

| CanNRT Annual Summer School 2026   <b>Year 2</b>                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday, August 16, 2026                                                                                                                | Monday, August 17, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tuesday, August 18, 2026                                                                                                                            | Wednesday, August 19, 2026                                                                                                                                                      | Thursday, August 20, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Friday, August 21, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <div>Hotel Check-in</div> <div><a href="#">Hôtel OMNI Mont-Royal</a><br/>1050 Sherbrooke St W<br/><br/>3:00 p.m.</div>                 | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                  | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                              | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Introductions and Welcome</b><br><i>Ellie-Anna Minogianis, Vanessa Tamburro</i><br>9:30 - 10:00 a.m.   University Club                                                                                                                                      | <b>New Approaches to Understanding Neurodevelopmental Conditions</b><br><i>Ryan Yuen</i><br>9:30 – 10:30 a.m.   University Club                     | <b>Neuroimaging (Mostly MRI) in Autism and ADHD</b><br><i>Kara Murias</i><br>9:30 - 10:30 a.m.   University Club                                                                | <b>Sharing your Science: Networking, LinkedIn, and Building a Professional Network</b><br><i>Sarah Geahchan, Courtney Irwin, Gabriela Kennedy, Ivana Okaro, with Yvonne Hung, Mirjam Guesgen</i><br>9:00 – 10:30 a.m.   University Club | <b>Pharmacological Clinical Trials in Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Conditions</b><br><i>Danielle Baribeau</i><br>9:30 – 10:30 a.m.   University Club                                          |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Expanding the Bar: Adjudicating Excellence in the Canadian Research Ecosystem</b><br><i>Rebecca Pillai Riddell</i><br>10:00 - 11:30 a.m.   University Club                                                                                                  | <b>Introduction to hPSC-based models in autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions</b><br><i>Yun Li</i><br>10:30 – 11:30 a.m.   University Club | <b>Missed at Every Stage: A Lifespan Perspective on ADHD from Girlhood Through Menopause and Beyond</b><br><i>Catherine (Katy) Lowe</i><br>10:30 – 11:30 a.m.   University Club | <b>Break</b><br>10:30 - 10:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Enhancing Equity in Research Participation: Strategies for Inclusion</b><br><i>Julie Scolah</i><br>10:30 – 11:30 a.m.   University Club                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Break</b><br>11:30 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Break</b><br>11:30 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                                  | <b>Break</b><br>11:30 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                              | <b>The Common Intersection of Neurodivergence and 2SLGBTQ+ Identities: A Time for Canadian Research Leadership</b><br><i>John F. Strang</i><br>10:45 – 11:45 a.m.   University Club                                                     | <b>Break</b><br>11:30 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Are you Ready for Inclusive Research? Building Relational Readiness for Meaningful Engagement</b><br><i>Rachel (Rae) Martens, with Roberta Cardoso, Kelly D’Souza</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   University Club                                          | <b>Introduction to Environmental Epidemiology</b><br><i>Eric Fombonne</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   University Club                              | <b>‘Indigenizing’ or Decolonizing Neurodevelopmental Research</b><br><i>Hiba Zafran</i><br>11:45 a.m.– 12:45 p.m.   University Club                                             | <b>A Policy Perspective: Diagnosis, Function, or Need? Rethinking Service Design Through Evidence</b><br><i>Jennifer Zwicker</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   University Club                                                           | <b>Transitioning to the Next Career Stage/Hidden Curriculum and Unspoken Next Steps After Graduation</b><br><i>Vivian Lee, Linda Nguyen, Julie Scolah</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   University Club |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 1:30 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 1:45 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                     | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                 | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Beyond Your Lab: How you Shape and Are Shaped by Research Networks</b><br><i>Mélanie Couture, Rebecca Pillai Riddell, Keiko Shikako, Kelly D’Souza, Catherine (Katy) Lowe, Ebrahim Mahmoudi Kojidi, Ishnoor Nahal</i><br>1:30 – 3:15 p.m.   University Club | <b>Community Activity: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Tour and Workshop</b><br><a href="#">MMFA</a><br>2200 Crescent Street<br>1:45 – 4:45 p.m.       | <b>Introductory Lecture on Open Science</b><br><i>Guy Rouleau</i><br>2:00 – 3:00 p.m.   University Club                                                                         | <b>Making a Case for Policy Change: What is the Change you Want to See in the World?</b><br><i>Keiko Shikako</i><br>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.   University Club                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Break:</b> 3:00 - 3:10 p.m.                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                     | <b>From Principles to Practice: Embedding Open Science in your Research Workflow</b><br><i>Gabriel Pelletier</i><br>3:10 – 4:00 p.m.   University Club                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Fellows’ Dinner</b><br><a href="#">Enoteca Monza</a><br><a href="#">Pizzeria Moderna</a><br>1251 McGill College<br>6:00 – 8:00 p.m. | <b>Welcome and Donor Reception</b><br><a href="#">La Guilde</a><br>1356 Sherbrooke St W<br>4:00 - 6:00 p.m.                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Break:</b> 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Networking Event and Dinner</b><br><a href="#">Hôtel le Germain Montréal</a> - 2050 Mansfield St.<br>5:00 - 8:30 p.m.                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| CanNRT Annual Summer School 2026   <b>Year 3</b>                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday, August 16, 2026                                                                                                                | Monday, August 17, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tuesday, August 18, 2026                                                                                                                       | Wednesday, August 19, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                     | Thursday, August 20, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Friday, August 21, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Hotel Check-in</b><br><br><a href="#">Hôtel OMNI Mont-Royal</a><br>1050 Sherbrooke St W<br><br>3:00 p.m.                            | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                             | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Breakfast:</b> 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Introductions and Welcome</b><br><i>Ellie-Anna Minogianis, Vanessa Tamburro</i><br>9:30 - 10:00 a.m.   University Club                                                                                                                                      | <b>Confounding and Causality Assessment</b><br><i>Eric Fombonne</i><br>9:30 - 10:45 a.m.   Maison Forget                                       | <b>Understanding and Implementing Preferred Language in Autism</b><br><i>Noémie Cusson, Mirjam Guesgen</i><br>9:30 – 11:00 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                | <b>Sharing your Science: Networking, LinkedIn, and Building a Professional Network</b><br><i>Sarah Geachan, Courtney Irwin, Gabriela Kennedy, Ivana Okaro, with Yvonne Hung, Mirjam Guesgen</i><br>9:00 – 10:30 a.m.   University Club | <b>Better Outcomes, Better Research: Practical Methods and Tools for Today’s Researcher</b><br><i>Nancy Butcher</i><br>9:30 - 10:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                               |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Expanding the Bar: Adjudicating Excellence in the Canadian Research Ecosystem</b><br><i>Rebecca Pillai Riddell</i><br>10:00 - 11:30 a.m.   University Club                                                                                                  | <b>Break:</b> 10:45 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                               | <b>Break</b><br>11:00 - 11:15 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Break</b><br>10:30 - 10:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Engaging Communities in Neurodevelopmental Research: Lessons from CAPS and ADHD-LEAP</b><br><i>Emma Climie</i><br>10:30 - 11:30 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Break:</b> 11:30 - 11:45 a.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Introduction to Autistic Mental Health</b><br><i>Jonathan Weiss</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                              | <b>Neurodiversity and AI: Opportunities and Challenges</b><br><i>Azadeh Kushki</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   Maison Forget                  | <b>Starting and Running a Lab, Mentorship, and People Management Skills</b><br><i>Guy Rouleau, Emma Climie, Giacomo Vivanti, Kara Murias, Catherine (Katy) Lowe</i><br>11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   Maison Forget | <b>The Implementation and Evaluation of Autism Interventions</b><br><i>Giacomo Vivanti</i><br>10:45 - 11:45 a.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                       | <b>Transitioning to the Next Career Stage/Hidden Curriculum and Unspoken Next Steps After Graduation</b><br><i>Vivian Lee, Linda Nguyen, Julie Scorah</i><br>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.   University Club |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Lunch :</b> 12:45 - 1:30 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 1:45 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Lunch:</b> 12:45 - 2:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Beyond Your Lab: How you Shape and Are Shaped by Research Networks</b><br><i>Mélanie Couture, Rebecca Pillai Riddell, Keiko Shikako, Kelly D’Souza, Catherine (Katy) Lowe, Ebrahim Mahmoudi Kojidi, Ishnoor Nahal</i><br>1:30 – 3:15 p.m.   University Club | <b>Community Activity: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Tour and Workshop</b><br><a href="#">MMEFA</a><br>2200 Crescent Street<br>1:45 – 4:45 p.m. | <b>Foundation Models in Health Research: From Large-Scale Pretraining to Specialized Clinical Applications</b><br><i>Lina Abou-Abbas</i><br>2:00 - 3:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                   | <b>Making a Case for Policy Change: What is the Change you Want to See in the World?</b><br><i>Keiko Shikako</i><br>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.   University Club                                                                                 | <b>Farewell Lunch</b><br>12:45 - 2:00 p.m.   Maison Forget                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Break:</b> 3:15 – 4:00 p.m.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                | <b>Break:</b> 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Fellows’ Dinner</b><br><a href="#">Enoteca Monza</a><br><a href="#">Pizzeria Moderna</a><br>1251 McGill College<br>6:00 – 8:00 p.m. | <b>Welcome and Donor Reception</b><br><a href="#">La Guilde</a><br>1356 Sherbrooke St W<br>4:00 - 6:00 p.m.                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                | <b>Networking Event and Dinner</b><br><a href="#">Hôtel le Germain Montréal</a><br>2050 Mansfield St.<br>5:00 - 8:30 p.m.                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

