



Postdoctoral Fellowship in Patient-engaged Health Research and Novel Clinical Trials

Dr. Brett Thombs (www.thombsresearchteam.ca/) of McGill University and the Scleroderma Patient-centered Intervention Network (SPIN; www.spinsclero.com) is seeking a postdoctoral fellow to be trained in a patient-engaged research program. The fellow will receive training in the design and conduct of observational studies and novel international trials of patient-centered interventions and will have a high level of direct patient participant interaction. This is a two-year position.

The Training Environment: The postdoctoral fellow will receive training in a thriving, highly productive research group. Dr. Thombs and his team produce transformative research in three areas. First, Dr. Thombs founded and leads SPIN, an international collaboration to develop, test, and disseminate self-management, rehabilitation, and psychological interventions for people with the rare autoimmune disease scleroderma. Before SPIN was launched in 2011, there were no large, well-designed trials of non-pharmacological interventions in any rare disease. SPIN has brought together >150 patients, researchers, and health care providers; built a cohort of >2,000 patients from 50 centers in 7 countries; and conducts large (N = 500-600) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)-funded trials of its interventions. Second, Dr. Thombs is the leading international figure in depression screening, and he has had a major influence on public policy in this area. He leads an international collaboration of over 350 investigators from 58 countries who pool datasets to evaluate and overcome shortcomings in existing screening tools (<https://www.depressd.ca/>). Third, Dr. Thombs is recognized for his meta-research that is done to improve research conduct and reporting. He recently led a CIHR-funded international collaboration to develop a reporting guideline for trials conducted using cohorts and routinely collected data, CONSORT-ROUTINE. He is Chair of the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, which develops national prevention guidelines, and members of the team do research on how clinical practice guidelines are produced, including conflicts of interest and issues of equity.

Dr. Thombs – Brief Biography: Dr. Thombs completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Fordham University in 2004, including clinical internship training at the Weill Cornell Medical College in New York, then was a postdoctoral fellow and instructor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He began his career at McGill in 2006, when he was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry. He was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 2011 and to Full Professor in 2015. In addition to the Department of Psychiatry, he holds Associate Memberships in the Departments of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Occupational Health; Medicine; Psychology; Educational and Counselling Psychology, and the Biomedical Ethics Unit. He is a Senior Investigator at the Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research of the Jewish General Hospital. In 2020, Dr. Thombs was named a Canada Research Chair (Tier 1). Since 2006, Dr. Thombs has published 325 peer-reviewed articles, including many in the world's leading medical journals (e.g., JAMA, BMJ, JAMA Intern Med, CMAJ, Lancet Rheumatology). He has been awarded over \$36 million in grant funding, including \$18.8 million as Principal Investigator and \$17.4 million as Co-investigator. He has been awarded 31 CIHR

team or operating grants as Principal Investigator. Dr. Thombs is the Chair of the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, the first non-physician in this role. He was one of two inaugural recipients of the McGill Principal's Prize for Outstanding Emerging Researchers in 2013 and has been awarded lifetime research awards from the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals and the Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and a member of the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists of the Royal Society of Canada. Curriculum vitae available here: <https://www.thombsresearchteam.ca/dr-brett-thombs>.

Scleroderma and SPIN: Scleroderma is a rare autoimmune connective tissue disease that causes significant disability and disfigurement. SPIN was created to bring together people living with scleroderma, health professionals, and scleroderma researchers from around the world to develop, test, and disseminate accessible support tools for people with scleroderma, including self-management, rehabilitation, psychological, and educational tools. Rare conditions like scleroderma are often under-studied, and patients usually have few or no tested support options, including the kind of support programs that are typically available to people with more common conditions. One reason for this is that the small number of patients with any given rare disease is a barrier to effectively developing, testing, and disseminating such programs. SPIN has addressed these barriers by (1) fostering a high level of patient and community engagement in all aspects of its research; (2) adapting well-tested patient support strategies from other chronic diseases to meet the needs of people with scleroderma and delivering them via the internet to increase accessibility; and (3) utilizing novel cohort-based trial designs to conduct large, efficient, trials in a resource-starved rare disease environment. People with scleroderma play important roles in SPIN's leadership, and patient advisory teams are engaged in the conceptualization, planning, conduct, and dissemination of all SPIN research.

Role: The postdoctoral fellow will lead or assist with ongoing SPIN projects and will have the opportunity to develop their own research in this context:

- (1) The fellow will have the opportunity to lead patient-oriented observational research using data from SPIN's ongoing cohort of people with scleroderma. Projects could include work on decision aids to support difficult health care decisions, psychological aspects of living with scleroderma, or other aspects of living with scleroderma of interest to the fellow.
- (2) The postdoctoral fellow will assist with the design, oversight, and data management of clinical trials for other interventions, including online programs that address body image concerns due to disease-related disfigurement, coping with emotional distress resulting from scleroderma, and physical activity support for scleroderma patients.
- (3) The postdoctoral fellow will develop their own research and will have the opportunity to lead SPIN projects or other related work to further their career goals.

Training Opportunities: Trainees with Dr. Thombs take on significant responsibility and have published extensively. In the last 5 years, trainees under Dr. Thombs' supervision have first-authored approximately 75 peer-reviewed articles and have co-authored articles more than 150 times. First-authored articles include many in top journals (e.g, JAMA, BMJ, JAMA Intern Med, CMAJ). They have received funding as Banting, CIHR, Fonds de recherche du Québec - Santé, and Mitacs postdoctoral fellowships. The postdoctoral fellow will gain experience in the design and management of large international trials, data analysis, manuscript development, dissemination of results via national and international conferences, grant writing, mentoring of students and staff, and engagement of patients in research. Profiles of current team trainees are available here: <https://www.thombsresearchteam.ca/team-members>.

Eligibility: Applicants should have a recent doctoral degree in a health-related field, such as psychology, public health, or epidemiology. The doctoral degree should be obtained by the date of hire.

Salary: CAD \$50,000

Location: The postdoctoral fellow will work primarily at McGill University and the Jewish General Hospital in Montréal, Québec.

Start Date: Start date is flexible, and applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

To apply: Applicants should send (1) a cover letter explaining their interest in the fellowship and how working in this position would support their career goals, (2) a curriculum vitae, (3) an unofficial transcript, (4) reprints or preprints of published articles or submitted manuscripts, and (5) contact information for three references to Ms. Marie-Eve Carrier (carrier.marie.eve@gmail.com).