

## **2020 Pursuit Award Recipients: Research Summaries**

### **Dr. Stephanie Snow, psychologist (candidate register), Outpatient Community Mental Health and Addictions Program, IWK Health Centre, Nova Scotia**

My dissertation involved a mixed-methods program of research aimed at improving the surgical experiences of children with autism. Working in collaboration with key stakeholders (children with autism, their families, and healthcare providers), a series of research projects contributed to the development, implementation, and preliminary evaluation of a theory-driven intervention designed to improve the quality of care delivery. We called the program BALANCE, which stands for 'Building Alliances for Autism Needs in Clinical Encounters'. It was implemented in the Day Surgery and Recovery Unit of a major Canadian pediatric hospital, where we found promising initial support for the potential of BALANCE to positively impact the care delivered to children with autism around the time of surgery."

### **Dr. Patrick Jachyra, post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto**

My doctoral research examined why adolescents with autism spectrum disorder are less likely to be physically active than their peers. Ten adolescent boys participated in two interviews, and created a digital story about their physical activity experiences. Findings highlight that some boys were inactive because of previous bullying experiences, experienced difficulty accessing programs, and experienced challenges with some of the teaching methods that were used in physical activity programs. Participation in physical activity was maximized when individual or group based activities generated meaning, a sense of pleasure, fun, and excitement. Findings suggest a need for directed efforts to create policies and practices, which are individualized and reflective of the needs and abilities of adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder to promote physical activity participation.

### **Dr. Emily Ho, occupational therapist, Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto**

The focus of my dissertation was on developing a patient decision aid for youth with brachial plexus birth injury. This decision support tool contains evidence-based information and a values clarification method to help these youth (ages 8 and 18 years) and their families discern what they value most related to rehabilitation and elective surgical treatment options for an elbow flexion contracture. This mixed methods dissertation included knowledge synthesis (scoping and systematic reviews), measurement, and interpretivist arts-based qualitative and cognitive interviewing methods. The qualitative findings were in themselves a strong contribution from this dissertation that went beyond the decision aid itself, elucidating how the youth's activation, health literacy, occupational engagement, functioning, and socio-emotional concerns affected their shared decisions and decision quality related to the clinical management of their brachial plexus birth injury.