

IHPME CONNECT 04.2018

CONNECTING TO THE FUTURE: IHPME RESEARCH DAY 2018



IHPME Research Day Committee, 2018

Each year students, faculty and alumni descend upon IHPME to participate in the largest student-led conference of the year, [Research Day](#). For this year's event taking place on May 2, co-chairs Méliissa Roy and Saerom Youn, along with their committee, have chosen a theme that will explore the ways in which big data and artificial intelligence can be leveraged to transform our health care system.

Whether you are a presenter or simply an attendee, Research Day is a pinnacle event in the academic year. Students from across the nine different programs present on their research through oral and poster sessions, and an expert panel of industry leaders as well as a keynote speaker, delve into the theme of the conference.

"Research Day provides an opportunity to engage with research in a different way, and being aware of what others are working on can trigger further innovation or inspiration," said Roy, who is a second year MSc candidate in Clinical Epidemiology and Health Care Research.

Roy is also a surgeon scientist in training, and when not at one of the Toronto area hospitals, she is focused on her Master's dissertation where she is studying the health literacy of a sub-population of hand surgery patients. Limited health literacy can impact delivery of care and health outcomes, and part of her research considers what clinicians can do when confronted with patients who have limited health literacy.

It is another reason that she believes strongly in the concept of translational research.

"Research needs to be shared in order for it to have the greatest impact," said Roy, "and Research Day is another space where we can become informed about what others are working on."

Co-Chair Youn agrees, "This event provides students with an opportunity to have their work be discovered by faculty or industry professionals, and it is also a way to prepare yourself in advance for other major conferences you might attend throughout your academic career."

A second year MSc candidate in Health Services Research, Youn has participated in school activities before but nothing as directly involved with her degree as coordinating Research Day. In her first year at IHPME, Youn joined the Research Day committee to gain some experience and make new connections, "I remember being inspired by the previous co-chairs," she said, "they really created a communal atmosphere for all of the students and were driven by no other motivation than to simply make this conference a good day for students."

Youn is also eager to explore this year's theme, big data and artificial intelligence. Her own research centers around development of a tool for knowledge users to better interpret evidence from poor quality nonrandomized studies.

More on the next page...

"I had this mini epiphany when I realized I could do so much in an area I never thought I would be interested in with respect to health care, which includes statistics and AI," said Youn. "Toronto has become a hot-bed for ML/AI related ventures, and there is support from both the government and the industry to make Toronto the AI hub of the world," she added.

"It is also an area of research that not every student may be exposed to in their program of study," said Roy.

The hope is that students will gain some new insight into the many opportunities that big data and AI may provide for their own research and the health system as a whole.

With two new initiatives to further engage students, including a new student welcome breakfast and a meet our graduates networking mixer, this year's Research Day is focused on providing students with a platform to seek out mentors and find opportunities with potential employers.

"It's easy to get lost in the drudgery of academia, and forget that being part of a graduate program can also build a sense of community," said Youn.

Students interested in presenting at this year's conference have until April 9 to [submit their abstracts](#). Guidelines for both oral and poster presentations are available on the [IHPME website](#).

"My advice to all IHPME students would be don't be shy to share your work," said Roy, "we are here to learn and learn from each other, and Research Day provides an opportunity that shouldn't be missed."

FINAL CHANCE TO SUBMIT ABSTRACTS!

DEADLINE APRIL 9



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Visiting international students explore ways to improve care for seniors in China



Man Li a visiting student from East China Normal University has always known her grandmother to be an independent and self-sufficient woman, but in 2014 an unexpected fall changed everything and soon her grandmother was being shuffled back and forth between family members, without a permanent residence.

"She didn't want to live with her adult children, she wanted to remain independent" said Li, "each of my father's siblings could not take care of her for more than a month at a time and as a result her health declined."

Experiencing her grandmother's struggle and seeing the lack of infrastructure in place to support seniors who are no longer able to live alone, inspired Li to pursue a PhD with a focus on long-term care and health promotion for seniors in China.

