# OADD
# RESEARCH SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
## 33rd Annual Research Day
**May 9th, 2025**

**Brock University**
**St. Catharines, Ontario**

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

RESEARCH

SPECIAL
INTEREST
GROUP
O.A.D.D.

*If you take pictures during the conference or want to live tweet your experiences, please be sure to use the Twitter/Instagram/Facebook hashtag* ***#OADDRSIG2025*** *when you post.*

*Also be sure to "like" us on Facebook at OADD-RSIG If you want to become more involved with RSIG, please email oadd.rsig@gmail.com*

This program contains information about our keynote speaker, as well as abstracts for the oral presentations. Authorship and the titles of all poster presentations are also included in this program.

## Conference Committee

**Erin Williamson**
*Western University*

**Naima Samuel**
*Karis Disability Services*

**Ruth Mills**
*Lakehead University*

**Olivia Dobson**
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*Open Collaboration for Cognitive Accessibility*

**Silvana Kurian**
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## Disability Knowledge Expert Consultants

**Ashlee Dagenais**

**Yvonne Spicer**

## Conference Chairs

**Courtney Bishop**
*Durham College*

**Laura Mullins**
*Brock University*

**It is our sincere pleasure to welcome you to the 33rd Annual OADD – RSIG Conference!**

This conference was designed to bring together researchers, professionals, and other interested individuals working in the field of developmental disabilities to exchange research, ideas, resources, and concerns. The objectives of the conference are to: (1) update research advances in the field and exchange information regarding ongoing research activities; (2) provide networking and collaboration opportunities; and (3) discuss ways to stimulate interest and support for research at the level of institutions, governments, and research funding bodies. To that end, the organizing committee has planned an exciting day of research talks and poster presentations. We hope you have a great day at the conference!

## Abstract Review Process

A subset of the RSIG 2025 Conference Committee reviewed the abstract submissions for both posters and oral presentations. All identifying information was removed from the abstract submission, in order to ensure a blind review by all committee members. Committee members refrained from reviewing abstracts they may have been biased towards to ensure fair review. Abstracts were judged out of a total of 25 points, based on the purpose, methodology, results, conclusions, and clinical or research implications of the submission.

**The RSIG 2025 Conference Committee appreciates all the submissions that were received for this year's conference.**

## Keynote Address

## The RSIG Committee Would Like to Thank the Follow Sponsors:

Brock University

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**Applied Disability Studies**

**Dr. Nicole Neil**

**Dr. Ivan Brown**

# Awards

## Awards Review Process

The 2025 RSIG Conference Awards Committee reviewed all OADD-RSIG Travel Awards and Student Award for Excellence in Research nominations, and a recipient was chosen by consensus for each award. Committee members who had known the candidates well (e.g., advisors, lab mates) abstained from participating in the review process.

For the student poster awards, five nominated candidates (nominated by RSIG Abstract Review Committee based on submitted abstracts) were invited to give two-minute presentations to members of the RSIG committee who did not have conflicts of interest, who will judge the posters and candidate presentations at the conference. Prizes will be awarded to two candidates at the RSIG Conference. *Poster award nominees are indicated with an ** in the program.*

## 2025 Award Recipients

### ***Student Award for Excellence in Research ($250 prize)***

- No submissions were provided for this years award

### ***Poster Awards***

- To be awarded at the OADD-RSIG Conference Day

### ***Travel Awards ($250 prize)***

- To be awarded at the OADD-RSIG Conference Day

### ***Brown & Percy JoDD Student Publication Prize***

- No Submissions were provided for this years award

The RSIG Conference Committee would like to thank all applicants for their submissions this year and encourage all students to apply next year. Thesis advisors and professors – don’t forget to nominate outstanding students for the Student Award for Excellence in Research next year! Current and recently graduated students are eligible for this award.

**All awards information can be found on our website at**
**http://oadd.org/affiliate-organizations/rsig-awards/**

## PRESENTATION 1:

### *Bridging the Knowledge Gap: Social Work Students' Learning Needs for Practice with Individuals with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities.*

Anna Przednowek, Dr. Kelly Harding

Objective: This study explores undergraduate social work students' experience, knowledge, and interest in social work practice with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It is crucial for social work students to develop a disability affirmative (Olkin, 1999, 2015) understanding of the lives of people with IDD, as they will encounter these individuals, their supporters, and caregivers across various practice contexts throughout their careers. The research addresses three key questions: (1) What experiences do social work students have in relation to IDD? (2) What are the key sources of knowledge for social work students regarding IDD? (3) What contributes to social work students’ confidence and interest in practice with people with IDD and their families?

