Comprehensive Research Experience for Medical Students (CREMS)

2022 Supervisor and Project Information Form

Please complete and return via email ONLY to crems.programs@utoronto.ca by **February 18, 2022**.

**Supervisor Information**

*NOTE: CREMS will not support pre-determined pairings of students and supervisors. Supervisors must agree to open their projects to all students and interview all that are interested.*

**Name:**
Dr. Andrea Simpson

**Email:**
Andrea.Simpson@unityhealth.to

**Department:**
Obstetrics and Gynecology

**Hospital/Research Institution:**
Unity Health – St. Michael’s Hospital

**SGS Department(s) (if applicable):**
Click or tap here to enter text.

**ORCID ID** *(see https://orcid.org/ – If you do not have an ORCID ID we encourage you to sign up for one):*
0000-0002-6020-3075

**Location of Work:**
Unity Health – St. Michael’s Hospital

**Field of Research (up to 4 keywords):**
Gynecology, health equity, homelessness

**Student contact time** *(number of hours per week YOU are available to the student for any concerns or to review progress):*
Senior supervision and guidance will be available to the student for approximately 2 hours per week. However, this is flexible and may need to increase during certain weeks and phases of the study. For instance, communication will need to increase during the initiation of more difficult tasks such as understanding the nuances of data entry. The student will be completely supported in their role and able to ask questions or voice concerns at any stage in the study process. As well, a senior fellow will also be available as a second support for any research related concerns.
Project Information

NOTE: If this project is selected, this information will be posted on CREMS website for interested student applicants to view research opportunities.

PROJECT TITLE:
Access to Gynaecological Care for People Living with Homelessness

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
Including background, aim(s), methodS and significance of the project. Maximum 300 words.
Homelessness has been described as a national health crisis, and Canadian women represent an increasing proportion of this growing issue. Research has shown a higher burden of illness among those who experience homelessness, and accessibility to healthcare is among the barriers at play which impact the mortality of this growing population. The life expectancy of a woman who experiences homelessness is 52 years of age, which is just shy of the completion of the normal physiologic reproductive window. The morbidity and mortality rates of homeless women in Toronto have been estimated to be 5-30 fold higher than expected. To date, much of the literature surrounding health equity and homelessness has focused on the single adult male population, rendering the patterns of illness among women experiencing homelessness misunderstood.

The objective of this needs assessment study is to identify and understand the current gynecological issues and barriers to accessing care faced by individuals experiencing homelessness, with the aim of directing future interventions to assess the prevalence of gynecological disease in this population and inform policy strategies aimed at improving health equity. A mixed-methods study design will be employed. Quantitative outcomes, including menstrual bleeding and pain, will be assessed using previously validated questionnaires. Surveys will be administered by front-line staff working within the Toronto shelter system. Participants will then be invited to participate in focus groups aimed at further understanding the burden of gynecological disease in this marginalized population. This information will be used to create community partnerships and improved clinical care pathways aimed at health equity initiatives. Improved access to gynecological care and the development of patient-centred education tools will improve access and care to people experiencing homelessness and gynecological disease.

Is this project remote-capable (in case of new restrictions) or have an alternative remote option?
☒ Yes, remote capable  ☐ No
☐ Yes, alternate remote option. Please specify (100 words max): Click or tap here to enter text.

If human subjects are involved, have the appropriate Research Ethics Board approvals been obtained?
☒ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Applicable

If yes, please list the application submission date:

Do you expect this work will be published?
☒ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Uncertain / Other
Research Environment and Student Roles and Responsibilities

Please be specific as possible. Please describe the research environment, including availability of required facilities/equipment/expertise, supervisor’s experience and mentorship plans. Please clearly outline the student role(s) and responsibilities related to the project, potential educational value, and indicate who will serve as the student’s direct report for daily oversight (PI, PHD student, technician, etc.). Maximum 300 words.

The student will have opportunity to work alongside the Minimally Invasive Gynecological Surgery team at St. Michael’s Hospital, including the main supervisor (Dr. Simpson) and a senior fellow (Dr. Skolnik), while engaging in multi-disciplinary research. Dr. Simpson and Dr. Skolnik have strong research training backgrounds and numerous peer-reviewed abstracts and publications. Other members of the research team will include experts working within the local shelter system, which provides the student with opportunity to develop partnerships with important community stakeholders. The department also has a dedicated research team and statistical support available. The student will be responsible for a scoping review of the topic as well as participating in the creation and delivery of surveys. The student will have opportunity to engage in data collection and entry which can be done remotely. There will be opportunity to attend in-person focus groups alongside front-line shelter staff. The student will be involved in coding the qualitative data and writing the final manuscript. Support and oversight will be provided continuously at all stages of the study. This work can primarily be completed remotely if required; however, engagement in our team of researchers and physicians is encouraged if it is acceptable at the time. This will be a valuable opportunity to learn qualitative research including data coding and working with marginalized populations to inform future advocacy work.