**SELF-ADVOCATES EXPERIENCES, PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRACTICES**

**Objectives:** This panel discussion will explore the experiences of self-advocates during an inclusive research process. Self-advocates will be asked pre-determined questions about the photovoice research process they were involved in, Voices Lost in Crisis, to provide insight on best inclusive research practices from the perspective of collaborators with disabilities. The participatory action research (PAR) project being discussed highlighted self-advocates' lived experience in the COVID-19 pandemic. The thirteen self-advocate collaborators represented a variety of diagnoses including Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), Autism, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy. Collaborators also lived in a range of settings including co-habituating engaged couples, semi-independent and with family. Through hearing self-advocates discuss their experiences with the Voices Lost in Crisis project, attendees will learn about preferred ways to engage persons with IDD throughout the research process as collaborators in a meaningful, accessible, and inclusive way.

**Method:** The Voices Lost in Crisis project explored the experiences of thirteen collaborators with IDD and dual diagnoses during the COVID-19 pandemic through analyzing photos, interviews and accompanying journals. Collaborators were trained through behaviour skills training virtual modules on the research process, consent procedures, photography, and journaling. The training helped collaborators to take photos and develop journal entries that represented their lived experiences. Collaborators were given the opportunity to share their experiences throughout the research process, connect with other, and trouble-shoot any challenges at bi-weekly research meetings. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted at the end of the photo-taking period to allow collaborators to analyze their most significant photos and journal entries in more depth with researchers.

**Results:** By transforming ‘participants’ into collaborators in the research process, their experiences were valued over the voices of the researchers and promoted autonomy through the choices of photos to use and participation in data analysis as well as results dissemination. They identified several themes to be collaboratively developed about the direct and disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on persons with IDD. These themes included: loneliness, inaccessibility, loss due to COVID-19 and restrictions, intersectionality, learning new skills and strengthening skills, new opportunities, changes in relationships, and most importantly resilience.

**Discussion:** Collaborators will share experiences about their direct involvement in the research process. Pre-determined questions could explore collaborators’ helpful and challenging aspects of the research, how accessibility challenges were managed, how they felt included in the process, lessons they learned and how direct research involvement impacted them. Furthermore, the benefits of using photovoice as an inclusive research platform will be explored, as will the benefits and challenges of using technology in this project. Collaborators can also discuss the benefits of inclusive research, to both themselves and academia, and discuss recommendations they have for future research based on experiences or lessons from the current project. Some collaborators are also involved in a new PAR project which explores changing relationship dynamics because of the COVID-19 pandemic with research questions and design being developed in collaboration with collaborators’ with IDD. Self-advocates experiences and recommendations can be used to further inclusive research in the developmental disability field.