She, along with fellow students Fiona Di and Shuying Yin, are visiting the Institute of Health Policy Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto to learn more about the field of health economics, and the ways in which it can be used to improve health care systems. Under the guidance of Professor Peter Coyte, they are also learning to hone their research in order to better influence policy makers with an evidence-based approach.

"Professor Coyte has orchestrated this exchange of scholars for a few years now, and I really feel that China can learn a lot from Canada's health system structure," said Di.

Like many countries, China is seeing steady growth in its aging population. As life expectancy continues to rise, the number of seniors requiring care is too, but a lack of infrastructure, and insufficient human resources are making it difficult for them to

get the care that they need.

Man Li does not want to see her parents suffer the same fate as her grandmother. It's why she has chosen to focus her research on community care center's for the elderly, and as an only child, she is hopeful her research will help the government implement policy plans for these systems of care.

"Care centers are especially important in rural areas," said Li. Only 10% of communities have day care centers for seniors, and basic infrastructure such as access to water plays a role in whether more care centers can be built. Although China is no longer enforcing the one child policy, many young adults are only children, which puts the burden of caring for their aging parents squarely on their shoulders.

As a result, seniors residing in rural locales are being forced to move to urban areas where they can be looked after by their adult children. These migration patterns are the crux of Fiona Di's research.

"In North America, seniors often will move in search of amenities, maybe they head to retirement communities, or they become tourists and travel," said Di, "in China, that is not really the motivation."

These migrations are also exposing issues of health coverage across China's states. Each state can offer different types of health coverage, and for seniors that move from their home state to urban centers, that coverage does not always follow them. Using data on the elderly gathered since 1998, Di is researching the patterns of migration to indicate to policy makers that the health system needs to change.

"The government is very focused on this as of late because we have developed so quickly as a nation and our population is aging rapidly, we know that something needs to be done to take care of our elderly," said Di.

Considering new payment models may be an option to help streamline some of the health coverage and student Shuying Yin (pictured right) is investigating these models for possible implementation in rural areas in China.



"Being at IHPME and the University of Toronto has exposed us to courses like health econometrics and has also allowed us to gain important insights from the other students," said Yin. Econometric methods look at the basic principles of regression model development and testing, something that underlies much of applied health economics. It is perfectly suited to Yin's own research, which is currently focused on a pilot benefit package and payment reform models being rolled out in five

counties in North East China.

"The package is intended to provide more access to health services in rural areas, including village clinics, township health centers, and county-level hospitals," said Yin. While she is still analyzing whether the pilot has been a success, she is hopeful that more of these types of packages will be implemented to allow for enhanced care for rural residents.

"We are asking ourselves what we can do to make it better," said Li, "our seniors deserve to lead an independent and happy life."

All three hope to return to China to complete their doctorate degrees and hopefully use their research to benefit the population.

"We are very grateful to be able to learn from our Canadian counterparts while we are here," said Di, "it is a wonderful opportunity for us to explore new ideas and help us grow as researchers."

NEW RESEARCH

Rheumatoid arthritis sufferers experience higher mortality rates: IHPME researcher examines causes of death



Sufferers of rheumatoid arthritis are more likely to die earlier than the general population, according to a new study by University of Toronto researchers that examined the causes of death of Ontarians over a 14-year period.

"Everyone deserves to live the same length and quality of life. Mortality is also one of the strongest markers to evaluate inadequate care, so if patients are dying earlier there is a gap in care that needs to be addressed," said Jessica Widdifield, lead author of the study and an assistant professor at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation. "The excess mortality related to rheumatoid arthritis that we observed may suggest inadequate attention to control of the disease and its related morbidity."

The study is one of the largest of its kind to comprehensively examine causes of death over an extended period of time. Over 87,000 patients with rheumatoid arthritis in Ontario

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were included in the study and compared with over 340,000 members of the general population over a span of 14 years.

