

BCMHSUS RESEARCH

Inside this issue:

Message from Executive Director	1
Comings & Goings	1
News & Announcements	1
Highlighting Research	2
Awards, Grants & Honours	2
Upcoming Events	4
Patient & Family Engagement	4
The Knowledge Exchange	5

Comings & Goings



Nassim Pezeshkzad joins BCMHSUS

Nassim Pezeshkzad is the Coordinator for Patient Experience and Community Engagement at BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services. She was born and raised in Ecuador, and she completed her post-secondary education in Canada with a BSc in Global Nutrition and a Masters in Public Health. In her role, Nassim manages the Patient and Family Partner Network, a provincial network of patients and families with lived or living experience who work in partnership with health care staff to make our programs and services person-centered and in doing so, improve patient experience. You can learn more about it here! Research Teams looking to create opportunities for meaningful engagement with patient and families are welcome to contact Nassim at engage BCMHSUS@phsa.ca.

Message from the Executive Director



Happy New Year 2022!

Dear BCMHSUS Research Community,

We hope you all had a restful holiday break and took some time to recharge for the new year.

The COVID-19 situation is evolving quickly with public health guidelines changing to reflect the increasing number of cases. We are monitoring these updates closely to ensure we are doing what we can to keep our community safe.

Currently there are no restrictions to research activities on-site but we are encouraging everyone to work from home when possible for the time being. We recognize that we are all extremely fatigued as we approach the two-year mark of this pandemic so please ensure you are checking in with your colleagues and taking the time to take care for yourself.

On a lighter note, with a new year comes new research and we are happy to announce the recipients of the 2022 BCMHSUS Research Catalyst Awards. Congratulations all!

Sincerely,

Jehannine



News & Announcements

Get boosted! Keeping safe amidst the surge in COVID-19 cases

The public health guidance has been evolving. As well, COVID-19 testing protocols have changed to reflect the high number of active cases and is now dependent on severity of symptoms, vaccination status and other risk factors. Please check the latest guidelines for testing at the [BCCDC website](#).

We would like to take this time to remind everyone about continuing to follow our site safety protocols. This includes wearing a medical mask at all times while on-site when not alone in an office and maintaining physical distancing as much as possible. Our COVID-19 safety plan is [available HERE](#).

The symptoms for the omicron variant are different. As such, if you have ANY allergy or cold-like symptoms, please isolate at home [until you have met these three requirements](#): minimum five days from symptom onset or positive test results if you are fully vaccinated (10 days if you are not), fever-free for 24 hours and improved symptoms, as per BCCDC's current guidance.

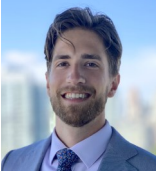
We would also like to urge anyone who has not received a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot yet to please prioritize this. All BCCHR admin staff and UBC personnel who work on-site at the Oak Street campus are included in the [health-care worker vaccination stream](#).

Highlighting Research

Featured Researcher

Every newsletter we highlight an outstanding PI/Trainee

Who are you?



Robert Selles

My name is Robert Selles. I am a Registered Psychologist who has specialized in the assessment and psychosocial treatment of obsessive-compulsive, anxiety, and tic-related disorders with a particular focus on their presentation among youth and within families. I received my PhD from the University of South Florida and completed clinical residency at Brown University prior to coming to complete a post-doctoral fellowship with the Provincial OCD Program at the University of British Columbia and BC Children's Hospital.

What are you working on?

Over the past 5.5 years, I have been working primarily on projects that seek to improve our understanding of how OCD presents in youth and families and how we can improve our methods of delivery treatment in order to optimize outcomes. For example, I have explored how youth's insight regarding their symptoms relates to their responsiveness to intervention, examined ways in which families respond to and manage OCD, and studied the potential benefits of providing treatment in an intensive format within individual's homes. I have also been contributing to the Personal Impacts of COVID-19 Survey (PICS) project, which explores mental health impacts and needs resulting from the pandemic.

Who are you working with?

I have worked primarily with Dr. S. Evelyn Stewart as well as the other clinical and research staff within the Provincial OCD Program at BC Children's Hospital.

I have also collaborated with other faculty in outpatient mental health at BC Children's. Working with a subspecialty population, I also have a network of collaborators from other OCD programs across Canada and in Australia, Scandinavia, India, and the US.

Why this project?

As I will be completing my post-doctoral fellowship in February and moving out of active research, the large majority of my projects are now completed with final touches being placed on a few outstanding manuscripts. However, I also remain engaged with the PICS project which is now moving towards publication of initial results and the implementation of a second qualitative follow-up phase.