Methods: A basic qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) was employed using semi-structured interviews with undergraduate social work students from the University of Montreal and Nipissing University. Data collection was guided by a bilingual interview guide adapted from a previous study on healthcare students' and physicians’ knowledge and training needs for developmental disabilities, particularly fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention and autism spectrum disorder (Coons, 2017; Ghaderi, 2017). The guide focused on three main areas: knowledge about IDD, experience and efficacy with IDD, and interest and training needs. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom and transcribed verbatim in their original language.

Data analysis utilized a qualitative content analysis approach informed by three key theoretical frameworks: (1) anti-oppressive social work practice theory in relation to disability; (2) critical disability studies; and (3) disability affirmative approach. The research coordinator (BE) and co-researchers (AP & AB) performed the data analysis, developing a coding guide to ensure consistent analysis across all interviews.

Results: To date, seven undergraduate students have participated in the study (n=4 NU; n=3 UdeM). Preliminary data analysis has identified that social work students’ experiences are predominantly informed by personal and/or professional encounters with IDD. Similarly, their primary sources of knowledge stem from workplace experiences or ad-hoc and sporadic training opportunities rather than formal education within their undergraduate social work program. Participants suggested a programmatic need for foundational theoretical grounding, opportunities for critical reflection, and most importantly, practical training - particularly in the form of field placements in settings that offer support services to people with IDD and their families.

Discussion/Conclusion:This pilot study addresses a critical gap in social work education and practice concerning individuals with IDD. While the findings are not intended for generalization, a hallmark of qualitative inquiry, they will provide valuable preliminary data to inform the development of a larger, more comprehensive survey. Preliminary findings suggest that bridging the knowledge gap is essential if social work students are to develop both interest and confidence in practicing with people with IDD and their families. By exploring students' experiences, knowledge, and interests, our research aims to inform innovative social work curricula and training programs. The findings are expected to foster more comprehensive and effective education for future social workers, better equipping them to advocate for the rights and needs of people with IDD and their caregivers, and to implement a disability affirmative approach (Olkin 1999, 2015) in social work practice.

**PRESENTATION 2**:

### Community Engaged Research to Enhance Supports for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Courtney Bishop, Katelyn Soucie-Vukmanich, Emily Bulten, Breanna Henry, and Charles Haugh

In Ontario and internationally, legislative changes have resulted in the development of services that are focused on providing *person-centered and individualized supports* that promote *inclusive environments, enhance human functioning,* and *improve personal outcomes* (Shogren et al., 2020). A key component of the delivery of person-centered and individualized supports is the legally mandated use of person-centered planning (PCP) to develop individual support plans (ISP) (Herps et al., 2016). Research has demonstrated that the goals and objectives within ISPs often are poorly defined and are not always linked to meaningful personal outcomes (i.e., outcomes that can be aligned with the QOL domains that are identified in the legislation) (Kamstra et al., 2017). Schalock and Verdugo (2012a), identified some common challenges expressed by community-based agencies providing supports and services to adults with IDD, noting that organizations have difficulties with developing and implementing ISPs that have a direct impact on personal outcomes, and monitoring and evaluating ISPs to ensure the effectiveness in achieving the objectives that have been identified.

This presentation highlights a community-engaged initiative designed to enhance goal setting and goal achievement for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) within a developmental services agency. Grounded in principles of quality of life (QOL) and person-centered planning, the initiative involved multiple interrelated components aimed at improving practice at the organizational level. First, we describe a qualitative research study conducted to inform the development of a new Individual Support Plan (ISP) framework. This framework was co-created with stakeholders and guided by QOL indicators, resulting in a comprehensive assessment tool to support the identification of meaningful goals that promote positive life outcomes for adults with IDD. Second, we present the design and implementation of a competency-based training program for direct support professionals. This training focused on the ISP framework, QOL assessment, and the development of SMART goals incorporating behavioural objectives, systems of support, and goal attainment scaling. Third, we share findings from a single-subject multiple baseline across behaviours study evaluating the use of Behaviour Skills Training (BST) to teach direct support professionals to identify, implement, and assess trauma-informed care and positive behaviour support strategies—both of which were foundational elements in the systems of support. Finally, we discuss future directions for this initiative and reflect on the benefits and challenges associated with community-engaged research in developmental services settings.