# CanNRT Annual Summer School 2026

## Session summaries and speaker information

### Contents

Expanding the Bar: Adjudicating Excellence in the Canadian Research Ecosystem.....3

Are you Ready for Inclusive Research? Building Relational Readiness for Meaningful Engagement.....4

Introduction to Autistic Mental Health .....5

Beyond Your Lab: How You Shape and Are Shaped by Research Networks .....6

New Approaches to Understanding Neurodevelopmental Conditions .....7

Confounding and Causality Assessment .....8

Introduction to hPSC-Based Models in Autism and Other Neurodevelopmental Conditions .....9

Introduction to Environmental Epidemiology ..... 10

Neurodiversity and AI: Opportunities and Challenges..... 11

Neuroimaging (mostly MRI) in autism and ADHD..... 12

Understanding and Implementing Preferred Language in Autism ..... 12

Missed at Every Stage: A Lifespan Perspective on ADHD from Girlhood Through Menopause and Beyond..... 14

Starting and Running a Lab, Mentorship, and People Management Skills..... 15

‘Indigenizing’ or Decolonizing Neurodevelopmental Research? ..... 16

Introductory Lecture on Open Science ..... 17

Foundation Models in Health Research: From Large-Scale Pretraining to Specialized Clinical Applications..... 18

From Principles to Practice: Embedding Open Science in Your Research Workflow ..... 19

Sharing your Science: Networking, LinkedIn, and Building a Professional Network ..... 20

The Common Intersection of Neurodivergence and 2SLGBTQ+ Identities: A Time for Canadian Research Leadership ..... 21

The Implementation and Evaluation of Autism Interventions ..... 22

A Policy Perspective: Diagnosis, Function, or Need? Rethinking Service Design Through Evidence..... 24

Challenges in Conducting Online Neurodevelopmental Research: Bots, Scammers, Imposters, oh my! ..... 25

Making a Case for Policy Change: What is the Change You Want to See in the World?.....26

Pharmacological Clinical Trials in Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Conditions .....27

Better Outcomes, Better Research: Practical Methods and Tools for Today’s Researcher.....28

Enhancing Equity in Research Participation: Strategies for Inclusion.....29

Engaging Communities in Neurodevelopmental Research: Lessons from the Canadian ADHD Priorities Survey (CAPS) and ADHD-LEAP .....30

Transitioning to the Next Career Stage/Hidden Curriculum and Unspoken Next Steps After Graduation .....31

**Note:** Session details may be updated as additional information becomes available.

**Monday, August 17, 2026**

**10:00 - 11:30 AM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2 & Y3**

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**Expanding the Bar: Adjudicating Excellence in the Canadian Research Ecosystem**

**Format:** Interactive workshop

**Summary:** Building on a foundation of an innovative new open-access learning platform funded by the Canada Research Chairs Equity Diversity and Inclusion Fund (POLARIS), DIVERT NPI and accidental EDI advocate, Dr. Rebecca Pillai Riddell, CPsych, FCAHS will present an interactive workshop targeted at faculty and students who struggle with evolving understandings of how to understand and adjudicate excellence for grants and awards. Following her personal journey through accidental advocacy, Dr. Pillai Riddell will present concrete advice that was co-created with researchers from across a diverse array of lived experiences within academia. There will also be an interactive activity to apply strategies you have learned right away. To support the application of the knowledge in your everyday professional life, the goal of the workshop will not be to tell you what to do, but rather support how you think about justice, equity, and inclusion when you have to judge the “excellence” of other colleagues.

**Learning objectives:**

- Identify common biases that affect the evaluation of researchers for awards, grants, and jobs
- Build awareness of structures that often perpetuate bias in research systems
- Gain practical skills in how to approach the adjudication of researchers

**Speaker: Rebecca Pillai Riddell**, PhD (she/her), Tier 1 York Research Chair in Pain and Mental Health; Professor of Psychology; Director, OUCH Laboratory; Nominated Principal Investigator, DIVERT Mental Health, York University

Dr. Pillai Riddell is the Tier 1 York Research Chair in Pain and Mental Health and Director of the Opportunities to Understand Childhood Hurt Laboratory (OUCH Lab; [www.yorku.ca/ouchlab](http://www.yorku.ca/ouchlab)) in the Department of Psychology of York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She is also a registered clinical psychologist, licensed to work with children and adults in clinical and health psychology. As both a basic-behavioural scientist and a clinician-scientist, Dr. Pillai Riddell currently leads a multi-national, multi-million dollar research program that studies preterm infants and their parents in Neonatal Intensive Care Units. Her research programs ultimately seek to advance a transdimensional understanding of infant pain (cortical, cardiac, behavioural, and social) and support applications of this understanding for real clinical practice. Her research is funded by all three national Canadian research councils (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). She has also been involved extensively in supporting EDI initiatives in research contexts at both the institutional and federal levels. She is the founding director of the POLARIS training collaboration to teach academics how to adjudicate faculty for awards and jobs inclusively (<https://www.yorku.ca/research/project/polaris/>) and is the Nominated Principal Investigator for DIVERT Mental Health.

**Suggested reading:** [POLARIS training modules \(for non-York affiliates\):](https://www.yorku.ca/research/project/polaris/access-to-our-polaris-modules-as-a-non-york-professor/)  
<https://www.yorku.ca/research/project/polaris/access-to-our-polaris-modules-as-a-non-york-professor/>

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

# Are you Ready for Inclusive Research? Building Relational Readiness for Meaningful Engagement

**Format:** Workshop

**Summary:** Many researchers value equity, diversity, and inclusion, yet translating those values into everyday research practice can be challenging. This workshop explores why inclusive research is an implementation challenge as much as an ethical one. Participants will examine how systems, policies, relationships, and research culture influence participation and discover practical tools to identify readiness gaps before they become barriers. The session emphasizes sustainable approaches that embed inclusion into research design rather than treating it as an afterthought.

### Learning objectives:

- Explain why inclusive research depends on implementation factors such as context, organizational readiness, and relational capacity
- Identify gaps in research processes and environments that may limit equitable participation and meaningful engagement
- Develop an action plan to improve readiness for inclusive research using evidence-informed engagement and implementation strategies

**Facilitators:** Roberta Cardoso, Kelly D'Souza

**Speaker:** Rachel (Rae) Martens, Knowledge Broker, University of Calgary

Rae Martens is a Knowledge Broker and Research Engagement Strategist in Calgary, Alberta. She specializes in bridging the gap between research, practice, policy, and lived experience to create more meaningful, inclusive, and actionable research.

Rae currently serves as Knowledge Broker for the Family Engagement in Research (FER) Program at the CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research and supports the Azrieli Accelerator at the University of Calgary, where she develops engagement strategies, researcher training, and implementation supports. Her work focuses on knowledge mobilization, implementation science, patient and family engagement, accessibility, and co-design in neurodevelopmental disability research.

Rae is a member of the Canadian Neurodevelopmental Research Training (CanNRT) Platform Steering Committee, where she contributes to the strategic direction of the national training platform and helps advance accessible, community-engaged research training for the next generation of researchers.

Drawing on both professional expertise and lived experience as a caregiver and disabled person, Rae is passionate about strengthening relationships between researchers and communities. Through teaching, consulting, and science communication, she helps build research systems that are collaborative, equitable, and designed to create meaningful impact.

**Suggested reading:**

- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19840381/>
- <https://thecenterforimplementation.com/toolbox/context-compass-framework>
- [https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/4605/Design-JusticeCommunity-Led-Practices-to-Build-the?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/4605/Design-JusticeCommunity-Led-Practices-to-Build-the?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | MAISON FORGET | Y3

**CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH**

**Introduction to Autistic Mental Health**

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This introductory lecture will explore the intersection of autism and mental health, highlighting the elevated prevalence of co-occurring mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and emotion dysregulation. Drawing on an ecological systems perspective, the session will examine how individual, family, school, and community-level factors contribute to risk and resilience. The lecture will also review evidence-based psychological interventions tailored for autistic youth, and discuss emerging strategies to build capacity in mental health services, including workforce development. Attendees will gain a foundational understanding of the complexities and opportunities in conducting research on mental health for neurodivergent populations.

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the prevalence and presentation of co-occurring mental health conditions in autistic children and youth
- Identify key ecological and systemic factors that influence mental health outcomes in autistic youth
- Explore evidence-based approaches and service models that support mental health for the autistic community, with a focus on building capacity

**Speaker:** Jonathan Weiss, PhD (he/him), Professor, Department of Psychology, York University

Professor and York University Research Chair in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; Department of Psychology, York University -- Jonathan Weiss, Ph.D., C.Psych. is a Professor of Psychology at York University and holds the York Research Chair in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. A registered psychologist, his research focuses on improving mental health outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities. He is also a Collaborating Scientist at the Azrieli Centre for Neurodevelopmental Research at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and is widely recognized for his leadership in community-based mental health research and advocacy. His work explores psychological interventions, the ecological correlates of mental health, and strategies to build capacity for developmental disability mental health services.

## NETWORK OF NETWORKS: INTERDISCIPLINARY & COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

### Beyond Your Lab: How You Shape and Are Shaped by Research Networks

**Format:** Panel and interactive workshop

**Summary:** Many trainees are connected to one or more research networks but may not fully understand the opportunities, resources, and pathways for engagement available through them. This interactive panel and workshop will explore the dynamic relationship between trainees and research networks, highlighting how networks support research, collaboration, knowledge mobilization, training, and career development, while also demonstrating the important role trainees play in shaping these communities. Through panel discussions featuring network leaders and trainees, collaborative activities, and peer-to-peer dialogue, participants will learn about the value of research networks, discover practical ways to become involved, and reflect on how they can contribute to strengthening Canada's neurodevelopmental research ecosystem.

