**REFLECTING ON THE CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS OF A PEER-LED SUPPORT PROGRAM DEVELOPED WITH AND FOR NEWLY DIAGNOSED AUTISTIC WOMEN**

**Isabella Chawrun1,2, Megan Pilatzke1, Clare Arias1, Lark Barker1, Teresa Kelly1, Yani Hamdani1,3, Ami Tint1**

1Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2 School of Public Health Sciences, University of Waterloo, 3Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto

**Objectives:** Coproduced research, where decision making power is shared between researchers and community members, has a long history outside of autism research. Involving community members in the generation of new knowledge is often considered important to ensure research findings are impactful and to reduce the knowledge to research practice gap. Yet, genuine research collaborations between non-autistic researchers and autistic partners are rare. There is also little consensus about what coproduction is, or the most effective coproduction methods with autistic partners. Finally, the extant literature often does not reflect on the tensions that can arise throughout coproduced research processes, which can impact participant and research outcomes.

This presentation will highlight our current study focused on the development of a virtual peer-led support program co-developed *with* and *for* newly diagnosed autistic women. We will review various models of collaborative research practices, our key methodological learnings, and the infrastructure needed for effective and supportive coproduction based on our ongoing work within an interdisciplinary, neurodiverse team.

**Methods:** Our team is composed of autistic self-advocates, clinicians, and researchers. We acknowledge the intersecting identities of our team members. Adopting a critical and reflective stance, we will provide a brief overview of the history of coproduced research, review relevant examples of partnerships within autism research, and position our own team’s values and methods.

**Results:** Several important considerations for effective collaborative research with non-autistic and autistic partners, including practical communication strategies to encourage candid collaboration and foster mutual respect within a neurodiverse team and virtual working environment, will be outlined. We will discuss how our methodology requires flexibility as we encounter and adapt to cultural (e.g., traditional views of autistic people as passive participants in research vs. active research partners) and structural barriers (e.g., institutional hiring practices) that have impacted our work within a neurotypical-dominated research and clinical space.

**Discussion:** Following the principles of ‘nothing about us without us’, the autistic community has fought for their rightful inclusion in research partnerships. There is growing interest in participatory and collaborative methods in autism focused research, which carries the potential to improve the translation between research and practice. Authentic co-production, however, is a time and resource intensive endeavor and requires careful reflection and intentionality to be delivered to a high standard.

**Correspondence:** list contact name, affiliation and email address of all authors.

Isabella Chawrun, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON.  Isabella.chawrun@camh.ca

Clare Arias, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON. clare.alexander-arias@camh.ca

Lark Barker, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON. larkjb@gmail.com

Megan Pilatzke, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON.  megan.pilatzke@camh.ca

Teresa Kelly, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON. teresa.kelly@camh.ca

Yani Hamdani, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON. yani.hamdani@camh.ca

Ami Tint, Azrieli Adult Neurodevelopmental Centre, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, ON. ami.tint@camh.ca