## PRESENTATION 3:

# Integrating Friendship and Diversity in an Inclusive Summer Day Camp

Emily Villani, Jessica Monaghan

Background: Children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) seek meaningful friendships like their same-age peers but are the most vulnerable to social exclusion. Summer camp is an informal learning setting with great potential for friendship formation, however, few studies investigate friendship and social skills interventions in an inclusive and informal setting. This study sought to fill research gaps by examining the effects of a group social skills intervention on friendship development between children with and without IDDs within the context of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) camp.

Methods: Children with and without IDDs between the ages of 9-14 were invited to participate in this research. A social skills intervention was taught to all participants over one week using embedded behavioural analytic strategies including video modelling, prompting and reinforcement, and modified Stay, Play, and Talk protocols, while including disability diversity training. Participants were offered opportunities to practice learned social skills while working on partner-based STEM activities and were provided feedback throughout the day.

Findings: Comparisons between week one and week two (waitlist control group) were used to evaluate the intervention’s effect on attitudes towards peers with disabilities and social skills development. Preliminary findings indicated that there were no differences in attitudes before and after participating in the intervention, but that participants had positive attitudes about peers with disabilities before participating in camp. Comparisons between identity groups (with versus without IDDs) were used to investigate the intervention’s effects on friendship formation. Findings suggest that there were differences in acceptance scores, but not rejection scores, between groups.

Conclusion: The goal for this project is to use findings to create a scalable camp program package that can be delivered by non-clinicians in community settings to expand accessible and inclusive practices.

## PRESENTATION 4:

### Unpacking the Passport Program: Experiences of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Families with Ontario's Direct Funding

Anna Przednowek

Objectives: The use of direct funding by adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) has expanded globally over the last several decades. Direct funding promises greater user choice and control, aiming toward a more individualized approach to support (Lord, 2000; Ferguson, 2007). In Ontario, Canada, the direct funding model known as the Passport Program was implemented with the policy shift to the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act in 2008 (Ontario Government, 2008). However, limited research has been published on the experiences of direct funding users with ID/DD and their supporting families, or the experiences of adults with ID/DD who do not receive family support when navigating the Passport program.

Methods: This presentation draws on a broader study examining the everyday life and care of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Ontario under austerity. The study includes 21 interviews with familial caregivers (parents and siblings) of adults with ID/DD, 24 interviews with adults with ID/DD, and participant observations of 62 activities of daily living and social recreational activities with 31 adults with ID/DD. Feminist political economy (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Rai, 2024) and feminist care ethics (Kittay, 1999; Tronto, 2020) provide the theoretical framework, with a focus on relational care and depletion in the analysis.

Results: The presentation will focus on two key themes. First, the research highlights differing experiences in using and managing Passport funding between adults with ID/DD who receive family support and those with fractured family relationships who lack family assistance in managing direct funding. Second, the findings prompt a critical question: Who benefits, and who pays? in the context of managing Passport funding amidst growing inequality and precarity.

Discussion/Conclusion: The findings of this study are pivotal, as they reveal significant tensions in the lived experiences of adults with ID/DD and families navigating the Passport funding model. While the direct funding scheme promises greater choice and control, this research underscores the complexities, particularly for individuals with limited or fractured family support. Moreover, the balance between the potential benefits—such as access, choice, and control—and the financial, emotional, and logistical burdens of managing these funds is a key concern, especially for families managing budgets.

As Ontario transitions to the new policy framework under the Journey to Belonging initiative, these findings are timely and offer important insights for policymakers. The study highlights the need for a more nuanced approach to direct funding models—one that better addresses the diverse needs of adults with ID/DD and provides robust support to families navigating these challenges. Moving forward, it is essential to ensure that the promises of personalization and choice do not inadvertently exacerbate inequalities or place undue burdens on vulnerable individuals and caregivers. Only by addressing these complexities can Ontario create a more inclusive and equitable system for all.

## PRESENTATION 5:

### Exploring Access and Utilization of Passport Funding: Perspectives of People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families

*Nicole Flynn, Kathryn Primrose, Yvonne Spicer, and Theresa Somerton*

*Objectives: There are many questions and concerns related to the provincial initiative for supports and services that is referred to as passport funding. There are over 100,000 people labeled with an intellectual disability in Ontario, millions of dollars of this funding initiative go unused, while at the same time, thousands of people are living without the supports and services they need to live an authentic life in the community. This research study examines the disconnect between money available and access by potential recipients.*