Causes of death among the two groups were found to be similar - such as circulatory system diseases, cancer, and respiratory conditions - but the study found that those with rheumatoid arthritis were dying much sooner, experiencing almost double the number of years of life lost.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic condition that can affect 2 - 3 % of older adults. As an inflammatory disease, rheumatoid arthritis can affect more than just the joints in the body, ongoing inflammation often leads to further complications and multi-morbidity in patients. This means that individuals will likely have multiple chronic conditions occurring simultaneously, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, or heart disease and a respiratory illness.



The study also found that among arthritis sufferers, one in three were dying of complications attributed to heart disease. Widdifield (pictured above) notes that these findings underscore the importance of improving preventative measures to slow down the progression of some of these co-morbid conditions in order to improve a patient's overall life expectancy.

"Hearing that you have arthritis is not something individuals consider to be a fatal diagnosis," said Widdifield who is also a scientist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, "but we can see from our research that more needs to be done to improve survival across all age ranges and earlier on in the course of the disease. There has been a significant shift in the paradigm of care over the past decade and long-term remission is now an achievable goal. Unfortunately, there are just too few rheumatologists to meet the needs of all RA patients."

Widdifield and her fellow researchers are hopeful that the outcomes of this study will help raise awareness of the underlying complications of the disease, and increase efforts across the health system to improve survival across all age ranges with particular emphasis on strategies to help patients play an active role in being vigilant about their health.

The study is published in [Arthritis Care & Research](#), and was generously supported by The Catherine and Fredrik Eaton Charitable Foundation, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and through the Arthritis Society Post Doctoral Fellowship (2014 - 2017).

AWARDS

Outstanding Community Leadership: Three IHPME Students Win Gordon Cressy Award

Three IHPME students, have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to student life as recipients of the [2018 Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award](#) presented by the University of Toronto Alumni Association and Division of University Advancement.

Getting involved in extracurricular activities might seem like a daunting task as a graduate student, but for Vinusha Gunaseelan, Vidhi Thakkar and Stephanie Zhou, taking on and excelling at volunteer work that enhances the student experience, has become a vital way to make the most out of their graduate school journey and also give back to the community.

"I do a lot of work with homeless populations, and if there is one thing I am passionate about outside of my studies, it's the organization [Homeless Connect Toronto](#)," said Zhou who is completing her MSc in the joint LEAD program alongside her MD.

Each year the organization hosts a one day all access event for over 700 homeless individuals in the city, providing a variety of services that would be hard for them to come by on a regular basis. These include dental, eye, and foot care check-ups, hair cuts, hot meals, and additional social and mental health services.

"It is hugely impactful," said Zhou, "we see 80% of the people returning each year because the event is so accessible for them."

Zhou has also taken part in the annual Faculty of Medicine student-run musical, [Daffydil](#), with proceeds going to the Canadian Cancer Society. This year Zhou's cohort focused on mental health, shedding light on issues such as physician burnout and suicides among unmatched medical students.



"We felt it was very important to make sure students are aware of these types of issues so that we can help each other find ways to manage our mental health," said Zhou.

This kind of community building is something that award winner Vidhi Thakkar also takes to heart. "Volunteering helps create this sense of community especially among students," she said. In the final stages of completing her PhD in Health Services Research, Thakkar has been an active member

of the IHPME Graduate Student Union (GSU). In her efforts to provide more opportunities for students to network with industry leaders in the field, she helped launch the IHPME Health Policy Rounds a monthly series that allows students to debate and discuss important issues in the world of health policy and systems research.

“Finding ways to link our students to those working in the health care industry and helping them network is something I am very passionate about,” said Thakkar.

In 2016, while co-chairing the [Canadian Association for Health Services and Policy Research \(CAHSR\)](#) student working group, Thakkar helped to coordinate conference activities catered to graduate students, which included further mentorship opportunities.

