

Applying the scientist-practitioner model: A commentary on the University of Ottawa's Academic Day

Melissa A. Vloet, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Ottawa

With Contributions From:

Tiffany Pursoo and Katharine Filbert, Ph.D. Candidates, University of Ottawa

Source: Vloet, M.A. (2009). Applying the scientist-practitioner model: A commentary on the University of Ottawa's Academic Day. *Psynopsis: Canada's Psychology Newspaper*, 31(3), 17.

In May 2009, the University of Ottawa hosted an academic research day organized by the division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in collaboration with the University of Ottawa's School of Psychology and Faculty of Education.

The event showcased current research initiatives of several hospital- and community-based youth mental health programs, such as the use of the internet as an effective tool for clinical data management and exchange, and developing group interventions for youth with borderline personality disorder traits. By bringing together various community agencies, educators, hospital staff (including nurses, psychiatrists, and psychologists), academic personnel, scientific researchers, and graduate students, the organizers were able to facilitate the bridge between the aforementioned current research initiatives and their clinical application.

A small group of Clinical Psychology graduate students from the University of Ottawa attended the event which was marked by a spectacular workshop series. Lead by a prominent team of cross-appointed faculty and researchers, the students were given the opportunity to explore current literature, examine emerging theories (e.g., current issues in outcome measurement, bio-psychosocial models of

the teenage brain), and critically analyze ethical and methodological questions (all that and lunch for free!). In addition, they were challenged to generate ideas in terms of implementing emerging research findings within their current clinical practice. Equally important, students were encouraged to create interpersonal relationships with a wide variety of professionals involved in various aspects of the service delivery process. Speaking about the impact of the workshops, Clinical Psychology student Katharine Filbert commented that, "The workshop series provided an excellent forum for interdisciplinary communication. Through discussion of the importance of evidence-based treatment for child and adolescent depression, to important conceptual and measurement issues related to developmental trajectories and diagnosis, students and professionals in a variety of disciplines gained further insight into the growing area of child and adolescent mental health." Her colleague, Tiffany Pursoo, noted, "The presentations were each delivered in a way that spoke to individuals across educational, psychological and psychiatric disciplines. I was inspired by the clinical application possibilities of many of the treatment approaches and research findings discussed."

The academic conference also afforded students the opportunity to expand their

knowledge of research initiatives in youth mental health within several settings in the Ottawa area. During the course of the event, Dr. Mario Cappelli, Director of Mental Health Research at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute, spoke about student-lead initiatives in scientist-practitioner programs and referred to students as the rising stars of our research institutes. He urged us to become involved in collaborative research partnerships within the community, and touched on current career opportunities and funding sources available to psychology students. For students who were previously unfamiliar with research occurring outside the psychology department, this event provided access to the work of faculty who hold joint

positions and who are not always visible within the department due to external commitments.

This event challenged me to utilize emerging research in combination with best practice guidelines during service delivery, as outlined by presenter Dr. Barry Schneider in his examination of the literature surrounding adolescent depression. The workshop series also inspired me by reminding me that I am part of a greater research community and a wide group of service providers who can all offer me invaluable support and whose projects help affirm the importance and relevance of my own clinical and scientific work.