*Methods: This study used an electronic survey consisting of 50 questions co-developed by people with the lived experience of and/or label of intellectual and/or developmental disability for people who are also labeled (diagnosed or self-diagnosed) as having an intellectual or developmental disability across the province of Ontario. The survey was sent to agencies, organizations, programs, self advocates and long-term care homes. The researchers encouraged the survey to be shared with connections and networks, province-wide. Responses were received from 422 Ontarians. This research study included consultation on the survey from Community Living Ontario Council members, Developmental Services Leaders and passport experts across agencies and the sector.*

*Results (Interim – pre data cleaning and adjudication):*
- *422 survey respondents*
- *402 identified as having one or more disability (319 self identified as having an intellectual and/or developmental disability; 359 self identified as having a diagnosis)*
- *256 had someone help them fill out the survey while 129 completed it by themselves (of those who had someone help them; 182 were helped by a family member and 77 were helped by an agency support worker)*
- *120 survey respondents do not require accommodation when doing things online;other respondents identified needing accommodations such as quiet space, more time, screen readers, text to talk, voice to text, bliss symbols, be my eyes, etc…*

- *Survey respondents self reported being from a wide variety of locations across Ontario. Major cities mentioned include Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, and Windsor, along with smaller towns, regions, and counties. Notable regions include Kitchener-Waterloo, Simcoe County, Barrie, Durham Region, Niagara, and Eastern Ontario. Northern Ontario areas like Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie are also mentioned, along with Southwestern Ontario and rural locations such as Atikokan, Muskoka, and Haliburton. Other locations mentioned include communities like Mississauga, Vaughan, Peel, and various districts such as Algoma and Renfrew County. Responses reflect a broad geographic distribution across urban, suburban, and rural parts of the province.*

*Discussion/Conclusion: The presentation will elaborate on these results and discuss the successes of the project as well as study limitations like lack of funding. The presentation will also discuss the role of women who have lived experience taking the lead and being actively involved in the research.*

## PRESENTATION 6:

### Participatory Action Research Network (PARN)

*Ashlee Dagenais, Theresa Somerton, and Yvonne Spicer*
*Emily Bulten, Maisie Babiski, and Olivia Dobson*
*Dr. Laura Mullins*

Members from PARN's Planning Committee and Volunteers to share an overview of PARN and the Research Camp October 2025.

PARNetwork.ca

# Data Blitz Talks

## Talk 1

### Impact of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Cognitive and Immune Functioning in Aging Male and Female Sprague Dawley Rats: A Longitudinal Study

Sunny Qureshi

Objective: Prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) is recognized as a critical global health issue linked to significant and lasting cognitive and behavioral deficits, yet relatively little is known about how these impairments progress with age. Moreover, sex-specific differences in age-related outcomes following PAE remain poorly understood. This study therefore aimed to (1) investigate long-term cognitive effects of PAE in middle- (6 months; 6M) and older-aged (12 months; 12M) rats, (2) evaluate peripheral immune parameters, and (3) examine brain neuroinflammation, with a particular focus on potential sex-specific vulnerabilities.

Methods:Using a well-established rat model of PAE, pregnant dams were given either ad libitum liquid ethanol diet or control pelleted diet throughout gestation. Cognitive performance of the offspring was then assessed at two time points in the same animals at 6M and 12M of age. Spatial learning and memory were measured using the Barnes Maze task, while recognition memory was examined using the Novel Object Recognition (NOR) task. Peripheral blood samples were obtained at each testing interval for serum cytokine analysis. Brains were collected post-testing, and immunohistochemical staining for Iba-1 was performed to quantify microglia in the dentate gyrus (DG).

Results: Results revealed that PAE offspring exhibited cognitive deficits that became more pronounced with aging. Specifically, while there were relatively mild disruptions in spatial learning and memory, recognition memory impairments were more substantial and persisted across both time points. Notably, these impairments were exacerbated at 12M, pointing to an accelerated cognitive decline in the PAE group. Sex-specific differences emerged, with PAE females displaying earlier onset and more severe recognition memory deficits compared to PAE males. Analyses of peripheral cytokines indicated that PAE offspring had lower levels of anti-inflammatory cytokines particularly IL-4, IL-10, and IL-13 at both time points. Again, these alterations were more pronounced in females, who exhibited significantly lower anti-inflammatory cytokine levels at 12M compared to age-matched controls. Neuroinflammation, assessed by Iba-1 staining, revealed increased microglia in the DG in PAE females.