#### Learning objectives:

- Describe the role of research networks in advancing neurodevelopmental research, collaboration, training, and knowledge mobilization
- Recognize and evaluate opportunities for engagement within research networks, including participation, collaboration, leadership, and mentorship activities
- Identify one concrete action they can take to become more actively involved in a research network and contribute to its development and impact

#### Speakers:

- **Mélanie Couture**, PhD (she/her), Associate Dean, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Professor, School of Rehabilitation, University of Sherbrooke, TACC co-director
- **Rebecca Pillai Riddell**, PhD (she/her), Tier 1 York Research Chair in Pain and Mental Health and Director of the Opportunities to Understand Childhood Hurt Laboratory in the Department of Psychology of York University in Toronto, Nominated Principal Investigator for DIVERT Mental Health
- **Keiko Shikako**, PhD (she/her), Associate Professor, School of Physical and Occupational Therapy and Canada Research Chair in Childhood Disability: Participation and Knowledge Translation, McGill University, CHILD-BRIGHT Knowledge Mobilization Program Co-Lead & Principal Investigator
- **Kelly D'Souza**, ME (she/her), PhD Student, Human Development, Educational & Counselling Psychology, McGill University, TACC Trainee Co-Lead
- **Catherine (Katy) Lowe**, MSc (she/her), PhD Candidate, School and Applied Child Psychology, University of Calgary, CanNRT Fellow
- **Ebrahim Mahmoudi Kojidi** (he/him) is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine (Occupational Therapy) at the University of Alberta and a CanNRT Fellow
- **Ishnoor Nahal**, BSc (she/her), PhD Candidate, Medical Science, University of Calgary, CanNRT-IMPACT Fellow

## BIOMEDICAL & DISCOVERY SCIENCE

### New Approaches to Understanding Neurodevelopmental Conditions

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Rapid advances in genome sequencing technologies have transformed our understanding of the genetic architecture of neurodevelopmental conditions. While early studies focused largely on single nucleotide variants and copy number variants, emerging forms of genetic variation are revealing additional layers of biological complexity and helping us better understand differences in neurodevelopmental outcomes. These discoveries are reshaping our understanding of how genomic variation influences brain development, neurodiversity, and neurodevelopmental outcomes.

This session will highlight recent advances in genomic discovery, with a focus on how emerging technologies are uncovering previously overlooked forms of variation associated with neurodevelopmental conditions. Through examples from autism, schizophrenia, and related conditions, we will explore how different classes of genetic variation influence gene regulation and neurodevelopmental pathways and may contribute to differences in neurodevelopmental outcomes. Attention will be given to tandem repeats as an important and increasingly recognized source of genetic variation, as well as the opportunities provided by long-read sequencing and genome-wide approaches to better understand their biological effects.

By integrating findings from large-scale genomic studies with emerging mechanistic insights, this presentation will illustrate how advances in genetics are providing new opportunities to understand the biological mechanisms underlying neurodevelopment, improve diagnosis, and ultimately support more precise approaches to research and clinical care.

#### Learning objectives:

- Describe how emerging forms of genetic variation contribute to the genetic architecture of neurodevelopmental conditions
- Explain how advances in genome sequencing and genomic analysis are enabling the discovery of previously overlooked disease-associated variants
- Discuss how genetic discoveries can inform our understanding of neurodevelopmental mechanisms, variation in neurodevelopmental outcomes, and future clinical applications

**Speaker:** Ryan Yuen, PhD (he/him/his), Senior Scientist, The Hospital for Sick Children

Dr. Ryan Yuen is a Senior Scientist in the Genetics & Genome Biology Program at the Hospital for Sick Children, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Molecular Genetics at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on exploiting whole genome-scanning methodologies to dissect the underlying genetic architecture in autism and other related conditions.

## POPULATION, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HEALTH

**Confounding and Causality Assessment**

**Format:** Interactive session

**Summary:** This interactive session builds on last year's introductory lecture on environmental risk (please review your notes, if available). Before the workshop, participants should read my 2025 editorial on acetaminophen (see below). You may also briefly review the other two references, focusing only on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as the outcome. In Prada et al., please examine Table 6. In Ahlqvist et al., focus on the ASD results in Figure 3 (top panel), Table 2 (top section), and the Discussion.

We will use this example to illustrate the concept of confounding, including confounding by indication, and to discuss how unmeasured factors may continue to bias an association even after extensive statistical adjustment. We will also review two approaches used in Ahlqvist et al.—negative control analyses and sibling-comparison designs—that can help account for confounding and improve estimates of associations, including when important confounders have not been directly measured.

**Learning objectives:**

- Comprehend the role of confounding factors, both measured and unmeasured
- Appreciate the use of negative controls to adjust for unmeasured confounding factors
- Examine how sibling designs allow researchers to adjust for unmeasured confounding factors

**Speaker:** Eric Fombonne, MD (he/him) Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University

Dr. Eric Fombonne trained in child and adolescent psychiatry in France. He held appointments as clinical scientist at the National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM, France), as Senior Lecturer and Reader at the Institute of Psychiatry and Maudsley Hospital, King's College London, UK (1993-2001), as tenured Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University (Canada), Head of the Division of Child Psychiatry and Canada Research Chair in Child Psychiatry (2001-2012). In September 2012, he joined the Department of Psychiatry at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon (USA) where he is now Professor Emeritus. He has a long experience of clinical work with autistic children and their families, over the lifespan, and has been also directing clinical services for teenagers with depression. His research activities on neurodevelopmental conditions and psychiatric disorders encompass clinical/longitudinal, population-based epidemiological studies in international settings, studies of associated factors and especially of vaccine exposure, clinical trials, and genetic studies. He has published over 400 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 55 chapters in books. He is past Associate Editor of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* (JADD; 1994-2004); he is currently Joint Editor of *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (JCPP; 2016-current) and is on the editorial board of several other journals in the field of autism and child psychiatry. (Complete publication list: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/myncbi/eric.fombonne.1/bibliography/48417593/public/?sort=date&direction=ascending>).

**Suggested reading:**

- Fombonne E. Editorial: The acetaminophen scare: association vs causation. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2025 Nov;66(11):1621-1626. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.70064. Epub 2025 Oct 17. PMID: 41104705.
- Ahlqvist VH, Sjöqvist H, Dalman C, Karlsson H, Stephansson O, Johansson S, Magnusson C, Gardner RM, Lee BK. Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy and Children's Risk of Autism, ADHD, and Intellectual Disability. JAMA. 2024 Apr 9;331(14):1205-1214. doi: 10.1001/jama.2024.3172.
- Prada D, Ritz B, Bauer AZ, Baccarelli AA. Evaluation of the evidence on acetaminophen use and neurodevelopmental disorders using the Navigation Guide methodology. Environmental health. 2025;24(1). doi:10.1186/s12940-025-01208-0

10:30 - 11:30 AM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2

**BIOMEDICAL & DISCOVERY SCIENCE****Introduction to hPSC-Based Models in Autism and Other Neurodevelopmental Conditions**

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This introductory lecture will explore the use of human pluripotent stem cell (hPSC) technology to study autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Participants will gain foundational knowledge on how hPSCs are generated and used to model brain development and investigate underlying biological processes.

**Learning objectives:**

- Define human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs) and describe the basic process of generating hPSCs
- Identify key applications of hPSC models
- Understand how hPSC-based models are used to study human brain development, with a focus on neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism
- Recognize the advantages and limitations of hPSC technology in modeling complex neurodevelopmental processes

**Speaker:** Yun Li, PhD, Senior Scientist, Associate Professor, Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto

Dr. Li is a Senior Scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children, and an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto. Her laboratory studies how the human brain forms, what makes it unique from those of other species, and how conditions like autism impact its development and function. Her group takes the experimental approach of modeling human brain development in the dish, utilizing a combination of pluripotent stem cell technology, CRISPR/Cas9-mediated genome engineering, and 3D brain organoids.

To learn more: <https://lab.research.sickkids.ca/li/>

## POPULATION, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HEALTH

## Introduction to Environmental Epidemiology

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This lecture introduces key concepts in environmental epidemiology with a focus on autism. Dr. Fombonne will review major findings related to environmental factors associated with autism, highlighting the methodological challenges in studying these associations. The session will also explore the complexities of study design in environmental research and address issues such as residual confounding. Attendees will gain a foundational understanding of how environmental exposures are investigated in relation to neurodevelopmental outcomes.

**Learning objectives:**

- Review some substantial findings on environmental factors associated with autism
- Appreciate the complexity of designing and executing environmental studies of autism
- Understanding confounding (by indication, by genetic factors, residual and other forms of confounding), and study designs that may reduce it

**Speaker:** Eric Fombonne, MD (he/him) Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University

Dr. Eric Fombonne trained in child and adolescent psychiatry in France. He held appointments as clinical scientist at the National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM, France), as Senior Lecturer and Reader at the Institute of Psychiatry and Maudsley Hospital, King's College London, UK (1993-2001), as tenured Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University (Canada), Head of the Division of Child Psychiatry and Canada Research Chair in Child Psychiatry (2001-2012). In September 2012, he joined the Department of Psychiatry at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon (USA) where he is now Professor Emeritus. He has a long experience of clinical work with autistic children and their families, over the lifespan, and has been also directing clinical services for teenagers with depression. His research activities on neurodevelopmental conditions and psychiatric disorders encompass clinical/longitudinal, population-based epidemiological studies in international settings, studies of associated factors and especially of vaccine exposure, clinical trials, and genetic studies. He has published over 400 articles in peer-reviewed journals, 55 chapters in books. He is past Associate Editor of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* (JADD; 1994-2004); he is currently Joint Editor of *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (JCPP; 2016-current) and is on the editorial board of several other journals in the field of autism and child psychiatry. (Complete publication list: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/myncbi/eric.fombonne.1/bibliography/48417593/public/?sort=date&direction=ascending>).

