

Student Member Spotlight

Four students excited to share their work at the upcoming CPA convention!

Written by Ayesha Azam (Regina)

It's that time of year again: the CPA annual convention is quickly approaching! And with so many amazing presenters lined up, it's sure to be a great event! We caught up with four students who are scheduled to present – read on to hear a bit about who they are and their exciting work. And, of course, be sure to mark your calendars and check out their presentations!

Esther L. Briner, M.A.

Presentation Title: Mortality trajectories by non-communicative diseases over time: A first step towards isolating associated psychological risk factors

Presentation Format: Poster

Date/ Time: Friday June 11, 11 a.m. EST (Poster Session E)

Please tell me a little about yourself.

I am a graduate researcher specializing in health and developmental psychology and fourth year PhD Candidate under the supervision of Dr. Rachel Burns in the Health Psychology Lab at Carleton University (<https://carleton.ca/healthpsychlab>).

My research interests focus on individual, psychological, and social determinants of health and health behaviours. I am also interested in understanding health at the population-level and identifying factors that promote resilience and improve health and psychological wellbeing across the lifespan.

Without giving too much away, what's your conference presentation about?

This year at CPA 2021, I will present results from a study that identified distinct trajectories of non-communicative disease (NCD) caused mortality among 37 countries over time and discuss next steps in exploring the psychological risk factors associated with NCD-caused mortality.

What are your long-term career aspirations?

I am interested in pursuing a research-oriented career where I can apply what I've learned through my studies in psychology.



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How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your life as a student? What's been the most challenging part? Have there been any unanticipated positives?

Aside from the disruptions to in-person activities, research, and training that are central to graduate student life, a major challenge for me has been finding alternative methods of data collection; specifically, ones that avoid in-person interactions by using mediated forms to achieve similar ends. Overall, a priority for me is to achieve my graduate program milestones in a timely manner despite these added barriers to navigate.

What are you most looking forward to doing once the pandemic is over?

I'm looking forward to attending the next CPA Convention in person!

Vincent Gosselin Boucher, MSc

Titre de présentation: The impact of COVID-19 on mental health around the world: results from the iCARE study

Format de présentation: Snapshot (présentation de 5 minutes)
Date/Heure: Publié lundi le 7 juin à 10:00 HNE

Parlez-moi un peu de vous.

Je m'appelle Vincent Gosselin Boucher, candidat au doctorat en psychologie à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), supervisé par Dre Kim L. Lavoie, professeur à l'UQAM et codirectrice du Centre de médecine comportementale de Montréal (CMM) au CIUSSS du Nord de l'île de Montréal. Je suis titulaire d'un baccalauréat en psychologie (2014) et d'une maîtrise en kinanthropologie de l'UQAM. Mon projet doctoral porte sur le développement d'un nouvel outil d'évaluation en ligne pour évaluer les compétences en communication motivationnelle chez les médecins. En plus de mes implications en recherche, j'ai la chance de m'impliquer dans l'exécutif de la section Psychologie de la santé et médecine comportementale de la SCP en tant que représentante des étudiants et des communications (depuis 2017), ainsi que de m'impliquer comme représentant des communications de Sciences 101 - Vulgarisation UQAM (depuis 2019) et comme président du conseil d'administration de la Coop UQAM (depuis 2018). Sans mettre de côté mon implication, je compte commencer un stage post-doctoral à l'automne 2021.

Sans trop en dire, quel est le sujet de votre présentation à la conférence ?

Je suis fier de présenter certains des résultats de l'étude iCARE (International COVID-19 Awareness and Responses Evaluation Study). Pour cette présentation, nous voulions identifier l'impact de la COVID-19 sur la santé mentale dans le monde entre mai et décembre 2020 auprès de plus de 28 000 personnes. En résumé, à l'aide d'un échantillon de convenance mondial, les répondants de moins de 25 ans ont déclaré vivre plus de détresse psychologique (c'est-à-dire se sentir plus anxieux,

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Vincent Gosselin Boucher

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irritable, isolé, déprimé et méfiant) et avaient de moins bonnes habitudes de vie (c'est-à-dire qu'ils.elles étaient moins actif.ves, avec une alimentation moins saine et utilisaient plus de drogues et d'alcool) par rapport à ceux de plus de 25 ans.

Comment cette recherche est-elle liée à d'autres recherches en cours ou à des recherches futures que vous envisagez de mener ?

