

# Students in Health Psychology

2020 Winners of the Ron Melzack Student Award



## Introducing the 2020 Winners of the Ron Melzack Student Award

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The Ron Melzack Student Award is awarded to the student with the best research presentation at the CPA annual meeting. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held virtually. Although this may have posed as a challenge for some, two students really rose to the occasion! Esther Briner from Carleton University and Bethany Nightingale from Ryerson University performed exceptionally well and tied for first place.

### **Esther Briner, PhD Candidate, Carleton University**

Esther Briner's presentation was entitled "Body Mass Index Moderates the Depressive Symptoms-C-Reactive Protein Relation Among Emerging Adults." The study took a cross-sectional approach to examining the relationship between body mass index (BMI), depressive symptoms, and C-reactive protein (CRP), a marker of systemic inflammation in the body. Specifically, in 5,114 young adults, it was found that self-reported feelings of sadness were associated with increased levels of CRP but that this relationship was only true among those with a high BMI. In contrast, the relationship between sadness and CRP was not significant among individuals with low to moderate BMI. These findings suggest that overweight individuals may be more vulnerable to the negative health consequences of depressive symptoms.



Esther Briner, PhD Candidate

### **Bethany Nightingale, PhD Candidate, Ryerson University**

Bethany Nightingale's poster was entitled "Eating Self-Efficacy Predicts Post-Surgery Emotional Eating Among Bariatric Surgery Patients." The study investigated whether pre-surgery eating self-efficacy—one's belief that difficult situations do not affect one's ability to eat in a healthy way—predicts psychological consequences one year post-surgery. Individuals enrolled in the Toronto Western Hospital's Bariatric Surgery Program (n = 358) completed questionnaires pre-surgery and one year post-surgery. The questionnaires included various scales to assess eating self-efficacy, emotional eating, binge eating, body image, and self-esteem. The findings suggested that eating self-efficacy was a predictor of eating in response to post-surgery anxiety, anger, and depression. In other words, bariatric surgery patients who believed that they could eat in a balanced way during difficult situations engaged in less emotional eating post-surgery. Says Nightingale: "future research can develop and test interventions to target pre-surgery variables in order to increase positive eating and body image outcomes post-surgery."



Bethany Nightingale, PhD Candidate