**Coping Strategies and Levels of Stress Related to Support Needs: Assessing Needs in Parents of Children with Down Syndrome**

**Esther Yejin Lee, Western University**

**Dr. Nicole Neil, Western University**

**Objectives:** Parents of children with developmental disabilities are repeatedly reported to have higher stress levels than parents of typically developing children. Despite Down syndrome (DS) being the most prevalent chromosomal cause of intellectual disability, research including individuals with DS often groups the population with other etiologies of disabilities or considers the population a control group in studies of autism spectrum disorder. There is minimal research on the unique profile of needs in parents/caregivers of children with DS, especially in the Canadian population. The present study aims to better understand parental stress and coping strategy use among parents/caregivers of children with DS, and how these factors may predict support needs. The research questions we will explore are: (1) What are the services and topics of need in families? (2) What is the relationship between stress, coping, and needs? We hypothesize: a) Increased important unmet needs will result in increased parental stress; b) Parents with less effective coping strategies will report high levels of stress, as well as high levels of important unmet support needs; and c) Parents with more effective coping strategies will report low levels of stress and low level of needs.

**Method:** 122 parents/caregivers of children with DS across Ontario completed an online survey that assessed the above variables using the Questionnaire of Resources and Stress, Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale, and Family Needs Survey. Most respondents were mothers (88.1%), White (84.2%), and married (85.1%). Majority of the respondents had some form of post-secondary education (89.5%) and had a total household income of over $50,000 (86.4%). The children of the respondents were distributed in the different age groups, and majority of them had been diagnosed with an intellectual disability (85.4%).

**Results:** Results will reveal the relationship between effective vs. ineffective coping strategies, stress and important unmet needs.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** No research has looked at the unique needs in parents/caregivers of children with DS, especially in the Canadian population. Support programs that target one aspect, usually child’s behavior are less likely to be successful than those focusing on broader aspects of family adaptation (Sloper et al., 1991). This study could inform support programs by better understanding the relationship between stress factors, coping strategies and unmet needs, consequently yielding healthy family adaptation. Furthermore, knowledge translation of the outcome will be distributed to support agencies and organizations for DS in Ontario.

**Correspondence:** Esther Yejin Lee, Western University, ylee686@uwo.ca

Dr. Nicole Neil, Western University, nneil@uwo.ca