Fun fact:

Outside of work I write and produce electronic music under the name Intrinsic and after my fellowship ends I will be taking a year to travel South America. Yo estoy muy emocionado!

Awards, Grants & Honours

Dr. Tonia Nicholls, Research Lead, Forensic Psychiatric Services.



We are pleased to announce that Dr. Tonia Nicholls has assumed the role of Research Lead, Forensic Psychiatric Services. Reporting to Dr. Jehannine Austin and working in close partnership with Forensic Psychiatric Services clinical and operational leadership, Dr. Nicholls will continue to build a leading edge research program that contributes to the evidence base and drives excellence in how we deliver care and improve patient outcomes. We would like to recognize Dr. Nicholls' longstanding commitment to advancing research at the intersection of criminal justice and mental health, supporting evidence-informed practices at BCMHSUS, academic excellence and mentorship, and collaborative partnerships with researchers, clinicians, leaders, students, and patients and families.

We are also excited to share that this new role is one of three new Research Lead roles at BCMHSUS. Each one will be embedded in one of our clinical program areas as we work to strengthen connections between research and practice at BCMHSUS and support research that is aligned with our clinical mandate. At this point, we are in the process of posting and recruiting for the positions of Research Lead, Complex Mental Health and Substance Use, and Research Lead, Correctional Health Services. We will keep you posted on further developments!

Recent Publications from BCMHSUS Researchers

- **Impact of posttraumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms on quality of life in adolescents after general traumatic injury.** Martin-Herz SP, McMahon RJ, Malzyner S, Chiang N, Zatzick DF. *J Trauma Stress.* [Read more](#)
- **Comorbidities in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Across the Lifespan: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.** Sharma E, Sharma LP, Balachander S, Lin B, Manohar H, Khanna P, Lu C, Garg K, Thomas TL, Au ACL, Selles RR, Højgaard DRMA, Skarphedinnson G, **Stewart SE.** *Front Psychiatry.* [Read more](#)
- **Pediatric Avoidant-Restrictive Food Intake Disorder and gastrointestinal-related Somatic Symptom Disorders: Overlap in clinical presentation.** Boerner KE, Coelho JS, Syal F, Bajaj D, Finner N, **Dhawal AK.** *Clin Child Psychol Psychiatry.* [Read more](#)
- **Food-allergy-specific anxiety and distress in parents of children with food allergy: A systematic review.** Westwell-Roper C, To S, Andjelic G, Lu C, Lin B, Soller L, Chan ES, **Stewart SE.** *Pediatr Allergy Immunol.* [Read more](#)
- **An International Adult Guideline for Making Clozapine Titration Safer by Using Six Ancestry-Based Personalized Dosing Titrations, CRP, and Clozapine Levels.** de Leon J, Schoretsanis G, Smith RL, Molden E, Solismaa A, Seppälä, N, **Procyshyn RM,** ... & Müller DJ. *Pharmacopsychiatry.* [Read more](#)
- **Late-life physical activity relates to brain tissue synaptic integrity markers in older adults.** Casaletto, K., Ramos-Miguel, A., VandeBunte, A., Memel, M., Buchman, A., Bennett, D., & **Honer, W.** *Alzheimer's & Dementia.* [Read more](#)



Dr. Christian Schütz, Professor the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia.

Congratulations to Dr. Schütz! Christian is a practicing psychiatrist and the Research and Education Medical Manager at Red Fish Healing Centre for Mental Health and Addiction as well as Principal Investigator at BC Mental Health and Substance User Services. He holds an MD from the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Germany, a Ph.D. in Medical History from the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany, and an MPH from John Hopkins University. He also completed a Fogerty-Fellowship at NIDA/NIH and DISCA-Fellowship at Yale University. He has published over 140 peer-reviewed articles and a dozen book chapters and has supervised more than 30 students across the globe in areas such as psychiatry, addiction medicine, and clinical neuroscience. [Read more](#)

Join us in congratulating the 2022 BCMHSUS Research Catalyst Award recipients!



