MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION & CREMS SPONSORED
RESEARCH AWARDS IN THE HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
2021 SUPERVISOR INFORMATION FORM

If you wish to act as a Supervisor for a first or second year University of Toronto medical student wishing to conduct a research project in the Humanities & Social Sciences between June and August 2021, please complete the form below with as much detail as possible.

***Submit this form to crems.programs@utoronto.ca by the deadline of February 24, 2021***

PART A: Supervisor and On-Site Supervisor Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Kathleen Sheehan and Suze Berkhout (parental leave until July 1st 2021) (co-supervisors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Email Address | suze.berkhout@uhn.ca  
                 kathleen.sheehan@uhn.ca |
| Telephone | 416-340-4800 ext. 3055 |
| Department | Department of Psychiatry |
                             Sheehan  
                             https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=4MTmBSwAAAAJ&hl=en  
                             Berkhout  
                             https://scholar.google.ca/citations?user=e1pVSS8AAAAJ&hl=en |
| Area of Research Project (2 keywords) | Qualitative, COVID19 |
The Discourse of Distress: Using Qualitative Methods to Assess the Need for and Use of Mental Health Supports by Hospital Staff During the COVID19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is a major source of psychological distress for healthcare workers (HCW). Despite concerns about HCW mental health during and following the SARS and H1N1 pandemics, no evidence-based interventions have been developed for supporting HCW during these types of events which can be distressing to individuals and impact care at the systems level. In response to COVID19, we rapidly developed and rolled a stepped-care model of mental health supports for HCW at University Health Network (UHN). We are using a novel mixed-methods approach to conduct both a needs assessment for and evaluation of this program. This includes: surveys and qualitative interviews with potential and actual service users; group and individual discussions with service providers; and examining issues raised at virtual open forums for hospital staff where questions can anonymously be posed to senior leadership.

In this study, we adopt a framework of critical realism in order to have continuity between both aspects of the evaluation. Critical realism, (1) contends with the central concerns of both the social and natural sciences, (2) recognizes that while a “real” world exists independent of our conceptions, we do not always have observable access to every aspect of it, and (3) identifies strength in quantitative analysis for the exploration of empirical regularities, and in qualitative methods for illuminating novel, complex relationships not captured by the predetermined categories of quantitative measures. We use mixed methods, in particular, because both distress and coping are multidimensional constructs that link to identity, meaning, and affective response within a given situation. Qualitative measures in particular offer the opportunity to explore such issues in depth, while quantitative measures contribute a greater sense of the scale of such issues across the population studied.

This project will generate three crucial and timely outcomes to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic: (1) Critical knowledge concerning the nature of HCW distress, a serious challenge to maintaining a healthy and well workforce; (2) Identification of the supports most helpful to HCW, enhancing their ability to cope and remain resilient in their roles; (3) The revision and enhancement of supports, building a responsive support program. We aim to mobilize these outcomes through scholarly and public facing publications as well as through an online and social media strategy.
**Student’s roles and responsibilities in bullet form (please be as specific as possible):**

- Collect and code qualitative data
- Develop thematic understanding of qualitative analysis
- Analyze quantitative data to triangulate with qualitative data if needed
- Work collaboratively with supervisor(s) and other team members
- Goal to write manuscript on topic of interest to student. Potential topics would include: exploration of how distress manifests in hospital workers, comparisons of themes from clinical versus research staff arising in data from open forums, methodology paper on use of qualitative methods to assess distress
- Potentially conduct qualitative interviews and focus groups, if developing this skill of interest and aligned with timeline
- Design project website through word press, if website development skills and knowledge translation are of interest

**Is this project for a specific student, or will you interview and select an interested student who would contact you directly for this opportunity?**

- For a specific student. Name of student: ________________________________
- For whichever student is chosen after interview

**If human subjects are involved, has Ethics been obtained?**

- Yes
- No
- N/A – project received REB waiver