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:** Matthew Sloan, MD, MSc, FRCPC

**Project Title:** Predictors of Relapse during Remote Alcohol Withdrawal Management

**Hospital/Research Institution:** Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

**Email:** matthew.sloan@camh.ca

**Field of Research (2 keywords):** Addiction, Alcohol Withdrawal

**Department:** Department of Psychiatry

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

*If YES, please name:* Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology
**Brief Project Description (<300 words):**

Alcohol use is one of the leading causes of death and disability in Canada. Many patients require withdrawal management as a first step in alcohol use disorder treatment. However, accessing medically managed withdrawal services can be difficult, as the majority of institutions in Ontario do not reserve beds or space for individuals in need of priority care for substance use disorders. This problem has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, as several addiction treatment centres have closed and patients may be reluctant to seek in-person care due to fears of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. This creates a dangerous barrier to treatment as both untreated alcohol withdrawal and untreated AUD can be fatal.

Symptom-triggered withdrawal management, in which a clinician repeatedly assesses the patient using a standardized withdrawal measurement tool and only administers benzodiazepines when patients are symptomatic, improves treatment safety and efficacy. However, this requires multiple in-person assessments, which is problematic due to the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Using telemedicine to provide remote symptom-triggered alcohol detoxification could significantly decrease the need for in-person monitoring and reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission in both patients and hospital staff.

The goal of our pilot study is to assess the feasibility of remote alcohol withdrawal management. Following remote withdrawal treatment, patients will be monitored for relapse over a period of 30 days. Summer research students will have the opportunity to examine predictors of relapse in this novel treatment paradigm. Students interested in working on this project will: (1) observe data collection for the final participants in the study, (2) assist in preparing relapse data for analysis, and (3) learn how to analyze this data and write up their findings. Data collection is primarily taking place remotely, therefore there will be no need for the student to be present on site.