**Suggested reading:**

- Fombonne E. The autism 'epidemic': misinterpretation, misinformation and conspiracy. *Eur J Epidemiol.* 2025 Oct 10. doi: 10.1007/s10654-025-01316-8. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41071434.
- Fombonne E. Editorial: The acetaminophen scare: association vs causation. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry.* 2025 Nov;66(11):1621-1626. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.70064. Epub 2025 Oct 17. PMID: 41104705.

## BIOMEDICAL & DISCOVERY SCIENCE

### Neurodiversity and AI: Opportunities and Challenges

**Format:** Interactive session

**Summary:** Artificial intelligence (AI) offers unprecedented opportunities to move beyond broad diagnostic labels and toward a more individualized understanding of neurodiversity. This session will explore how large-scale, multimodal datasets and artificial intelligence can help identify meaningful differences in developmental trajectories, strengths, challenges, and support needs, enabling more precise and responsive care.

The session will also examine the growing role of AI-enabled technologies in real-world environments, including wearable sensors, digital phenotyping, adaptive learning platforms, and assistive technologies. We will explore how these tools can support participation, learning, and well-being in everyday settings, while also addressing key challenges and areas of concern. Together, these advances have the potential to transform how we understand and support neurodivergent children and youth.

#### Learning objectives:

- Describe how artificial intelligence and large-scale, multimodal datasets can advance our understanding of neurodiversity beyond traditional diagnostic categories, enabling more individualized identification of strengths, challenges, developmental trajectories, and support needs
- Describe emerging AI-enabled technologies in real-world settings, including wearable sensors, digital phenotyping, adaptive educational tools, and assistive technologies, while considering key challenges related to implementation, ethics, privacy, equity, and accessibility

**Speaker:** Azadeh Kushki, PhD (she/her), Senior Scientist/Professor/Associate Chief, Data Science, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital/University of Toronto

Dr. Azadeh Kushki is the Canada Research Chair in Neurodiversity and Personalized Health (tier II), and the Associate Chief of Data Science and a senior scientist at the Bloorview Research Institute, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. She is also a Professor at the Institute of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Toronto, and the Lead of Analytics for the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders Network (POND). Dr Kushki leads the Neurodiversity and Personalized Health Lab at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, a highly translational program of research focused on using data science and AI to advance personalized health for neurodivergent children.

## Wednesday, August 19, 2026

9:30 - 10:30 AM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2

### CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

## Neuroimaging (mostly MRI) in autism and ADHD

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This session will give an overview of neuroimaging in pediatric populations with a focus on investigation of neurodevelopment and neurodiverse populations. There will be an overview of different MRI methods, some examples of things we have learned about diversity of brain development from neuroimaging, and comments on neuroimaging analysis in relation to complex or longitudinal datasets.

**Learning objective:** Opportunities and limitations of MRI and neuroimaging in neurodevelopmental research

**Speaker:** Kara Murias, MD, PhD, FRCPC (she/her), Assistant Professor, University of Calgary

Dr. Kara Murias, MD, PhD, FRCPC, is an Assistant Professor in the Cumming School of Medicine Departments of Pediatrics, Clinical Neuroscience and Psychiatry, and a pediatric neurologist at the Alberta Children's Hospital. She completed her MD, PhD, and Pediatric Neurology residency at the University of Calgary. She is a physician in division of Developmental Pediatrics, and a researcher within Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute - Owerko Centre and the Hotchkiss Brain Institute – Mathison Centre. Her research focuses on the different trajectories of cognitive development in children with neurodevelopmental conditions, as well as genetic and neurologic disease, what underlies cognitive differences, and gaining evidence for interventions. As a member of the CanNRT Mentorship and Membership Committee she will be participating in “Talent and Capacity Building” and networking sessions.

9:30 - 11:00 AM | MAISON FORGET | Y3

### KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

## Understanding and Implementing Preferred Language in Autism

**Format:** Interactive session

**Summary:** As a CanNRT Fellow, you will likely be working with Autistic people or researching autism, and will encounter many scenarios where you will write about Autistic people. The goal of this workshop is to share evidence- and experience-based guidelines on the preferred language in autism. You will also have the opportunity to practice implementing those guidelines to rewrite texts that you may encounter in your work or research.

The workshop will give you a deeper understanding of an Autistic person's experience, and demonstrate how language can either cause people to feel alienated or pathologized, or respected and empowered. Rather than presenting a fixed set of guidelines, this workshop was co-developed with Autistic people and is interactive.

#### **Learning objectives:**

- Understand Autistic people's experiences, and demonstrate how language can be both empowering or lead to feeling alienated
- Have evidence- and experience-based guidelines for preferred language in autism
- Implement these guidelines for texts that you may encounter in your work/research

#### **Speakers:**

**Mirjam Guesgen**, PhD (she/her), Workshop facilitator, McGill Writing Centre, McGill University

Mirjam Guesgen is an award-winning journalist, writing for outlets in Canada, the US and abroad. She also writes scripts for popular YouTube channels like SciShow, where her videos reach an audience of more than 8 million. As part of the McGill Writing Centre, she teaches written communication skills through workshops like this and the WCOM314 Communicating Science class. Before becoming a journalist full-time, she completed her PhD in Zoology at Massey University in New Zealand and a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Alberta. Her forthcoming book, *The Rise and Fall of the Lab Rat*, will be published in 2028.

**Noémie Cusson** (she/her), PhD candidate, Psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal, and CanNRT Alumna and Steering Committee member

Noémie Cusson is a PhD candidate in psychology at l'Université du Québec à Montréal and is a former CanNRT Fellow. Her thesis focuses on empathy and emotional sharing in autism, and she is supervised by Dr. Isabelle Soulières and Dr. Laurent Mottron. As someone with lived experience, she strives for her research to contribute to a better understanding of autism and to improve the quality of life of Autistic people. She is also committed to disseminating knowledge about autism to diverse audiences and is involved in various science outreach initiatives. Finally, she is a current member of CanNRT's Steering Committee as well as RNETSA's (*Réseau national d'expertise en trouble du spectre de l'autisme*) Scientific Committee and was formerly the co-chair of CanNRT's Curriculum Co-Design Committee.

#### **Suggested reading and preparation:**

- [Autism Alliance of Canada/Alliance canadienne de l'autisme Autism Language Guide/Guide de terminologie en autisme](#)
- [Preferences for Identity-First and Person-First Language: A Systematic Review of Research With Autistic Adults/Adults With Autism](#)
- [First Do No Harm: Suggestions Regarding Respectful Autism Language](#)
- [Research by autistic researchers: an "insider's view" into autism. The autistic way of being](#)

*The main workshop activity will also be provided beforehand, to give people time to read it. Please let us know if you would also like the workshop slides ahead of time.*

CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

## Missed at Every Stage: A Lifespan Perspective on ADHD from Girlhood Through Menopause and Beyond

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This session will examine attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in girls and women from a lifespan neurodevelopmental perspective, emphasizing how a condition that begins early in development may present, persist, and change across major developmental stages and life transitions. Drawing on the broader literature, the session will highlight patterns of under identification, delayed diagnosis, and downstream barriers to treatment in girls and women, and consider how changing developmental demands, social context, and hormonal transitions may shape symptom expression and impairment over time. Attention will be paid to the relationship between expected shifts in estrogen and dopaminergic activity as a possible framework for understanding changes in attention, executive functioning, and impairment across the lifespan.

The session will also present emerging findings from the baseline time point of the ADHD-Her project and discuss how these early findings can inform future phases of research on girls and women with ADHD, including longitudinal follow-up focused on developmental trajectories, functioning, mental health and risk across key transition periods (i.e., puberty, emerging adulthood, pregnancy, postpartum, perimenopause, and menopause). When ADHD in girls and women is missed or diagnosed late, the consequences can accumulate across the lifespan. These may include poorer mental and physical health, academic and occupational underfunctioning, social impairment, relationship distress, and even shortened life expectancy. Importantly, these burdens may be greater for women with ADHD relative to women without ADHD and men with ADHD. Identifying the risk and resilience factors that shape these outcomes, and understanding how they operate across developmental periods, is crucial for advancing research, improving early identification, and informing more effective supports that encompass developmental periods beyond childhood and adolescence.

**Learning objectives:**

- Identify key developmental and hormonal transitional periods that may influence symptom expression, impairment, and recognition of symptoms, and explain how the expected shifts in estrogen interact with dopaminergic activity to impact ADHD symptom expression and experience impairment
- Recognize the implications of patterns of underidentification and delayed diagnosis, and downstream barriers to interventions in girls and women with ADHD
- Discuss how emerging ADHD-Her results may inform understanding of this neurodevelopmental condition at different life stages, identifying risk and resilience factors and future longitudinal follow-up

**Speaker: Catherine (Katy) Lowe**, MSc (she/her), PhD Candidate, CanNRT Year 3 Fellow, University of Calgary, and CanNRT Mentorship & Membership Committee member

Catherine (Katy) Lowe, MSc, is a PhD candidate in School and Applied Psychology and a CanNRT doctoral fellow whose current work focuses on ADHD in girls and women across the lifespan via the collaborative national ADHD-Her project. Her research examines how key developmental periods,

psychosocial experiences, and hormonal transitions from childhood through older adulthood shape the outcomes of ADHD in girls and women. Based on her previous research and clinical training in child mental health and neurodevelopment, Katy is excited to participate in ADHD-Her to advance women's health research and understanding of ADHD in girls and women.

