



Health Psychology Research Funded by CIHR's Fall 2020 Project Grant Competition



Written by Minhaj Mussawar (Regina)

The COVID-19 pandemic may still be negatively impacting research productivity across the country but it didn't stop these four health psychology research teams from bringing home the bacon in the latest CIHR competition! Here's a sneak peek at their exciting work.

Developing and evaluating an online intervention to improve the uptake and maintenance of protective behaviours against COVID-19 among young adults in Canada

Principal Investigator: Dr. Tavis Campbell

Institution: University of Calgary

As COVID-19 continues to affect millions of lives across the globe, public health measures such as face masks and social distancing have continuously been reinforced. Yet while these measures are effective, they can be difficult to adhere to for a long time, eliciting fatigue and even frustration in people. As part of this study, Dr. Tavis Campbell from the University of Calgary is aiming to create a program designed to motivate people to physically distance and wear masks. Using a single-session, interactive online platform, the program will use participants' responses to certain questions to provide feedback that focuses on tying achievable protective behaviours to greater societal goals while also guiding them to consider other potential sources of motivation using thought-provoking questions. Given that fear-based approaches alone have poor outcomes and are even counter-productive for promoting sustained behaviour changes, Dr. Campbell hopes that this program will be more effective at increasing motivation for physical distancing and mask-wearing. Although the targeted population is young people who are less likely to adhere to public health recommendations, once fully developed, the program can be used to target other segments of the population and focus on other COVID-19-related issues as they emerge, such as vaccine hesitancy and treatment decision-making.



(cont'd)

Dr. Tavis Campbell



A Mindfulness-Based Intervention to Improve CPAP Adherence in Adolescents with Obstructive Sleep Apnea - A Randomized Controlled Trial

Principal Investigators: Drs. Indra Narang and Sara Ahola Kohut

Institutions: University of Toronto, Hospital for Sick Kids

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) occurs when a person stops breathing involuntarily for periods of time during their sleep and is more common in people with co-existing medical conditions and obesity. The primary method of treatment for OSA beyond surgery is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). CPAP is highly efficacious yet adherence rates are as low as 50% in adolescents due to discomfort with the equipment and the need to wear CPAP every night during sleep. Consequently, teenagers may enter adulthood with untreated OSA, which can have negative impacts on their mental and physical health. In an effort to improve CPAP adherence rates in adolescence, Drs. Indra Narang and Sara Kohut have developed and implemented a mindfulness program for adolescents with OSA consisting of eight online sessions over 4 weeks that adolescents can participate in while they use their CPAP. It is anticipated that mindfulness will improve CPAP adherence and the results from this study will be used to develop an app version of the intervention. The hope is that mindfulness will not only improve adherence rates, but will also have positive effects on the mental health of adolescents and young adults suffering from obstructive sleep apnea.



Drs. Indra Narang (left) and Sara Ahola Kohut (right)

From the Heart: Canadian Women's Lived Experiences of Heart Failure

Principal Investigators: Drs. Susan Law, Jillianne Code and Mark Smilovitch

Institutions: University of British Columbia, Trillium



Drs. Susan Law (left), Mark Smilovitch (centre) and Jillianne Code (right)

Heart failure research has largely been conducted in men, resulting in a poor understanding of women's unique experiences with the condition. Consequently, the outcomes for heart failure are less positive for women compared to men. A research team including Drs. Susan Law (qualitative researcher), Jillianne Code (researcher, heart failure patient and President of Heartlife Canada) and Mark Smilovitch (cardiologist) aims to improve the experiences of women with heart failure by gathering personal stories from women across Canada and creating an online resource that will feature these stories. Women primarily from Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Nova Scotia will be recruited from national patient groups, social



media advertisements and caregiver organisations, with the goal of providing support to other women and to healthcare teams in making better decisions regarding their care. The approach adopted by Dr. Law and team was initially developed at the University of Oxford. This project is part of a novel Canadian version for health experiences research (see: www.healthexperiences.ca) and will centre on the different roles in women's lives and how they may affect their lived experiences and outcomes of heart failure. In a follow-up to the development of the online resource, the researchers will evaluate the usefulness of the website and share findings amongst other women, healthcare teams and at conferences. The researchers hope that these study findings can be used to expose knowledge gaps where better evidence is needed, as we all as inform clinicians and healthcare teams on how to improve care for women living with heart failure.

The Association between COVID-19-related Attitudes, Concerns and Behaviours in Relation to Public Health Policies: A behavioural science approach to optimising policy strategies to improve health, economic and quality of life outcomes (the iCARE Study)

Principal Investigators: Drs. Kim Lavoie and Simon Bacon

Institutions: The Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux du Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal (CIUSSS-NIM), Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and Concordia University

Over the course of the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected some countries more than others. Numerous reasons can account for this, such as a country's population and access to healthcare resources. However, one key factor is the implementation of prevention measures such as social distancing and mask wearing, alongside the general public's awareness, attitudes and adherence to those measures. This can have major impacts on the healthcare system and on the ability to both reduce and sustain a low number of cases in the population. Hence, as some countries make the transition out of lockdown into an adapted way of life, understanding the extent to which public attitudes impact adherence to current and new COVID-19 policies is paramount, and is exactly what Dr. Kim Lavoie and Dr. Simon Bacon from the Université du Québec à Montréal and Concordia University (respectively) are exploring in the iCARE study (www.iCAREstudy.com). Connecting the iCARE survey with open source data such as Google Mobility data, Oxford Government Policy data as well as the John Hopkins case/death/recovery data, the iCARE study will assess the impacts of government policies on public adherence, as well as their impacts on different aspects of life, such as on their health, finances and access to care. The survey assesses the quality of life and health behaviours of individuals as a result of the pandemic, such as how physical activity levels and eating habits have changed, as well as the mental health impacts of social isolation on loneliness and anxiety. The hope is that these measures will be used to provide key information to governments on the efficacy of policy measures on people's behaviour and quality of life.



Drs. Kim Lavoie (left) and Simon Bacon (right)