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: Julie Thorne
Email: Julie.thorne@wchospital.ca

Department: Obstetrics & Gynecology, Temerty Faculty of Medicine
Hospital/Research Institution: Women’s College 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):
0000-0003-0909-8334

Location of Work:
Remote work for the student as per the requirements; project sites are through WCH Bay Centre for Birth Control and Choice in Health Clinic. All data collection and team meetings can happen virtually.

Field of Research (up to 4 keywords):
Family planning, abortion, virtual healthcare

Student contact time (number of hours per week YOU are available to the student for any concerns or to review progress):
We will have a dedicated 1-2hr team meeting every week. Daily communications can happen as needed over phone, text, and email, with additional ad hoc meetings. For example we may block a couple hours to go over a data set outside of the usual planned time.
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:
Evaluation of a Virtual “No Touch” Abortion Program Implemented in the Greater Toronto Area During the COVID-19 Pandemic

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
Including background, aim(s), methods and significance of the project. Maximum 300 words.

BACKGROUND: COVID-19 posed several reproductive health risks to people, included more barriers to accessing safe abortion care (job loss, child care concerns, increased intimate partner violence). “No-Touch” medication abortion (ie medication abortion provided solely through virtual communication) is one way to address these barriers and ensure people maintain access to abortion care.

AIMS: In this study we evaluate the safety, efficacy, and implementation of virtual “no touch” medication abortion programs at two sites in Toronto (WCH and Choice in Health Clinic). Specifically, we aim to report the proportion of cases that convert from “no-touch” to “low-touch” or “full-touch”, report any emergency outcomes, understand whether this care is acceptable, feasible, and appropriate, and develop an understanding of client motivations for seeking “no-touch” medication abortion care.

METHODS: Phase 1—A retrospective chart review: electronic chart review of all clients who have undergone no touch-abortion since April 2020; de-identified data will be entered in a secure REDCap database; Phase 2a--Surveys of clients who underwent a “No Touch” abortion: telephone or emailed survey to consenting patients, using validated measures (Acceptability of Intervention, Intervention of Appropriateness, and Feasibility of Intervention Measures). Included are race-based and health equity metrics in the survey to further understand access barriers and health disparities; Phase 2b--Qualitative interviews of clients who underwent a “No Touch” abortion: 15-25 semi-structured interviews examining factors contributing to choosing a no-touch abortion, perception of quality of care received, and perspectives on how abortion care should be provided beyond the pandemic.

SIGNIFICANCE: access to virtual abortion care was accelerated because of the COVID-19 pandemic but there are many people who may prefer or have improved access to abortion care if they do not need to travel to a clinic. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature in self-care interventions.

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.

There are a lot of exciting opportunities for this student. They will be expected to work from home, as it the requirement for this posting. The student will focus first on Phase 1 to participate in the chart review, data entry, analysis, and synthesis into data visuals. A paper skeleton will be part of their project aims, including background, methodology, and shell tables, with expectation for co-authorship. I will have a senior resident on her research rotation at the same time focusing on Phase 2a and 2b; the summer student will have the opportunity to learn about qualitative methodologies and participate in survey data analysis, in depth interviews and in depth interview transcription analysis alongside this resident, myself, and our team of 8 collaborators. The student will report directly to myself and the resident, with ease of access through text, WhatsApp, telephone, and email for any trouble shooting required. I will host weekly Zoom meetings with the student both both related to research and mentorship for the student. There is the potential for long-term engagement in the project through to its completion should the student be interested. In the family planning arena we have a few exciting ideas at various stages of project inception and the student may have the opportunity to participate in project proposal writing and assembly of REB Applications should time permit.