Investigator: Dr. Jehannine Austin

Project: "Integrating an evidence-based mental health service, adapted for COVID-19, into primary care to help people protect their mental health"
Co-investigators: Victoria Maxwell and Heather Robertson

Investigator: Dr. Clare Beasley

Project: "Effect of cannabinoids on stress response regulation: A salivary biomarker study"
Co-investigators: Karina Thiessen and Thomas Chao



Investigator: Dr. William Honer

Project: "Evaluation of a novel screening assessment of cognitive function in comorbid mental and substance use disorders"
Co-investigators: Allen Thornton, Alasdair Barr, Donna Lang, William Panenka, Kristina Gicas and Thalia Field

Investigator: Dr. Tonia Nicholls

Project: "The Forensic Sexual Offences Program Evaluation (FSOP-E): Investigating client and clinician satisfaction, virtual health, and efficacy for reducing risk and reoffending"
Co-investigators: Heather Scott and Karen Petersen



Investigator: Dr. Christian Schütz

Project: "Expanding Reducing Overdose and Relapse (ROAR) CANADA to forensic psychiatric patients"
Co-investigators: Tonia Nicholls and Thomas Chao



Dr. Evelyn Stewart

Recipient of a CIHR Operating Grant - Understanding and mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on children, youth and families in Canada for the project titled: "Impact of Social Determinants of Mental Health on Child and Parent Risk, Resilience and Support Access in the COVID-19 Era: A Nested Mixed-Methods Study of Short and Long-Term Outcomes". [Read more](#)

Principal Applicants: **S. Evelyn Stewart**, Jana Davidson, Hasina Samji

Dr. Stewart is also a Co-investigator on the new CIHR Operating Grant - COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence competition. Project entitled: Understanding vaccine confidence and decision-making among Canadian youth: Survey and intervention development.

Don't miss Dr. Stewart's Geoffrey L. Hammond Lectureship which recognizes outstanding career research achievements by nominated investigators on the Oak Street Campus. [Click here](#) for the recording.



Dr. Janet Mah

Recipient of a CIHR Operating Grant - Understanding and mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on children, youth and families in Canada for the project entitled: "How is COVID-19 continuing to impact children with and without Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?" [Read more](#)

Principal Applicants: Maria A. Rogers; Yuanyuan Jiang; Co-investigators: Emma Climie; **Janet W.T. Mah**; Penny V. Corkum



Dr. Ivan Torres is awarded Health Professional-Investigator Award

Dr. Torres has received the 2021 award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research for his project entitled "Neuropsychological functioning in treatment resistant schizophrenia". Congratulations Dr. Torres!



Dr. Heather Palis receives IMH Marshall Fellowship Award

We congratulate Dr. Palis on this award for her research project "Reincarceration and overdose among people with psychiatric disorders: Longitudinal trends across health care reform and contamination of the illicit drug supply in BC." Heather is currently doing her Postdoctoral fellowship with BCMHSUS/BCCDC under the supervision of Dr. Tonia Nicholls and Dr. Amanda Slaunwhite. [Read more](#)



2021 the Dr. Jay C. Cheng Memorial Prize in Psychiatry

Congratulations to Dr. Christian Farrell in receiving the 2021 Dr. Jay C. Cheng Memorial Prize in Psychiatry, awarded by UBC Psychiatry. The award is conferred upon a 4th year medical student who has demonstrated academic excellence. Dr. Farrell has most recently worked with Dr. Nicholls and operational leadership at BCMHSUS and published a manuscript documenting the COVID-19 pandemic response at the BC Forensic Psychiatric Hospital.

Upcoming Events

Women in Science

Presented Thursday, February 10 | 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Presented in partnership with BC Children's Hospital, Women's Health Research Institute and the BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services Research Institute.



Session Moderator:

- **Dr. Lori Brotto**, Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, UBC; Canada Research Chair, Women's Sexual Health; Executive Director, Women's Health Research Institute, Investigator, BCCHR; Head & Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UBC

Panelists:

- **Dr. Shazhan Amed**, Clinical Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UBC; Investigator and Head, Division of Endocrinology, BC Children's Hospital
- **Dr. Roxana Geoffrion**, Associate Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, UBC; Program Director, Advanced Training Program in Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery, UBC
- **Jennifer Murray**, Graduate Student, School of Population and Public Health, UBC
- **Dr. Tonia L. Nicholls**, Distinguished Scientist, **BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services**; Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UBC; Investigator, BC Children's Hospital; President-Elect International Association of Forensic Mental Health Service
- **Dr. Melissa Woodward**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Psychiatry, UBC

Agenda:

- 7:00 – 8:00 pm; Panelist introductions and brief (10 minute) presentation on what inspired you to pursue a career in science, your career journey or current research.
- 8:00 – 9:00 pm: Open Panel Discussion. Conversation will be focused around the questions received from participants. This could include anything from questions on your research, personal reflections, or feedback on any stereotypes or gender-based barriers you faced.