As a current member of the Justice Emmett Hall Foundation Board, Thakkar provides the student perspective to the board in the selection of the Hall Laureate and in promoting the student essay competition. “We all can think of that one mentor who has had a strong and positive influence in our lives. If we can help students launch their careers while they finish their academic degrees, we are setting them up to be successful leaders in our health care industry,” she said.

Mentorship was also a particular draw for our third award winner Vinusha Gunaseelan, an MSc student in Health Services Research. As a first year graduate student, Gunaseelan benefitted from the IHPME peer mentorship program which she said made all the difference in the world for someone fresh out of their undergrad.



“That was the main reason I got involved in the peer support program,” she said, “I knew what it was like to have a supportive program in place as a new student, and I wanted to make sure I could help other incoming students feel the same.”

Gunaseelan came to IHPME with a strong interest in addressing health inequities having learned about the disparities in the health system, particularly those faced by Indigenous populations. This year, she helped coordinate the student-led DLSPH conference “Resisting colonialism and (re)claiming Health on Turtle Island.” As the Public Health Student Association representative for the IHPME GSU, this was also a perfect way for Gunaseelan to work collaboratively with her peers.

“It’s amazing to be able to work with like-minded people, and these types of collaborations help bridge the gap between the



two departments,” she said. “It’s also a really important part of your social life, because as graduate students, it’s easy to get bogged down in your own work.”

In line with her research, Gunaseelan has also been an instrumental member of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health Diversity and Equity Committee. She was heavily involved in the drafting of the [School’s statement](#) and was keen to make it reflect the values of the University.

“We felt it was important to consider how we could apply the University’s existing Statement in the public health and policy world, and how we could incorporate it into our practices at DLSPH and IHPME,” said Gunaseelan.

She along with Thakkar, and Zhou will be honoured at a ceremony in the spring celebrating all 2018 Gordon Cressy recipients from across the University.

“I’m excited to see my classmates receive this award, and to meet so many stellar students from across the various faculties at the university,” said Zhou, “It is truly inspiring.”

Early Researcher Award from the Ministry of Research and Innovation

Congratulations to IHPME faculty member [Yvonne Bombard](#) on recently receiving the Early Researcher Award from the Ministry of Research and Innovation. The award provides funding to new researchers working at publicly funded Ontario research institutions to build a research team.

FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

New Faculty

Lisa Cranley - Assistant Professor, NB Cross Appointment
Aaron Drucker – Assistant Professor, Status
Lihi Eder – Assistant Professor, Status
Lisa Lix – Professor, Status
Michael Zywił – Assistant Professor, Status

Renewal Faculty

Hans Kreder - Professor, Status
Brian McCrindle - Professor, Status
Michael Schull - Professor, Status

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MSC/PHD DEFENSES

Clinical Epidemiology and Health Care Research

Meghan Elliott, MSc

Thesis Topic: *Long-term Perceived Engagement and Research Priorities Among Chronic Kidney Disease Stakeholders: A Qualitative Study* Date: February 27, 2018

Health Services Research

Edward Chau, MSc

Thesis Topic: *Effect of Continuity of Care on the Risk of Developing Multimorbidity in Ontario, Canada Between 2011-2015: A Retrospective Cohort Study* Date: February 12, 2018

Raman Sohal, PhD

Thesis Topic: *Scaling Up Health Services Delivery for Bottom of the Pyramid Populations in Lower-and-Middle Income Countries* Date: March 1, 2018

Rosemary Yachouh, MSc

Thesis Topic: *A Qualitative Investigation of Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugees and Immigrants* Date: March 6, 2018

Robert Paul, PhD

Thesis Topic: *One Hundred Twenty Years of Canadian Academic Medicine: How Michael Porter Became the New Abraham Flexner* Date: March 21, 2018

PUBLICATIONS

[Farmanova E](#), Bonneville L, Bouchard L. Organizational Health Literacy: Review of Theories, Frameworks, Guides, and Implementation Issues. *Inq J Heal Care Organ Provision, Financ.* 2018;55:4695801875784. doi:10.1177/0046958018757848.

