, methodological choices, and the reporting of data from multiple sources. Reflecting on my practical experience as a public health nurse, I had long been interested in developing and implementing new health intervention programs tailored to communities with dynamic social structures. While the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle is commonly used to refine such programs, I often questioned how to adequately capture the complexity of real-world settings, implement interventions effectively, and rigorously evaluate their impact.

This course provided valuable insights into addressing these challenges. It emphasized methodological approaches suited to complex environmental and social phenomena characterized by diverse and multifaceted dynamics. It deepened my understanding on how to identify and conceptualize public health issues, disentangle relevant social structures and contributing factors, and design research that can be effectively applied in complex real-world contexts. These competencies are highly practical and increasingly essential for advancing public health nursing research and practice in Japan.

4. Extracurricular Activities

Since last September, I have been a member of the UBC Center for Health Services and Policy Research (CHSPR)¹ and also the BC Primary Health Care Research Network (BC-PHCRN)². Through engagement with students from a wide range of disciplines, including

computer science, medicine, population health, neuroscience, and kinesiology, I have broadened my research perspective and deepened my understanding of diverse public health issues.

In particular, I am currently involved in a research project validating the Canadian electronic Frailty Index (CAN-eFI). I also presented our work at the CHSPR 2026 conference alongside a nurse practitioner student on our team. Using a pan-Canadian dataset, we examined its construct validity and discriminatory performance through scientifically rigorous methods, and we are now preparing this work for publication.

The research environment surrounding me has been highly inclusive, inspirational, and motivating. I have also come to appreciate how combining a nursing perspective, especially one that considers patients' holistic health, can contribute meaningfully to addressing current public health challenges. In addition, I found that Japanese PHN ideas about cost-effectiveness and sustainable healthcare systems strongly resonate within the Canadian context, as both countries have socialized national health insurance systems.

I also recently began working as a research assistant under Dr. Wong on a new project, and I am very excited to collaborate with rigorous and impactful researchers, continue learning through this experience, and further expand my professional connections.

5. Connection and Relationships

Looking back on this past semester, I have had the opportunity to connect with many faculty members, researchers, and students both within and beyond UBC. Each of them has been generous, thoughtful, and highly knowledgeable, making my experience at UBC both vibrant and meaningful. I also feel fortunate to be part of a cohort with such inspiring and accomplished peers. This year, our cohort consists of six members, four of whom are international students, including myself. Each member brings a strong area of expertise and a clear vision for their future career, and our discussions consistently motivate and inspire me. Being surrounded by such passionate individuals makes me truly proud to be part of this program. One faculty

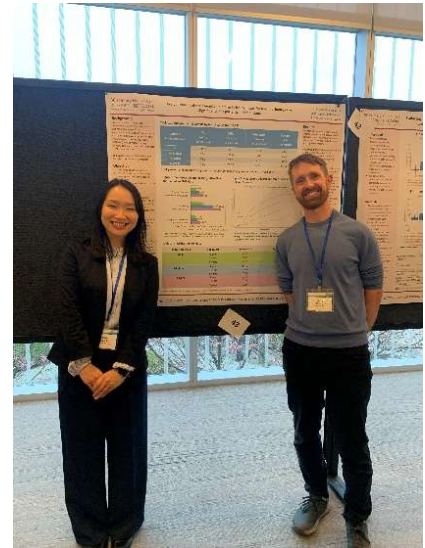


Figure 1: CHSPR 2026 poster conference

member mentioned that “the PhD journey is not easy, and that is why only about 1% of nurses in Canada hold a PhD.” This statement deeply resonated with me. Despite the challenges ahead, I am confident that we will be able to navigate this demanding journey together. While PhD training can sometimes feel isolated, given the intensive focus on reading and writing, we continue to support and encourage one another. I strongly believe that these relationships will help us persevere and ultimately grow into successful nursing scientists in the future.



Figure 2: 2025 SON PhD cohort and Dr. Helen Brown

6. Beyond First Year

All required coursework will be completed by April, after which I will begin preparing for my comprehensive examination. This examination consists of three components: an annotated bibliography, a written exam, and an oral exam. According to program guidelines, the comprehensive exam must be completed within two years of the program start date, and at least four months of preparation is recommended. Most senior students complete this milestone by the end of the second-year spring term, and I aim to achieve this on schedule.

7. Conclusion

My first year has provided me with a deep understanding of the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological rigor required in doctoral-level research. It has also helped me establish a solid philosophical foundation to guide my work. In addition, my extracurricular activities have strengthened my research skills, and the relationships I have built have become a strong source of motivation. This year was also a period of significant transition, during which I adapted to a new lifestyle, academic culture, and learning system. Building on this foundation, I anticipate that my second year will be more active and self-directed. I plan to engage more deeply in my research, take greater initiative in my learning, and continue developing my academic and professional competencies.

8. Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the generous financial support of the Sasakawa Health Foundation Scholarship, which has enabled me to pursue valuable learning opportunities throughout my studies.

9. References

1. Centre for Health Services and Policy Research. Accessed March 29, 2026. <https://chspr.ubc.ca/>
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