Health Section Poster Award Winners

from the CPA 2021 Convention

Written by Kailey DeLucry (Regina)

As the submission deadline for the 83rd CPA convention is quickly approaching, I want to bring your attention to four students who received special recognition for their great work at this past CPA convention. Gabrielle, Ashley, Brigitte, and Esther all received an award for *Best Poster Presentation*. I caught up with them to hear more about their research and future plans!

Gabrielle Gauthier-Gagné, BA

Presentation Title: Adolescent Self-Reported Daytime Sleepiness is Associated with Objective Measures of School Night Sleep Duration

Gabrielle Gauthier-Gagné

About myself:
I graduated with a B.A. in Psychology from McGill University in 2019 at which point I started working in Dr. Gruber's Attention, Behaviour and Sleep Laboratory. I started as a research assistant and became fascinated with our lab's work exploring adolescent sleep. Now, I am in my second semester as a MSc student in the Integrated Program in Neuroscience at McGill University.

About my research:
Our study examined the associations between adolescents' self-reported daytime sleepiness and objectively measured sleep. We became interested in this topic because adolescents often report high levels of daytime sleepiness, but there was a lack of data on what adolescents' daytime sleepiness tells us about their sleep. Further, we wanted to investigate whether the use of this sleepiness scale could be used as an accessible, inexpensive tool to identify adolescents who might benefit from sleep interventions.

What's next:
Currently, I am working on my thesis project investigating the relationship between adolescents' light exposure and sleep patterns.
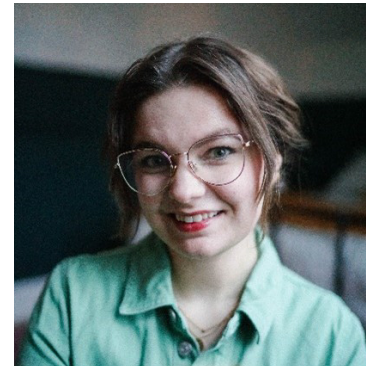
Ashley Balsom, MA

Presentation Title: Distress and Coping Among Women with Infertility Attempting to Conceive Without Medical Assistance

Ashley Balsom

About myself:

I am a second-year PhD student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Regina under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Gordon of the Women's Mental Health Research Unit. I became interested in this area of research during my undergraduate training. I had the opportunity to work in the Family Resilience Laboratory at Memorial University of Newfoundland under the supervision of Dr. Julie Gosselin that helped spark my interest in reproductive health. During this time, I was also diagnosed with Endometriosis which can be impactful to infertility that helped guide my research interests.

About my research:

My CPA poster focused on the findings of my master's thesis. From previous research, we knew that individuals of marginalized genders who were attempting to conceive often experience a disproportionate amount of distress compared to their partners. Much of what we know about these individuals with infertility has come from research focusing on women undergoing medically assisted reproduction, which only represents a small proportion of individuals attempting to conceive. We wanted to learn more about how women cope during a cycle of attempting to conceive without medical assistance. We monitored women throughout one menstrual cycle of actively attempting to conceive and the participants completed mood ratings, a coping assessment, and reported their use of fertility monitoring techniques every second day. We found that engaging in behavioural activation (i.e., activities unrelated to conceiving), active coping (e.g., seeking information, problem-solving), and trying to be more optimistic predicted less distress. Surprisingly, social support seeking was associated with greater anxiety and lower emotional quality of life. Day-to-day fertility confirming techniques (e.g., basal body temperature checks, cervical mucus monitoring) were associated with greater anxiety. These findings have important implications for future clinical interventions targeting infertility-related distress.

What's next:

I am currently working on my dissertation proposal hoping to defend it during the next few months. I'm interested in adapting Acceptance and Commitment Therapy as a treatment approach for individuals experiencing distress related to infertility. For my PhD project, we will work with a panel of women with lived experiences of infertility to help inform the intervention content. My dissertation will consist of two studies, first a pilot study to explore the intervention and make adjustments before starting study two which will be a randomized control trial exploring the efficacy of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for individuals with infertility.

Brigitte Voisard, BA

Presentation Title: Motivational Communication for Physicians: Preliminary Results of An Ongoing Integrated Knowledge Transfer Study

About myself:
I am a third-year PhD/DPsy student in clinical psychology at Université du Québec à Montréal. Before undergoing studies in psychology, I completed a bachelor's degree in creative writing. Psychology presented itself as the logical next step in the exploration of our inner lives!

Brigitte Voisard

About my research:
This poster describes the protocol and advances in the development of a training program in Motivational Communication (MC) for physicians. This communication style is used to engage the patient towards changes in health behaviours (e.g.: augmenting physical activity, adhering to medication, accepting vaccinations, etc.) by fostering motivation and self-efficacy towards change. Through its impact on patient behaviour, the use of MC can have a marked impact in the prevention and management of chronic diseases.

However, too often, the development of behavioural interventions is rushed, leading to disappointing or obscure results in efficacy trials. This poster describes the ways we address this, showcasing a practical application of the Obesity Related Behavioural Intervention Trials (ORBIT) model. This model emphasizes the impact of early phases of intervention development on the quality of the intervention package. We are using this model jointly with integrated knowledge translation (iKT) processes by engaging stakeholders in every phase of program development.

I was drawn to this project by its highly practical objectives, rigorous methodology and potential beneficial impact on both physicians and patients. On a personal note, experiences within the medical system have long made me sensitive to the need for improved communication between patients and physician, which has undoubtedly influenced my attraction to this project.

What's Next:
Using an iterative optimization qualitative model, we will finesse our training program using up to four waves of stakeholder feedback. This phase will result in a complete intervention package that will be ready to undergo a proof-of-concept study, followed by efficacy testing. The development of the MOTIVATOR program is at the centre of my PhD dissertation, and of my schedule! In parallel, I am also continuing course work as I prepare towards upcoming clinical internships.

Esther Briner, MA

Presentation Title: Mortality Trajectories by Non-Communicative Diseases Over Time: A First Step Towards Isolating Associated Psychological Risk Factors

About myself:
I am a graduate researcher and [PhD candidate in health psychology](#) under the supervision of Dr. Rachel Burns in the Health Psychology Lab at Carleton University.

About my research:
Given that mental health and well-being are central to reducing the global burden of non-communicative diseases (NCDs), identifying patterns of death by NCDs in the population is an important first step towards isolating the psychological factors that are associated with NCD-caused mortality. Using publicly available longitudinal data from the World Health Organization for 37 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, I conducted latent class growth modeling to identify groups of countries that have similar outcome patterns of NCD-mortality. Consistent with expectations, distinct outcome patterns of NCD-caused mortality were identified over time.

Esther Briner

What's Next:
We know that an important way to control NCDs (or death by NCDs) is to focus on reducing the risk factors associated with these diseases. Although prior research has linked unfavourable biological, social, and behavioural factors with NCDs, less is known about the relation between psychological factors and NCDs. I wondered how psychological factors might be associated with, or predict, patterns of death by NCDs over time. Next steps will explore factors, such as emotions, attitudes, and life satisfaction, that might be associated with distinct patterns of NCD-caused mortality over time. I am currently working on a study that extends these ideas; exploring the relationship between life satisfaction and trajectories by NCD-caused mortality at three time points over ten years.