[Farmanova E](#), Bouchard L, Bonneville L. Success Strategies for [Linguistically Competent Healthcare : The Magic Bullets and Cautionary Tales of the Active Offer of French-Language Health Services in Ontario](#). *Healthc Q.* 2018; 20(4):24-30.

IHPME IN THE NEWS

[Why is it so hard to reform Canadian healthcare](#) - Op-Ed by Dr. Danielle Martin.

[Health care experts hope for long-term reform, "shift in philosophy for Ontario's system"](#)

- Raisa Deber weighs in on system wide change.

[Lawmakers care less about your access to medication because they already have theirs](#) - Op-ed by Nav Persaud.

[Self-directed care will require a role for government](#) - Op-ed by Blair Roblin.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

2018-2019 COLLABORATIVE SPECIALIZATION IN PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

Become a part of a dynamic training and research community in Public Health Policy!

Engage with academic mentors, students and policymakers in governmental and non-governmental public health agencies to learn about real-world policy issues and public health policy agenda setting, and enhance the professional skills required to succeed in your profession.

Any student who has been accepted into a graduate-level program at the University of Toronto may apply.

The application deadline is Friday, May 4th, 2018 at 5:00 pm. For application forms and more information about the program, please visit our website at www.publichealthpolicy.utoronto.ca, or send your information request to publichealthpolicy@utoronto.ca

CIHR Advisory Board Applications

Applicants have until April 9, 2018 to submit an application for the Institute Advisory Boards. Selection criteria and application forms can be found on the [CIHR website](#).

EVENTS

CCHE Seminar Series

Fridays | 11:00am - 1:00pm | HS 100 | Free

[Meg McMahon](#) - April 6

[Anna Zajacova](#) - April 13

[Tom Van Ourti](#) - April 20

IHPME Research Day: Connecting to the Future

May 2 | 8:00am - 7:00pm | HS 6th and 7th Floors | Free

Have you ever wondered how artificial intelligence might transform the future of health care? Or how we as researchers and policy makers could leverage big data? Find out more at this year's IHPME Research Day.

Our annual student led conference invites current IHPME students to participate by presenting during our oral and poster sessions on their latest research. All students, faculty, staff and alumni are welcome to attend.

Enjoy a morning panel with experts in the field of AI and an afternoon of student presentations. Our keynote speaker is Michael Draugelis of Penn Medicine.

Submit Abstracts: <http://ihpme.utoronto.ca/research/research-day-2018/call-for-poster-oral-presentations/>

Register Now: uoft.me/research-day-2018

Story Slam 2018

May 15 | 6:30pm - 8:30pm | Mount Sinai Hospital, 18th Floor | Free

Story Slams are events that celebrate storytelling. Participants verbally share brief stories (5-minute maximum) with an audience who vote on their favourite story. The Department of Medicine organized its first story slam event in 2017, featuring 15 storytellers. Each story was published in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

RSVP

Doughnuts with the Dean

June 2 | 9:00am - 12:00pm | HS 6th Floor | Free

Join Interim Dean Adalsteinn (Steini) Brown for a morning mixer with your fellow alumni and their families at our first-ever alumni reunion event.

- Enjoy mini lectures from our world class faculty on a variety of health policy and public health issues.
- Learn about preventing infectious disease at our quarantine tent.
- Revisit the rich history of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health through our timeline exhibit.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

SUPPORT IHPME

The Institute of Health Policy, Management & Evaluation, as part of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, is the first Canadian public health school to launch its own fundraising campaign. With the support of our generous donors, our Boundless Campaign will enable IHPME to continue shaping training and research in health systems, management and policy.

For more information on how you can get involved, give annually, create a named fund, or consider the School in your estate planning, please contact **Annette Paul, Director of Advancement** at annette.paul@utoronto.ca or visit [IHPME Donate](#) or [Support/Campaign](#). Thank you for your support!

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WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

We're pleased to receive submissions of 400 words or less for consideration in upcoming editions. If you'd like your event listed, please send full details.

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