



Graduate Diploma in Health Research PROGRAM – 2018 SUPERVISOR & PROJECT INFORMATION FORM

Please complete and return via email only (gdip.hres@utoronto.ca) by **September 4, 2018**
(forms received after this date will not be posted).

Supervisor Information

Name: Kulamakan Kulasegaram; Cynthia Whitehead(Co-PI)

Co-Investigators: Paul Tonin

Email: mahan.kulasegaram@utoronto.ca; cynthia.whitehead@utoronto.ca

Degree(s): PhD (Mahan); MD, PhD (Cynthia)

SGS Department: Department of Family & Community Medicine in Dalla Lana

School of Public Health

Academic Rank: Assistant Professor (Mahan); Associate Professor (Cynthia)

Field of Research: Medical Education; Assessment & Evaluation, Learning Science

(Mahan); Critical discourse analysis of assumptions in medical education (Cynthia)

Research Institution Affiliation (if applicable): The Wilson Centre

Allocation of student contact time:

(number of hours per week YOU are available to the student for any concerns or to review progress) 2-3 hrs per week.

Project Information (for posting on GDipHR website)

Title: Accreditation Drives Education; Does Evidence Drive Accreditation?

Description (max 500 words):

The accreditation process for undergraduate medical education in North America requires medical schools to undergo periodic evaluation against pre-specified standards. The purpose of these standards is to ensure quality of process and outcome during education and promote equivalency of *product* across multiple medical schools, i.e. medical students who are similarly qualified and knowledgeable. Evidence for this claim is still emerging and recently, researchers in N. America have begun to evaluate the effect of the processes of accreditation on medical education. This proposed research project goes one step further by critically examining the basis of the accreditation standards themselves and the various implications they have for program improvement, evaluation, and educational quality.

Research questions: 1) If North American, and specifically Canadian accreditation standards are intended to promote high quality education and healthcare, what is the evidence base from which these standards are based, and to what extent are they informed by the current state of education science and practice? 2) Secondly, how is quality constructed within accreditation standards and how do the historical and political context of accreditation help to determine notions of quality?

Methods

This project is a literature review and knowledge synthesis study. A broad archive of peer-reviewed and grey literature will be assembled from existing archives held by the investigators and new literature searches. This literature will capture relevant papers, reports, and other documents on accreditation in medical education. After assembly, the archive will be analyzed using two knowledge synthesis approaches. For question 1, we will conduct a critical scoping review of literature on accreditation through the lens of educational psychology. The scoping review methodology allows for a broad scan of the peer-reviewed and grey literature in order to explore the multiple facets relevant to the question: the

definition of evidence, theories and methods, and degree to which accreditation is informed by empirical study. The theoretical lens of educational psychology will provide an analytical framework from which to evaluate the standards and their implementation against accepted evidence in educational practice. For question 2, a critical Foucauldian discourse analysis will enable analysis of the historical construction of how, why, and when quality is defined in the accreditation standards. By using this critical discursive approach, this analysis will uncover how discourses of quality have informed political and social debates on accreditation standards (including an analysis of power relations), including how these discourses have been taken up in medical education.

Anticipated Outcomes:

The results of this research will allow for critical examination of the assumptions of accreditation processes and practices, as well as examining the evidence base for how accreditation impacts education. The results of question 1 will highlight the relationship between scientific evidence and accreditation as well as approaches to using evidence to inform accreditation. The critical discourse analysis will problematize some of the accepted assumptions of accreditation standards in order to inform a more equitable accreditation system. We anticipate two publications resulting from this study to be published in peer-reviewed medical education journals and two oral presentations.

If human subjects are involved, have the appropriate Research Ethics Board approvals been obtained?

YES NO Application Submitted **N/A**

Do you expect this work will be published within the 20 months?

YES NO Uncertain

Student's roles and responsibilities (please be as specific as possible):

The medical student selected for this project will be required to:

- a) Participate in the literature search, extract, summarize literature, construct and validate an archive with the assistance of the PIs and a librarian
- b) Learn two synthesis methods and apply them to the archive with the assistance of the PIs
- c) Critically evaluate and synthesize literature including through qualitative coding, narrative summaries, and quantitative synthesis where applicable
- d) Learn appropriate analysis software
- e) Participate in team meetings and lead analysis discussions
- f) Orally communicate the findings to a diverse audience
- g) Draft the protocol and first drafts of the papers with assistance from the PIs

Please indicate who will serve as the student's direct report for daily oversight (PI, PhD student, technician, etc...):

Daily supervision will be provided by Drs. Kulasegaram and Whitehead. The student will be expected to be physically present at the Wilson Centre.