11:15 AM – 12:45 PM | MAISON FORGET | Y3

## TALENT & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

### Starting and Running a Lab, Mentorship, and People Management Skills

**Format:** Panel discussion

**Summary:** This will be a skills-based and interactive discussion covering aspects associated with initial steps in a research career (emphasis on academic and clinical research but consideration for non-academic career paths as well). Discussion will include starting and setting up a lab, where to look for resources and assistance, recruiting and human resource management, financial aspects and budgeting, choosing which grants to apply for, and moving into a mentor role.

**Learning objective:** Gain confidence and network connections to assist with career development

#### Panelists:

- **Emma Climie**, PhD, R.Psych, Associate Professor in the School and Applied Child Psychology Program at the University of Calgary and Director of the Strengths in ADHD Research Lab. Dr. Climie's research focuses on strengths-based approaches to ADHD, resilience, emotion regulation, and the well-being of children, adolescents, and families.
- **Guy Rouleau**, OC, OQ, MD, PhD, FRCPC, FRSC, FAAN, Distinguished James McGill Professor at McGill University, Chair of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, and co-founder of the Tanenbaum Open Science Institute. Dr. Rouleau is an internationally recognized neurologist-geneticist whose research has led to the discovery of numerous genes associated with neurological and psychiatric disorders.
- **Giacomo Vivanti**, PhD, Joan & Jack Craig Chair in Autism Research and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre. Dr. Vivanti's research focuses on improving outcomes for autistic individuals through early identification, personalized interventions, implementation science, and clinical research.

#### Facilitators:

- **Kara Murias**, MD, PhD, FRCPC, is an Assistant Professor in the Cumming School of Medicine Departments of Pediatrics, Clinical Neuroscience and Psychiatry, and a pediatric neurologist at the Alberta Children's Hospital. She completed her MD, PhD, and Pediatric Neurology residency at the University of Calgary. She is a physician in the division of Developmental Pediatrics, and a researcher within Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute - Owerko Centre and the Hotchkiss Brain Institute – Mathison Centre. Her research focuses on the different trajectories of cognitive development in children with neurodevelopmental conditions, and genetic and neurologic disease, what underlies cognitive differences, and gaining evidence for interventions. As a member of the Mentorship and Membership committee she will be participating in "Talent and Capacity Building" and networking sessions.

- **Catherine (Katy) Lowe**, MSc, is a PhD candidate in School and Applied Psychology and a CanNRT doctoral fellow whose current work focuses on ADHD in girls and women across the lifespan via the collaborative national ADHD-Her project. Her research examines how key developmental periods, psychosocial experiences, and hormonal transitions from childhood through older adulthood shape the outcomes of ADHD in girls and women. Based on her previous research and clinical training in child mental health and neurodevelopment, Katy is excited to participate in ADHD-Her to advance women's health research and understanding of ADHD in girls and women.

**Suggested reading/ preparation:** *Please consider questions and concerns for discussion.*

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2

## INDIGENOUS RESEARCH & RECONCILIATION

### 'Indigenizing' or Decolonizing Neurodevelopmental Research?

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This session will orient participants to Indigenous health research in the domain of neurodevelopment, will outline research principles with examples, and provide concrete tools for researchers.

#### Learning objectives:

- Orient to the history and present landscape of neurodevelopmental research with/for Indigenous groups
- Identify the epistemological challenges in conducting research with and for Indigenous groups
- Understand the overarching principles of Indigenous research paradigms
- Locate specific resources and next steps for culturally safer neurodevelopmental research

**Speaker:** **Hiba Zafran** (she/her), Associate Professor (professional), McGill University

Hiba is a dually licensed occupational therapist – psychotherapist living in Tio'tia:ke on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Territory, currently known as Montréal. Hiba is a part-time academic coordinating partnerships for the Indigenous topics in the occupational therapy curriculum at McGill University, and a part-time community psychotherapist. Her scholarship and practice focus on identifying, analyzing and addressing the rights violations experienced by groups living at the intersection of displacement, racialization, complex queerness, and disability. She is ethically committed to centering how individuals across differing social locations within multiply marginalized communities survive, resist, narrate, and transform conditions of protracted structural, collective, and intergenerational violence. Her recent contributions to the profession of OT include participation in the advisory group for Indigenous engagement in the development of the 2021 Competencies for Canadian occupational therapists, and the development of the 2024 national joint position statement on an intersectional approach to social accountability in occupational therapy.

**Suggested reading:** <https://brocku.ca/thomson-lab/wp-content/uploads/sites/209/Forming-the-Circle-Indigeneity-Neurodevelopmental-Disability-Mental-Health-Sept-2023-1.pdf>

## KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION & SOCIETAL IMPACT

### Introductory Lecture on Open Science

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Open Science is reshaping the research ecosystem by fostering greater transparency, accessibility, collaboration, and reproducibility across all stages of the scientific process. This introductory lecture will provide an overview of the concept of Open Science, the motivations driving its adoption, and the core practices that enable more rigorous, efficient, and impactful research. The lecture will also highlight the work of the Tanenbaum Open Science Institute (TOSI) and its efforts to advance a culture of openness in neuroscience research in Canada and beyond. Dr. Rouleau will also present the Institute's model for embedding Open Science principles within research programs, training initiatives, and institutional structures. By examining opportunities and challenges associated with Open Science, attendees will gain insights into how greater openness can enhance research quality, accelerate discovery, and strengthen trust in science.

**Learning objectives:**

- Learn what is Open Science and its core principles, and how it can accelerate scientific research
- Gain an understanding of the key elements for driving a culture change towards Open Science, and reflect on how this model might apply in the context of your institution, unit or lab

**Speaker:** **Guy Rouleau**, OC, OQ, MD, PhD, FRCPC, FRSC, FAAN, Chair, Department of Neurology & Neurosurgery, The Neuro (Montreal Neurological Institute-Hospital) / McGill University

Dr. Guy Rouleau is a Distinguished James McGill Professor at McGill University and Chair of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery. He also serves as Director of the Division of Molecular Diagnostics within the Department of Clinical Laboratory Medicine at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), where he practices as a neurologist-geneticist. In addition, he is co-founder of the Tanenbaum Open Science Institute (TOSI).

For more than 40 years, Dr. Guy Rouleau and his team have focused on identifying the genes causing several neurological and psychiatric diseases, including autism, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, hereditary neuropathies, epilepsy and schizophrenia, as well as providing a better understanding of the molecular mechanisms that lead to these disease symptoms. Among Dr. Rouleau's main achievements are his contribution to the identification of dozens of disease-causing genes and his discovery of new mutational mechanisms.

Dr. Rouleau has published over 1,000 articles in peer-reviewed journals and has been quoted more than 129,000 times (Google Scholar). He has supervised well over a hundred students at the Masters, PhD and Post-doctoral levels in addition to receiving numerous awards for his contribution to science and society. As co-founder of TOSI, Dr. Rouleau is pioneering a new way of doing research by transforming The Neuro into the first academic institution to adopt Open Science principles to accelerate discovery and benefit patients and society.

## BIOMEDICAL & DISCOVERY SCIENCE

# Foundation Models in Health Research: From Large-Scale Pretraining to Specialized Clinical Applications

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Foundation models are increasingly discussed in health research, often in connection with large language models. However, their potential extends across many types of clinical and biomedical data.

This introductory session will build the concept from the foundations of machine learning, deep learning, representation learning, transfer learning, and self-supervised learning. It will explain how broadly pretrained models can be adapted to specialized health applications, using examples from different biomedical domains. The session will also discuss key limitations and the validation required before these models can be considered clinically useful.

No prior machine-learning or mathematical background is required.

### Learning objectives:

- Explain the key concepts underlying foundation models and how they relate to machine learning, deep learning, transfer learning, and self-supervised learning
- Describe how pretrained models can be adapted to specialized clinical and biomedical applications
- Identify key limitations and validation requirements when applying foundation models in health research

**Speaker:** Lina Abou-Abbas, PhD (she/her), Assistant Professor, School of Engineering, Lebanese American University

Lina Abou-Abbas is an Assistant Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Lebanese American University, specializing in artificial intelligence for biomedical and healthcare applications. Her research focuses on deep learning and explainable AI for physiological signal analysis, particularly EEG and ECG, as well as AI-based drug-target interaction prediction. She is also exploring the emerging potential of foundation models to learn from large-scale biomedical data and support specialized clinical applications. Lina earned her PhD in Engineering from École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) in Montréal and completed her postdoctoral training at McGill University's Montreal Neurological Institute. She is actively engaged in interdisciplinary research and in training and mentoring students in artificial intelligence and biomedical engineering.

## KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION & SOCIETAL IMPACT

### From Principles to Practice: Embedding Open Science in Your Research Workflow

**Format:** Interactive session

**Summary:** This interactive session will guide participants in applying Open Science throughout the research lifecycle. Using real-world test cases inspired by participants' own projects, we'll explore practical strategies, tools, and best practices that promote transparency, reproducibility, collaboration, and efficiency. Along the way, we'll address key considerations around ethics, privacy, and data security to ensure responsible and impactful Open Science implementation.

**Learning objectives:**

- Identify appropriate Open Science tools and workflows to apply at different stages of the research lifecycle
- Recognize common challenges and opportunities for implementing Open Science practices across diverse research contexts
- Apply practical strategies to make your research more open, transparent, and reproducible, regardless of career stage or research domain

**Speaker:** **Gabriel Pelletier**, PhD (He/Him), Open Science Alliance Officer, Tanenbaum Open Science Institute/McGill University

Gabriel is the Open Science Alliance Officer at the Tanenbaum Open Science Institute (TOSI) at The Neuro, McGill University.