Lorsque la pandémie de COVID-19 a frappé le monde en mars 2020, le laboratoire MBMC a lancé l'étude iCARE (<https://mbmc-cmcm.ca/covid19/>), une étude internationale en plusieurs vagues sur la sensibilisation du public, ses attitudes, ses préoccupations et ses réponses comportementales aux politiques de santé publique autour de la COVID-19. Elle implique la collaboration de plus de 200 chercheurs internationaux issus de 40 pays. J'ai joué un rôle actif dans ce projet en aidant à créer les enquêtes électroniques (en 36 langues) et à gérer la plateforme en ligne. En travaillant au sein d'une équipe de santé multidisciplinaire, l'impact de la COVID-19 s'est fait sentir, affectant la santé (physique et mentale) des patients, des professionnels et de la population générale dans le monde entier, et ce de plusieurs manières. Comme je travaille avec une équipe pour développer des interventions visant à modifier les comportements dans le cadre de la gestion des maladies chroniques, j'ai été fortement impliquée dans le projet iCARE. Nous découvrons de jour en jour les effets pervers de ce virus et ces effets de la COVID-19 peuvent durer dans le temps (soyons réalistes). Je trouve important de continuer à travailler avec les professionnels de la santé pour optimiser les soins et tenter d'intervenir sur leurs impacts (par exemple, la détresse psychologique) et leurs attitudes (par exemple, les comportements de santé, la vaccination). Ainsi, le cœur de notre système de soins de santé (c'est-à-dire les professionnels de la santé) doit être en bonne santé pour pouvoir aider et intervenir auprès des patients. C'est ce que nous souhaitons tous.



Quelles sont vos aspirations professionnelles à long terme ?

Après avoir terminé mes stages postdoctoraux, j'aimerais obtenir un poste de professeur dans une université. Mon objectif est de continuer à intégrer cette passion et ce leadership dans ma carrière de chercheur et de futur professeur. Je veux continuer à innover dans la recherche, en trouvant de nouveaux outils pour optimiser la communication, l'enseignement et la communication scientifique. Je veux découvrir et collaborer avec des réseaux de chercheurs, en créant des écosystèmes de recherche stimulants pour moi-même et les futurs étudiants que j'aurai la chance d'encadrer.

Comment la pandémie de COVID-19 a-t-elle affecté votre vie d'étudiant ? Quel a été l'aspect le plus difficile ? Y a-t-il eu des points positifs inattendus ?

Ce qui m'a le plus affecté, ce sont les liens sociaux, avec ma famille, mes amis, les autres étudiants et les chercheurs que je côtoyais au quotidien. Étant à la fin de mon parcours de doctorat, je n'avais plus besoin d'aller à l'université, mais avant la pandémie, j'y allais pour voir d'autres étudiants et continuer à m'impliquer dans la communauté étudiante et universitaire.

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Mon plus grand défi pendant la pandémie est de garder un sens à ce que je fais en tant qu'étudiant tout en me sentant impuissant pour ma famille et mes amis. Lorsque vous voyez le monde s'arrêter pendant plusieurs mois, se mobiliser et collaborer, des questions existentialistes se posent. Il faut s'adapter et apprendre à travailler et à socialiser avec de nouvelles règles, dans ce nouveau monde.

Je crois que ce sont précisément ces moments de questionnement, avec moi-même, qui ont été pour moi les points positifs inattendus de la pandémie du COVID-19. Vivant seule, j'ai eu l'occasion de lire, d'écrire pour exprimer ce que je vivais et l'impact de la situation sur mon quotidien et celui de mon entourage. Ce n'est pas toujours facile, mais c'est clairement une période importante dont il faut se souvenir et dont il faut tirer des leçons.

Qu'avez-vous le plus hâte de faire une fois la pandémie terminée ?

Je suis optimiste quant à l'existence d'une post-pandémie, mais je suis réaliste quant au fait que ce ne sera pas un retour à la normale. Je pense que ce sont les choses simples (pour moi) qui me manquent le plus, comme revoir ma famille et mes amis sans inquiétude ni crainte. Également, il y a cette vie de quartier, ces moments de lecture et d'écriture dans les cafés que j'ai bien hâte de redécouvrir. Bien sûr, il y a la possibilité de voyager, que j'espère retrouver. Néanmoins, je crois (et j'espère) que nous devons tirer des leçons de cette situation extraordinaire.

Ashley Balsom, M.A.

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

Date/Time: Friday June 11, 11:00 a.m. EST (Poster session E)

Presentation Format: Poster

Please tell me a little about yourself.

My name is Ashley Balsom. I am a first 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.



Ashley Balsom

Without giving too much away, what's your conference presentation about?

My CPA poster will be outlining the findings from master's thesis. We know from previous research that infertility is disproportionately associated with distress in women yet there has been little resource focusing on the relationships between coping strategies and fertility-monitoring techniques and how they may be associated with distress in women 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 had both expected and unexpected findings for this project that I will describe in more detail during my poster presentation.

