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: N. Zoe Hilton, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Project Title: Self-harm and Suicide in Forensic Psychiatric Patients

Hospital/Research Institution: Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care

Email: zhilton@waypointcentre.ca

Field of Research (2 keywords): Suicide, Psychiatry

Department: Psychiatry (Waypoint Research Institute)

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

Brief Project Description (<300 words):

Self-harm and suicide are pressing concerns in forensic psychiatry. Individuals in forensic psychiatric units – that serve patients undergoing court-ordered assessment or treatment – have higher rates of self-harm than those in correctional services. In some cases, self-harm has resulted in patient injuries and even death during psychiatric seclusion. Seclusion is used more often, and for longer, in forensic units than in general psychiatric units. Yet, little is known about the prevalence and characteristics of self-harm and suicide attempts among forensic patients.
Some risk factors have been identified (e.g., drug use, schizophrenia). Findings from this project will expand this work and inform risk-reduction efforts.

This project aims to identify the prevalence and risk factors for self-harm and suicide attempts among forensic patients in Ontario’s only high secure psychiatric facility, in an already identified sample of over 600 men. Existing data have been collected on individuals for up to four years of hospitalization. Under the supervision of Waypoint’s Senior Research Scientist (Dr. Hilton), the CREMS student will: 1. Review and summarize existing literature; 2. Participate in generating hypotheses and planning analyses; 3. Create analysis syntax and interpret output; 4. Participate in manuscript writing (depending on timing, results, and student writing ability).

The student will be mentored by Dr. Hilton and work closely with researchers who have extensive experience in quantifying medical data for research. This project is suitable for working off-site. If the student is able to work at the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in Penetanguishene, there is an opportunity to collect additional data about incidents of self-harm, suicide watches, and suicide attempts and to explore new variables of interest to the student. The student will also have the opportunity to attend virtual educational events and meet with clinician-scientists to learn about their work at Waypoint.