In this role, he leads the development and coordination of the TOSI Alliance for Open Neuroscience, a national network of neuroscience and mental health research institutes committed to advancing Open Science. His work focuses on fostering a culture shift in research by promoting collaboration, transparency, and data sharing across institutions.

Gabriel joined TOSI in 2022 as the Open Science Data Manager, where he worked closely with research teams at The Neuro to assess data management needs, implement best practices, and support the adoption of tools that enhance openness and reproducibility. He holds a PhD in Neuroscience from McGill University and previously worked as a Research Associate in the Cognitive Neuroscience Unit at The Neuro.

## TALENT & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

### Sharing your Science: Networking, LinkedIn, and Building a Professional Network

**Format:** Workshop

**Summary:** Many trainees know that networking and online visibility are important for career development, but putting yourself out there can feel uncomfortable, awkward, or even embarrassing. This interactive workshop will explore the emotional barriers that often prevent us from sharing our work, making new connections, and engaging professionally online. Together, we'll discuss practical networking strategies, explore different approaches to navigating platforms such as LinkedIn, and learn how to communicate our science both comfortably and effectively.

#### Learning objectives:

- Reflect on personal barriers to networking and professional visibility
- Identify practical strategies for building and maintaining professional relationships
- Learn approaches for communicating research and professional experiences online (e.g., LinkedIn, other social media)

**Faculty advisors:** Mirjam Guesgen, Yvonne Hung

#### Speakers:

**Sarah Geahchan** (she/her), PhD Candidate, Laboratory Medicine & Pathobiology, University of Toronto

Sarah Geahchan is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto studying autism using human 3D stem cell models. Her research seeks to better understand how brain circuits develop and how changes in this process may contribute to autism. Sarah completed her HBS in Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Toronto. Outside of her scientific life, Sarah enjoys playing soccer, doing Pilates and spending time with friends.

**Courtney Irwin** (she/her), PhD Candidate, Laboratory Medicine & Pathobiology, University of Toronto

Courtney Irwin is a PhD candidate in the Department of Laboratory Medicine & Pathobiology at the University of Toronto. She completed her HBS in Biochemistry at the University of Ottawa. Using 3D stem-cell models, her PhD research seeks to better understand human sensory nervous system development and how this may be altered in neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism. Courtney is also passionate about peer mentorship and is involved in various committees to make science more approachable and accessible to students of different ages. Outside of the lab, you may find her reading, baking, running, or hanging out with her two rescue cats Wren and Finn.

**Gabriela Kennedy** (she/her), MA/PhD Student, Psychology, University of Toronto

Gabriela Kennedy is a first-year master's student in the School and Clinical Child Psychology program at the University of Toronto. She completed her Honours Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Concordia University and her Master of Science in Psychology at the Université de Montréal. Her MSc research sought to advance menstrual equity in neuroscience by investigating the influence of the menstrual cycle on brain function and symptoms associated with neurodevelopmental conditions, particularly in ADHD. Through her MA/PhD training, Gabriela hopes to conduct equity-focused maternal and child health research, examining how minority stress and structural inequities shape maternal well-being and child development.

**Ivana Okaro** (she/her), Master's Student, Neuroscience, McGill University, TACC Trainee Co-Lead

Ivana Okaro is a neuroscience enthusiast with a heart for translating scientific discoveries into healthcare that improves lives. As an MSc student in Neuroscience at McGill University, her work explores novel therapeutic approaches for newborn brain injury. Beyond the lab, Ivana finds joy in developing programs that support marginalized science students and empower youth. Through her efforts as a science communicator, she hopes to bring research beyond the walls of academia and closer to the communities whose lives it has the power to change.

10:45 - 11:45 AM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2

#### POPULATION, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HEALTH

### The Common Intersection of Neurodivergence and 2SLGBTQ+ Identities: A Time for Canadian Research Leadership

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Many neurodivergent people are 2SLGBTQ+, and many 2SLGBTQ+ people are neurodivergent. The most studied of these overlaps is the common intersection of autism and gender diversity, where we are beginning to identify a possible, previously undescribed neurophenotype of autism. We will examine this intersection through epidemiological, neurodevelopmental, biological, sociocultural, and clinical perspectives. Our preliminary findings suggest that autism's phenotype varies not only with assigned sex and gender diversity, but also potentially with sexual orientation. Sexual orientation diversity has only recently begun to be studied in autism, despite its proportional overrepresentation. Beyond autism, emerging research suggests a broader relationship between neurodivergence and 2SLGBTQ+ identities, including ADHD and learning differences. We will survey both of these developing areas.

The talk will also centre the lived experience of individuals at this intersection, including intrinsic strengths and the vibrant self-advocacy movements. We will address some of the current challenges in the field, including patterns of late diagnosis and ongoing debates around self-diagnosis. The United States invested substantially in this work and then abandoned it, terminating all related research initiatives in 2025. I will share my own journey,

including the difficult and painful decision to leave my work in the U.S. and continue it in Canada, and make the case that this is a moment when Canada can lead in the science of intersectional neurodivergence and the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

**Learning objectives:**

- Describe emerging neurophenotypic characteristics common among individuals at the intersection of autism and gender diversity
- Examine the evidence on sexual orientation diversity in autism, and why disaggregating by sexual orientation subtype matters in this work
- Recognize the contributions of individuals at this intersection to civil rights and advocacy movements

**Speaker: John F. Strang**, PsyD (he/him), Neuropsychologist and Associate Professor, Children's National Hospital; George Washington University School of Medicine

Dr. John Strang is a neuropsychologist who partners with autistic and LGBTQIA+ people in his research and clinical work. In October 2026 he will join the Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto as Senior Scientist. He is Associate Professor at George Washington University School of Medicine and Principal Investigator at Children's National Hospital, where he founded and directed the Gender and Autism Program, the first clinical and research initiative for autistic and transgender youth and adults. He directs the LGBTQIA+ and Neurodiversity Research Collaborative.

He leads research funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, including the National Institute of Mental Health, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Human Genome Research Institute. He is part of an Autism Centers of Excellence network dedicated to the needs and experiences of autistic girls, women, and gender-diverse people, as well as late-diagnosed autistic people. An expert in community-based participatory measure development, he bridges psychometrics with community priorities to create novel measures that support self-advocacy. He co-leads longitudinal research on minority stress and development, and the first large-scale study of pubertal suppression's effects on neurodevelopment. He co-authored two of the Unstuck and On Target executive-function interventions, for teens and transition-age youth.

Amid U.S. federal efforts to suppress gender research, including the termination of four of his major NIH grants, he has stewarded his lab through philanthropy and legal action. Dr. Strang is himself LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent.

**10:45 - 11:45 AM | MAISON FORGET | Y3**

**HEALTH SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**The Implementation and Evaluation of Autism Interventions**

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** The evidence base supporting autism interventions has expanded dramatically over the past two decades, yet important gaps remain between research and routine clinical practice. For example, despite strong empirical support for Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions

(NDBIs), these approaches are still implemented inconsistently in community early intervention settings. This presentation will examine the factors contributing to this research-to-practice gap and discuss strategies to promote the adoption, implementation, and sustainment of evidence-based autism interventions. Drawing on implementation science, it will explore how characteristics of the intervention, service systems, organizations, practitioners, families, and broader policy context influence successful implementation. The presentation will also illustrate how implementation science frameworks can guide the identification of translational barriers, inform the design of implementation strategies, support meaningful partnerships with autistic individuals, families, practitioners, and community organizations, and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Finally, it will highlight how integrating effectiveness and implementation research can accelerate the delivery of evidence-based practices and ultimately improve the quality, accessibility, and equity of services and outcomes for autistic individuals and their families.

#### **Learning objectives:**

- Describe key barriers and facilitators influencing the implementation and sustainment of evidence-based autism interventions across clinical, educational, and community settings
- Apply implementation science frameworks to identify translational gaps and develop strategies for improving the adoption, fidelity, and sustainability of evidence-based practices
- Evaluate the role of contextual factors, stakeholder engagement, and implementation outcomes in designing and interpreting autism intervention research that is relevant to real-world practice

**Speaker: Giacomo Vivanti**, PhD (he/him), Professor and Joan & Jack Craig Chair in Autism Research, Department of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University and IWK Health

Giacomo Vivanti, PhD, is the Joan & Jack Craig Chair in Autism Research and Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre. His research focuses on improving outcomes for individuals on the autism spectrum across the lifespan, with particular emphasis on early identification, personalized interventions, and the needs of individuals with high support needs. His commitment to this work is informed by both his scientific training and his lived experience of growing up with two brothers on the autism spectrum who have high support needs.

Dr. Vivanti completed his PhD in Cognitive Science at the University of Siena (Italy), followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California Davis MIND Institute. He subsequently held research and faculty appointments at the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre at La Trobe University (Australia) and the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute (USA), where he served as Associate Professor and led the Early Detection and Intervention Program. His research integrates experimental methods, including eye-tracking and behavioral paradigms, with clinical trials, implementation science, and epidemiological studies to better understand developmental trajectories, optimize autism interventions, and improve access to evidence-based care. His work has been supported by major federal and foundation grants, and he has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications and several books. Dr. Vivanti serves as Associate Editor of the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, is a Fellow of the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR), a member of the Profound Autism Alliance Medical and Scientific Advisory Board, and the clinical director of the Early Start Denver Model Training Program.