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How does this research relate to future research you plan to do?

My research experience thus far has largely focused on infertility and the experience of individuals experiencing infertility. I had the opportunity to help an honours student in my lab (the Women's Mental Health Research Unit) collect data that served as their honours thesis and became a pilot study for my master's thesis. This pilot study was published in 2020 and directly informed the methodology used for my master's thesis for which my CPA poster describes. Since submitting my abstract for CPA my master's thesis has also been published. Both of these projects have been influential in directing my doctoral dissertation. My master's thesis explored coping in women attempting to conceive and recent research has highlighted a lack of efficacious evidence-based interventions for individuals experiencing infertility, I have thus decided to explore Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for individuals actively attempting to conceive which has yet to be systematically explored in North America.

What are your long-term career aspirations?

When I originally entered into the clinical program at the University of Regina, I was certain I wanted to be a clinician, but the more time I spent engaged in clinically meaningful research that I was passionate about, the more I fell in love with research. I have focused much of my research thus far in the field of infertility and am hoping to expand this area in the future to have three identified areas of research (i.e., infertility, relationships, reproductive events). My current career plan is to apply for a post-doctorate position following the completion of residency and then begin my journey into academia.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your life as a student? What's been the most challenging part? Have there been any unanticipated positives?

As I was in California for a conference when the international pandemic was first declared, I found that transition to working from home a little jarring. When I arrived back in Canada, I immediately went into quarantine and had to adjust to life without being able to leave my house. I can remember my first day being allowed to go for a walk outside and how grateful I felt in that moment for fresh air. Although I am now able to leave my house more regularly, I still find some days working from home and being a grad student in a pandemic continues to be difficult. I think one of the best skills I have learned over the past year is self-compassion and that it is okay to take some time for yourself. One of the unanticipated positives I have found from COVID has been the accessibility of conferences. Being a grad student and someone who lives with a chronic pain condition attending conferences has always been relatively difficult. With conferences moving remote I have been able to attend more conferences with less financial burden and since I have been presenting from my own home, I have been able to "attend" conferences even when experiencing a flare-up. I will admit I do miss some of the personal aspects of making connections at in-person conferences the accessibility of virtual conferences has been a personal unanticipated positive.

What are you most looking forward to doing once the pandemic is over?

The best part of grad school is the bonds you make with your fellow students, and with the presence of variants and many of my friends being on clinical practica, it has been a long time since we have been able to be in the same room. I most look forward to drinking a glass of wine and loudly singing Taylor Swift or One Direction Karaoke with my pals.

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Odessa Grimard, B.Sc.

Presentation Title: Factors predicting engagement of veterans and non-veterans with an online weight loss intervention

Date/Time: Available as of June 7th at 10:00 a.m. EST

Presentation Format: Snapshot (5-minute presentation)



Odessa Grimard

Please tell me a little about yourself.

I am a recent graduate with a B.Sc First Class Honours in Psychology from McGill University. Over the past year, I have been a part of Dr. Bärbel Knäuper's Health Psychology Lab, as well as a volunteer for the McGill Comprehensive Health Improvement Program's veteran health intervention project, MissionVAV. This summer, I am continuing to volunteer for both groups, and I hope to keep working with them as I start my medical degree in September.

Without giving too much away, what's your conference presentation about?

My title says it all, so I have no worries about giving it away! I examined veterans' and non-veterans' engagement in a weight loss intervention provided by MissionVAV. I found little difference between the two groups, and also a few interesting trends with implications for future online weight loss interventions. These findings are important to the weight loss intervention itself, as it has implications for its next iterations. They are also important for other wellness interventions which are being developed at MissionVAV.

What are your long-term career aspirations?

I'll be starting my studies in Medicine in September. I don't quite know what kind of doctor I want to become, but I do know that many of health psychology's findings will be useful in my practice of medicine no matter what path I choose. I hope to work clinically for a time, and later go into health policy.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your life as a student? What's been the most challenging part? Have there been any unanticipated positives?

To me, one of the biggest challenges was the loss of community. So much of my love of academics and Psychology has to do with the communities that form from it: study groups, lab teams, small cohorts, etc. COVID-19 made it much harder to find, create and sustain those groups, though I was lucky to find myself in teams where people tried their best, with a fair degree of success. One unanticipated positive, however, was that being online allowed me to do so much more that being in-person would. I am chronically ill, and being able to reallocate the energy I'd normally spend running from class to event to class on campus to my research and wellbeing really allowed me to flourish.

What are you most looking forward to doing once the pandemic is over?

I'm looking forward to sharing a meal with my grandmother, hosting gatherings with friends (in person! with hugs & cookies!), and lab meetings with less 'unstable internet' notifications.