**EXPERIENCES WITH INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION AND FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER: EXAMINING THE KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL WORK, AND NORTHERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE STUDENTS**

**Rachel VanderVecht,1 Kelly Harding1,2**

**1Psychology Department, Laurentian University, 2Canada FASD Research Network**

**Objectives:** Psychologists, social workers, and health care professionals all play important roles in the diagnosis and treatment of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Researchers have advocated for an interdisciplinary approach to FASD, as it is a multifaceted disability. To the authors’ knowledge, there is limited research exploring both psychology and social work graduate students’ experiences with interdisciplinary education regarding FASD. The purpose of this study was to examine the knowledge and experiences of Applied Psychology graduate students, Masters of Social Work graduate students, and Northern Ontario School of Medicine students in regards to FASD, as well as students’ reported experiences with interdisciplinary education in the context of FASD.

**Methods:** This study utilized a sequential mixed methods approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative phases. Participants were invited to complete two questionnaires. All participants who completed the questionnaires were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, which was used to supplement the data obtained from the questionnaires. SPSS software was used to analyze demographic and descriptive information obtained from the questionnaires and Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the semi-structured interviews to identify themes across the data set.

**Results**: Data collection for this research is currently in progress and results will be available at the time of the conference. To date, 19 questionnaires have been completed, and 8 interviews have been conducted and transcribed. Preliminary data analysis indicates that, in general, students in all three programs do not feel as though they have a sufficient knowledge of FASD and how to diagnose or treat it. Additionally, data obtained from the interviews suggests that students do not receive enough formalized training on FASD or disabilities in general, and most of their experiences have come from work or volunteer experience. However, students have also identified the value of their clinical placements, as they identify that these experiences are where they obtain most of their practical knowledge. Lastly, the preliminary data shows that students’ experience and comfort with interdisciplinary education is strong, but not when it comes to addressing the needs of individuals with FASD.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** By examining where the gaps in knowledge are regarding interdisciplinary approaches and FASD amongst all three programs, the findings from this study may help to guide future curricula development and better prepare future professionals to work with individuals with FASD. By having the experience and knowledge of collaborating with other professionals as students, they may be more prepared as future professionals to support those with FASD in an interdisciplinary setting. Furthermore, this study may demonstrate to students that individual professions have specific skill sets and may provide an understanding of the role that each profession can bring to addressing the needs of individuals with FASD. This exposure to interdisciplinary education and training may facilitate collaboration amongst disciplines, and lead to better outcomes for individuals with FASD and their families.

**Correspondence: Rachel VanderVecht, Laurentian University, rvandervecht@laurentian.ca**