**Suggested reading:** Vivanti, G. (2024). Autism early intervention—progress, steps backward, and the reconciliation of conflicting narratives. *Current psychiatry reports*, 26(12), 753-760. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11920-024-01552-x>

## HEALTH SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND IMPLEMENTATION

### A Policy Perspective: Diagnosis, Function, or Need? Rethinking Service Design Through Evidence

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Health and social systems are increasingly challenged to design services that are equitable, effective, and responsive to the needs of children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions. This session will examine how evidence, human rights commitments, and policy priorities intersect to shape these decisions when considering eligibility around diagnosis, functional impairment, or individual need. Drawing on examples from child health and disability policy, participants will explore how governments balance scientific evidence, resource constraints, equity considerations, and obligations under human rights frameworks, including the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The session will discuss the strengths and limitations of diagnosis- and function-based approaches, the importance of person-centred service design, and the role of researchers in informing policy decisions that promote inclusion and participation. Trainees will gain practical insights into how policy is developed, why evidence alone is rarely sufficient for decision-making, and how researchers can maximize the impact of their work by engaging with policy processes and knowledge mobilization to support more equitable, rights-based health and social systems.

#### **Learning objectives:**

- Explain how evidence, human rights, and policy considerations influence service eligibility and design for children and youth with neurodevelopmental conditions
- Consider diagnosis-, function-, and needs-based approaches to service design, and their implications for equity, access, and outcomes
- Identify strategies for translating research into policy to support more equitable and evidence-informed health and social systems

**Speaker: Jennifer Zwicker**, PhD, MPP (she/her), Director Health and Social Policy, School of Public Policy and Associate Professor, University of Calgary/ Kids Brain Health Network

Dr. Jennifer Zwicker is Director of Social Policy and Health at the School of Public Policy and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary. She holds a Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Disability Policy for Children and Youth and serves as Chief Scientist for the Kids Brain Health Network.

Her research program evaluates interventions and informs policy related to the allocation of funding, services, and supports for children and youth with disabilities and their families. Central to her work is strong collaboration with interest holders and governments, enabling the translation of peer-reviewed research into policy papers, op-eds, and briefing notes for provincial and federal ministries and Senate committees.

Dr. Zwicker's research has informed national initiatives, including the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences National Autism Strategy Working Group and the Royal Society of Canada Expert Working Group on disability-inclusive policy during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has been recognized for her

policy leadership as an Action Canada alumna, Governor General Leadership Forum participant, Canada's Top 40 Under 40 recipient, and Killam Emerging Scholar.

**Suggested reading:**

- Disability Policy in Canada: Provincial and Territorial Report <https://kidsbrainhealth.ca/disability-policy-in-canada-provincial-and-territorial-report/>
- Federal report [https://kidsbrainhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Disability-Policy-in-Canada-Federal-Report-Final\\_Nov27.pdf](https://kidsbrainhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Disability-Policy-in-Canada-Federal-Report-Final_Nov27.pdf)

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | MAISON FORGET | Y3

**HEALTH SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**Challenges in Conducting Online Neurodevelopmental Research: Bots, Scammers, Imposters, oh my!**

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Bots, imposters, and scam participants have become a common issue in online research with the rise of artificial intelligence and after the transition to online research that started during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neurodevelopmental research has been affected by this issue as online research can address accessibility needs of people with neurodevelopmental conditions. In this session, Mackenzie Salt will share insights from the Canadian Autistic Adult Needs Assessment project, which was substantially affected by bots and scam participants in both its survey and qualitative phases. He will also include insights from subsequent studies to show changes to scam participant behaviour over time. Strategies around recruitment and advertising to avoid bots, keeping bots and scam participants out of research and what to do if they get into your study will be discussed.

**Learning objectives:**

- How bots and scam participants can compromise online research data of different types and what it looks like when a study begins to be targeted
- How to identify bots and scam participants and strategies researchers can use to address these issues and assess their effectiveness
- Practical recommendations to strengthen the design of future online research in neurodevelopmental conditions

**Speaker: Mackenzie Salt,** PhD (he/him), Assistant Professor, McMaster University

Mackenzie Salt, PhD, is an Autistic autism researcher and a research associate with the McMaster University Autism Research Team (MacART) and the National Centre for Autism Collaboration. He is also a part-time assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University. He holds a PhD in Cognitive Science of Language from McMaster University and he is a CIHR Health System Impact Fellowship program alumnus. He has a background in qualitative research and research engagement. He has worked with Autistic people for over 15 years and he is currently working on several projects, all involving gathering information from and learning from the experiences of Autistic adults and using the findings to inform change. He is also currently the Editor-in-Chief of the all-Autistic editorial board of the Canadian Journal of Autism Equity.

**Suggested reading:**

- Pellicano, E., Adams, D., Crane, L., Hollingue, C., Allen, C., Almendinger, K., Botha, M., Haar, T., Kapp, S. K., & Wheeley, E. (2023). Letter to the Editor: A possible threat to data integrity for online qualitative autism research. *Autism*, 13623613231174543. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231174543>
- Useful to read or refer to after the talk: Carey, M. E., McLean, K. J., Chvasta, K., de Marchena, A., & Roux, A. M. (2025). Methods to reduce fraudulent participation and highlight autistic voices in research. *Autism*, 29(4), 859–867. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241298037>

2:00 - 4:00 PM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2 & Y3

**HEALTH SYSTEMS, SERVICES AND IMPLEMENTATION****Making a Case for Policy Change: What is the Change You Want to See in the World?**

**Format:** Workshop

**Summary:** From fundamental to clinical and implementation science, your research can contribute to improving the lives of people with neurodevelopmental conditions. In this session, we will discuss how your research can inform policy and lead to real impact, and we will work together on a policy pitch for your research.

**Learning objectives:**

- Have a better understanding of the policy process and how research can inform policy
- Identify the relevant policy outcomes in your research
- Develop a cohesive message and strategy to mobilize research into policy

**Speaker:** **Keiko Shikako**, PhD (she/her), Associate Professor, School of Physical & Occupational Health, McGill University

Dr. Keiko Shikako, PhD, OT/erg, Canada Research Chair in Childhood Disabilities: Participation and Knowledge Translation (2015-2025), Associate Professor at McGill University's School of Physical and Occupational Therapy. Her research is grounded in human rights and equity frameworks, focusing on how policies, environments, and programs can contribute to the participation and inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in their communities.

### CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

## Pharmacological Clinical Trials in Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Conditions

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This presentation reviews the current state and future of pharmacological clinical trials in autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions (NDCs). We will review the history of pharmacotherapy trials in autism, discuss widespread psychotropic medication use, and review the limited evidence for effectiveness of medications in neurodevelopmental populations. This session will introduce randomized controlled trial (RCT) methodology, while surveying challenges in trial design, placebo effects, and developmental outcome measurement in trials for those with NDCs. The presentation concludes with a discussion on precision medicine approaches, innovative trial designs, and large collaborative networks as paths forward for the field.

#### Learning objectives:

- Explain the rationale for pharmacological clinical trials in autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions, including current evidence gaps and challenges in treatment development
- Describe key principles and methodological considerations in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) for neurodevelopmental conditions, including placebo effects, outcome measurement, and trial design elements
- Discuss emerging approaches to precision medicine and individualized therapeutics, including the role of genetics, molecular pathways, and innovative trial designs in advancing care for neurodevelopmental conditions

**Speaker:** **Danielle Baribeau**, MD, PhD (she/her), Clinician Scientist, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Dr. Danielle Baribeau is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and clinician scientist at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in Toronto, Canada, with clinical expertise in autism, rare genetic conditions and psychopharmacology. She leads a research program focused on clinically translating genetic advances into improved clinical care for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities. Her research program uses 1) health administrative data linked to genomic data, and 2) clinical trials, to study health outcomes and emerging treatments in neurodevelopmental and rare genetic conditions. She is also the clinical lead of the Ontario Provincial Genetics Program Neurodevelopmental Disorders Expert Group, guiding health system decisions regarding eligibility for genetic testing.

## CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

# Better Outcomes, Better Research: Practical Methods and Tools for Today's Researcher

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Choosing the right outcomes is fundamental to producing high-quality, impactful research. This session will cover principles for selecting, measuring, and reporting outcomes in research studies, and explore how these decisions influence research quality, impact, public trust, and patient care. Learners will be introduced to evidence-based methods, tools, and resources that can be applied to strengthen the design, conduct, and reporting of their own studies.

### Learning objectives:

- Understand key terminology and concepts in outcomes research and measurement science
- Explain good practices for selecting, measuring, and reporting meaningful outcomes in research studies, with a focus on neurodevelopmental populations
- Identify practical methods, tools, and resources to support outcome selection, measurement, and reporting

**Speaker: Nancy Butcher**, PhD (she/her), Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto and Co-Director, Increasing capacity for Maternal and Paediatric Clinical Trials (IMPACT)

Dr. Nancy Butcher is a clinical trialist and methodologist dedicated to improving research quality and health outcomes for children and families. She serves as Co-Director of IMPACT (Increasing capacity for Maternal and Paediatric Clinical Trials), a national clinical trials training and mentorship platform, and is based at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and the mother of two young boys.

### Suggested reading:

- [Core Outcome Measures in Effectiveness Trials](#)
- [COSMIN](#)
- Butcher NJ, et al. Guidelines for Reporting Outcomes in Trial Reports: The CONSORT-Outcomes 2022 Extension. JAMA. 2022;328:2252–2264. doi:10.1001/jama.2022.21022

## CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

### Enhancing Equity in Research Participation: Strategies for Inclusion

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** This presentation addresses the biases that have been inherent in neurodevelopmental research and offers some examples of strategies for mitigating those biases. Historically, research studies in neurodevelopment often fail to include individuals with higher support needs, complex communication needs, females, and those from under-resourced groups. The aim of this presentation is to outline these inequities in research access and participation and to highlight some examples of how to enhance the inclusion of diverse groups in research.

