Comprehensive Research Experience for Medical Students
Summer Research Program 2021
Supervisor/Project Information Form

Due February 24, 2021 by email to crems.programs@utoronto.ca

**Supervisor Name:** Susan Abbey

**Project Title:** Understanding Distress: A Mixed-Methods Study to Assess the Need for and Use of Mental Health Supports by Hospital Staff During the COVID19 Pandemic

**Hospital/Research Institution:** University Health Network (Toronto General Hospital); Toronto General Hospital Research institute (TGHRI)

**Email:** susan.abbey@uhn.ca

**Field of Research (2 keywords):** COVID19, mixed-methods

**Department:** Department of Psychiatry

**School of Graduate Studies Appointment (IMS, LMP, IHPME etc)? Yes/No:**

If YES, please name:
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 to support HCW during these types of events, which are 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.

We have used a mixed-methods approach because qualitative measures offer the opportunity to explore issues in depth, while quantitative measures contribute a greater sense of the scale of such issues across the population studied. Our project has generated a substantial amount of data and we are looking for an enthusiastic and self-directed learner to work with the team on analysis and preparation of a manuscript or manuscripts, related to a topic of interest. This could include analysis of survey or qualitative interview data, exploration of themes in the virtual forums, or impact of service improvement initiatives.

We hope to 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.