Participants: [Registration](#) will be open to high school students, the general public and the community on the Oak Street Campus. To allow for active participation, registration will be limited to 150 participants.

BCMHSUS Learning Rounds: Translating Psychopharmacology Research for Clinical Practice

When: Thursday, January 27th 12pm-1pm **Location:** Webinar (Zoom)

Objective: To highlight clinical resources and research that are aimed at helping mental health clinicians in daily practice. These include:

- The Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs
- SWITCHRX.CA
- Choosing an antipsychotic for early schizophrenia
- Treatment options for clozapine-associated obsessive-compulsive symptoms
- Introduce an international guideline for making clozapine titration safer

Register on the LearningHub: [Everything you wanted to know about Forensics](#) (27777) or join on [Zoom](#) - Meeting ID: 986 5259 9434 Passcode: 234567

Can't join by computer or mobile device? Join by telephone: +1 778 907 2071



Patient & Family Engagement

BCMHSUS “Co-Created with Patients and Families” Symbol

By Katie Mai, Leader, Patient Experience and Community Engagement, BCMHSUS



This symbol will be added on reports, papers, resources, and public-facing materials that were developed with and by patients and families. Our hope is to increase the credibility of BCMHSUS materials by integrating the patient voice, raise awareness of the importance of co-design, and promote collaboration between staff, researchers, patients and families in the development of materials.

To work with a patient or family partner(s) in developing your materials, receive support on how to co-design, and to add this symbol on your work, reach out to the Patient Experience and Community Engagement team at engage_bcmhsus@phsa.ca.



The Knowledge Exchange

Now Launched! The Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Network

We are excited to share that we have launched the Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Network ('the Network'). An evidence-informed mechanism to address system-level challenges, the Network will focus on issues relating to British Columbians with complex needs, including mental health and/or substance use, acquired brain injury, developmental disability, complex/ challenging behaviours and/or violence, and criminal justice involvement.

We are delighted to introduce you to Krista and Ashley, who sit within Deborah Ross' Strategic Initiatives team.



Krista English, PhD, the Senior Network Lead, brings a strong background in network science, specifically related to transmission dynamics of contagions, initially applied to infectious diseases and then later to the spread of knowledge. She is excited to apply this expertise in support of addressing the unmet needs of individuals with complex mental health and substance use (MHSU) issues.



Ashley Radomski, PhD, the Network Lead, has worked closely with local, provincial and national teams to provide evidence for improving mental health care practices across the lifespan, through treatment options and policy recommendations. She is dedicated to ensuring the needs of individuals accessing MHSU services drive how we understand and improve care delivery.

Why a Network?

The goal of The Network is to address the unmet needs of individuals with complex MHSU issues who also have needs relating to criminal justice system involvement, acquired brain injuries, developmental disabilities, and/or complex challenging behaviours.

The Network brings together people with lived and living experience alongside representative and committed stakeholders from the health authorities and related sectors in a dynamic structure designed to facilitate and accelerate the knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) process. As an incubator for new ideas, the Network helps advance innovative thinking on complex issues. The Network also connects existing or planned projects across the province to create synergy, drive scalability, and improve sustainability of impact.

The Network as a Mechanism for KTE

KTE is an iterative process that encompasses a spectrum of activities involved in making knowledge useful for the intended audience, including synthesis, dissemination, exchange and application. The Network optimizes KTE by connecting unique combinations of stakeholders within health settings and across various sectors to develop solutions to complex problems. According to Krista, "Iterative and integrated KTE is everything that we do... it's so critical to innovation. Solutions for such complex issues span providers, programs, and services, even beyond the healthcare system, which is why many of these gaps remain.

Get Involved

Join the Network mailing list, attend learning sessions, contribute your expertise to interdisciplinary problem-solving tables, or finding inspiration and partnerships for future research studies and syntheses. The level of commitment is entirely up to you and your interest in the current Network activities (which you can help shape!).

Additional KTE Resources:

1. Learn more about the Network and get involved by emailing Krista at krista.english@phsa.ca.
2. The BCMHSUS KTE Framework has launched! Learn more about KTE at BCMHSUS and download the framework [here](#).
3. The iKT Research Network has developed a new guide to making research activities work for health organizations. Download it [here](#).

We want to hear from you! Do you have KTE ideas, stories, or questions? Connect via [email](#).



Interested in research opportunities at BCMHSUS? Get involved! Visit the following [link](#) and become a Community Partner.