**Learning objectives:**

- Identify research methods that lead to bias/inequitable participation
- Summarize strategies for mitigating selection biases
- Summarize strategies to enhance the successful inclusion of individuals with differing profiles of needs

**Speaker:** Julie Scolah, PhD (she/her), Assistant Professor, McGill University

Dr. Julie Scolah is a licensed neuropsychologist specializing in neurodevelopmental conditions. She holds M.A. and PhD degrees from the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Scolah joined McGill University in 2019 as an Assistant Professor (Professional) in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. She served as Associate Director of the Azrieli Centre for Autism Research Clinic from 2019 to 2023. Scolah was also previously an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary from 2008 to 2011.

Scolah leads the Neurodevelopment Learning Community (NDLC), offering professional development opportunities in neurodevelopment for health professionals. She is the Director of the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Superhub at the MUHC and introduced ECHO-Autism to Quebec. Scolah is a scientific committee member of the Transforming Autism Care Consortium (TACC) and served as a co-investigator for the Quebec 1,000 (Q1K) Families initiative. Scolah also serves as a member on the CanNRT Mentorship and Membership committee. She is also a member of the Child-Bright Network's Knowledge Mobilization Clinician Hub.

Her research interests focus on identifying and addressing barriers to healthcare for neurodivergent individuals. She collaborates on pan-Canadian projects such as Pathways in ASD, the ECHO-Audio study, and the Canadian World Health Organization-CST study. As a clinician, Scolah has expertise in assessing and diagnosing neurodevelopmental conditions in tertiary centres (McMaster Children's Hospital, Alberta Children's Hospital, Montreal Children's Hospital, and The Neuro). Her expertise also extends to leading multidisciplinary teams in home, school, and centre-based interventions for autism.

CLINICAL & APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

## Engaging Communities in Neurodevelopmental Research: Lessons from the Canadian ADHD Priorities Survey (CAPS) and ADHD-LEAP

**Format:** Lecture

**Summary:** Meaningful neurodevelopmental research requires more than rigorous methods; it requires meaningful engagement with the people who will ultimately use and benefit from the findings. This session will use the Canadian ADHD Priorities Survey (CAPS) and the ADHD Lived Experience Advisory Panel (ADHD-LEAP) as case examples to explore how collaborative research can strengthen the relevance and impact of research. CAPS brought together researchers, clinicians, educators, individuals with lived experience, and family members from across Canada to identify priorities for ADHD research and practice using a Delphi consensus methodology. Participants will receive an overview of the Delphi method, including practical considerations for designing and implementing consensus studies, engaging diverse groups in the research process, and translating findings into meaningful recommendations. The session will also describe the development of ADHD-LEAP and the role of lived experience partners in shaping research questions, study design, interpretation of findings, and knowledge mobilization. Drawing on examples from CAPS and ADHD-LEAP, attendees will explore how participatory approaches can improve the quality, relevance, and uptake of neurodevelopmental research while informing clinical practice, education, and policy. Practical strategies for incorporating meaningful engagement into trainees' own research programs will be highlighted throughout.

**Learning objectives:**

- Describe the Delphi consensus methodology and its application for identifying research and practice priorities in neurodevelopmental research
- Explain how meaningful engagement with individuals with lived experience, family members, clinicians, educators, and researchers can strengthen the relevance, quality, and impact of research
- Apply practical strategies for incorporating participatory approaches and lived experience partnerships into the design, implementation, and knowledge mobilization of their own research programs

**Speaker: Emma Climie**, PhD, RPsych (she/her), Associate Professor, Werklund School of Education, Specialization, School and Applied Child Psychology & Director of Training, University of Calgary

Dr. Emma A. Climie is an Associate Professor in the School and Applied Child Psychology program at the University of Calgary and Director of the Strengths in ADHD Research Lab. A registered psychologist, she has over 15 years of experience in research, clinical practice, and graduate training, with a research program focused on strengths-based approaches to ADHD and the social-emotional well-being of children, adolescents, and families. Dr. Climie holds the Carlson Family Research Award in ADHD and is the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on projects funded by SSHRC, CIHR, the Azrieli Foundation, and the University of Calgary. Her research examines resilience, emotion regulation, stigma, positive childhood experiences, and developmental outcomes across the lifespan, with a growing emphasis on girls and women with ADHD. Dr. Climie also serves as Director of Training in her graduate program, supervises undergraduate and graduate trainees, and contributes to several national professional organizations,

including CADDRA- Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance, the Canadian Psychological Association, and the Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs.

**Suggested reading:**

- Miller, C.J., Bedard, A.V., Climie, E.A., Corkum, P., Espinet, S.D., Grizenko, N., Jiang, Y., Rogers, M.A., Toplak, M.E., & Callahan, B.L. (2026). Strategic Investment in ADHD Support: Insights from Canadian Educational and Coaching Professionals. School Mental Health. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-026-09882-2>
- Walji, A., Butt, D., Climie, E.A., Corkum, P., Hechtman, L., Bedard, A-C. V., Jiang, Y., Grizenko, N., Espinet, S.D., Miller, C.J., Rogers, M.A., Toplak, M.E., & Callahan, B.L. (2025). Top ten priorities identified by healthcare professionals to support the clinical care of individuals with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Canadian Delphi study. PLOS One, 20 (12): e0339378. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0339378>

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM | UNIVERSITY CLUB | Y2 & Y3

**TALENT & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Transitioning to the Next Career Stage/Hidden Curriculum and Unspoken Next Steps After Graduation**

**Format:** Interactive session

**Summary:** This session will be facilitated by a panel of academic faculty members from a variety of multidisciplinary backgrounds. The session will describe the process of applying to academic positions and how hiring decisions are made. There will also be an interactive group activity where learners will be placed into groups to review applicant profiles and rank the applicants based on different job descriptions. All learners will then be brought together to discuss characteristics of successful candidates. The session will conclude with a panel discussion in the format of a ‘faculty confessional’, discussing misconceptions, impressions of academic candidates, and unwritten rules of academia.

**Learning objectives:**

- Describe the process of applying to academic positions and review the decisions of hiring committees
- Understand the responsibilities of search committees and unspoken rules of academic hiring processes
- Evaluate and highlight the qualities of candidates for academic positions

**Speakers:**

**Vivian Lee**, PhD (She/Her), Associate Professor, Faculty of Psychology, Carleton University

Dr. Vivian Lee is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and a member of the Pickering Centre for Human Development at Carleton University. Her research focuses on the emotional and mental health of children and youth with autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Guided by developmental psychopathology and family systems perspectives, her work examines how child-, parent-, and system-level factors interact to promote healthy emotional development or contribute to mental health challenges and family stress. She is particularly interested in understanding how these factors shape parent and family well-being across development.

Dr. Lee's research is conducted in close partnership with community-based autism service providers, advocacy organizations, and Autistic individuals and families. Her recent work examines the experiences of culturally diverse autistic families, evaluates community-based psychosocial interventions, and develops evidence to improve the accessibility, quality, and delivery of autism services.

**Linda Nguyen**, PhD (She/Her), Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Azrieli Accelerator, University of Calgary

Dr. Linda Nguyen is an Azrieli Accelerator Assistant Professor in Youth, Sibling, and Community Engaged Research in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. She completed her graduate school training in the School of Rehabilitation Science and CanChild Centre for Childhood-onset Disability Research at McMaster University, followed by her postdoctoral fellowship training in the School of Physical and Occupational Therapy at McGill University.

Her program of research focuses on 1. Supporting siblings who have a sibling with a disability during adolescence and young adulthood; 2. Building training capacity to engage with youth with disabilities; and 3. Mobilizing research into policy and practice.

Throughout her research, she engages with collaborators and research partners including youth and adults with disabilities, siblings, families, healthcare professionals, researchers, and civil society organizations nationally and internationally.

**Julie Scolah**, PhD (She/Her), Assistant Professor, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, McGill University

Dr. Julie Scolah is a licensed neuropsychologist specializing in neurodevelopmental conditions. She holds M.A. and PhD degrees from the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Dr. Scolah joined McGill University in 2019 as an Assistant Professor (Professional) in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. She served as Associate Director of the Azrieli Centre for Autism Research Clinic from 2019 to 2023. Dr. Scolah was also previously an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary from 2008 to 2011.

Dr. Scolah leads the Neurodevelopment Learning Community (NDLC), offering professional development opportunities in neurodevelopment for health professionals. She is the Director of the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Superhub at the MUHC and introduced ECHO-Autism to Quebec. Dr. Scolah is a scientific committee member of the Transforming Autism Care Consortium (TACC) and served as a co-investigator for the Quebec 1,000 (Q1K) Families initiative. Dr. Scolah also serves as a member on the CanNRT Mentorship and Membership committee. She is also a member of the Child-Bright Network's Knowledge Mobilization Clinician Hub.

Her research interests focus on identifying and addressing barriers to healthcare for neurodivergent individuals. She collaborates on pan-Canadian projects such as Pathways in ASD, the ECHO-Audio study, and the Canadian World Health Organization-CST study. As a clinician, Dr. Scolah has expertise in assessing and diagnosing neurodevelopmental conditions in tertiary centres (McMaster Children's Hospital, Alberta Children's Hospital, Montreal Children's Hospital, and The Neuro). Her expertise also extends to leading multidisciplinary teams in home, school, and centre-based interventions for autism.