Discussion/Conclusions: These findings highlight the critical, long-term impact of PAE on cognitive function, immune system regulation, and neuroinflammation. Recognition memory deficits emerged as a particularly sensitive domain, with PAE females exhibiting earlier and more pronounced impairments. Elevated levels of microglia and reduced anti-inflammatory cytokine profiles in PAE females further suggest a unique vulnerability to heightened inflammation that may accelerate age-related cognitive decline. Collectively, this work highlights the need for sex-specific interventions designed to mitigate the detrimental consequences of PAE on brain function and immune homeostasis as individuals reach middle to old age. By exploring these complex interactions, this study paves the way for targeted therapeutic strategies aimed at improving the health and well-being of individuals affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs).

## Talk 2

### An Examination of Pyramidal Behaviour Skills Training with Frontline Supervisors, their Direct Support Professionals and the Impacts on those Accessing Service

Charles Haugh

In Ontario, agencies supporting adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities (IDD) are mandated by the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services to collaborate with person’s accessing their services on Individual Support Plans (ISP) that contain individualized goals with plans to achieve them. Recent research has found that the quality of these goals, and the frequency with which they are achieved are variable. This study is situated in a larger community-engaged research project co-led by Drs. Courtney Bishop and Rosemary Condillac aiming to help an agency develop, implement, and maintain a system of goal setting, planning,and achievement in collaboration between coordinators and those accessing their services. This presentation outlines a research proposal using Pyramidal Behaviour Skills Training to teach supervisors within a direct support agency to train coordinators to collaborate with adults withIDD on setting and planning meaningful goals. This research proposal was informed by lessons learned and feedback given by the support agency, and those accessing their supports.

**Talk 3**

## A Review of Systematic Reviews: Analysis of Interventions for Employee Burnout

Katelyn Soucie-Vukmanich

Objective: There are several systematic reviews and meta-analyses which explore the effects of interventions on employee burnout (e.g., Ahola et al., 2017; Aust et al., 2023; Waddell et al., 2023). These reviews report mixed results about the effectiveness of interventions on improving employee wellbeing and they highlight the significant barriers to analysis due to the wide range of intervention types, methodologies, and more. The purpose of this project is to extend the information available in systematic reviews and meta-analyses about interventions of employee burnout and begin behaviour analytic conceptualizations of the common interventions reported in the literature.

Methods: The review will follow the PRISMA guidelines and will use Boolean strings to collect articles for analysis. Covidence software will be used to store and screen articles. The review will use a mixed methods design to complete a thematic and quantitative analysis of 1) the type of interventions used, 2) interventions focused on the employee, the organization, or both, and 3) interventions implemented pro-actively vs. post burnout symptom development. Additionally, interventions described will be analyzed to highlight whether their procedures could be conceptualized in a behaviour analytic framework of assessment and intervention.

Results: Data collection is currently ongoing. Available results will be presented in the data blitz. The results will report: 1) the PRISMA table outlining the results at each stage of screening, 2) the patterns recorded for types of intervention, where interventions were focused, and if they were implemented pro-actively vs. reactively, 3) patterns of behaviour analytic principles/procedures conceptualized from the interventions, and 4) statistical analyses (e.g., analysis of variance) comparing the effects of the available evidence.

Discussion: The data blitz will provide an overview of available results and elaborate on patterns which emerge and how these variables in differing combinations impact the effectiveness of the interventions reported.

Conclusion: Currently, there is enough literature using systematic review and meta-analytic methodologies summarizing the available literature about the effects of different treatments on employee burnout. This research will extend these results by providing secondary analysis to highlight if interventions are focused on the employee, the environment/organization, or both; if interventions are provided before or after burnout indices have developed; and if the interventions outlined can be conceptualized in behaviour analysis.

### Talk 4

## Telehealth Autism Services: Service Users' and Providers' perspectives

Jessica Monaghan

Objectives: Accessibility to autism services could be challenging for families in rural areas. Telehealth has become a popular tool for autism services after the pandemic. The current study examined stakeholders' perspectives on telehealth autism services. The first objective was to explore the barriers and facilitators of telehealth. The second objective was to identify the predictors of future telehealth use, and the third objective was to compare service users and service providers' levels of satisfaction with telehealth autism services.

Method: The study used mixed methods through anonymous online survey adopted from the Telehealth Satisfaction Questionnaire, and interviews to collect qualitative data on the advantages and disadvantages of telehealth for the autistic population, the acceptability and practicality of telehealth services, the level of stakeholders' satisfaction with telehealth, and the variables that impact the choice of using telehealth. Participants were (n=67) including (n=24) autism services providers such as Behaviour Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists, and Social Workers, (n=37) caregivers, and (n=8) autistic persons participated in the study. A linear regression analysis was used to analyze the predictors of future use of telehealth. Between groups t-test was conducted to compare service users and providers' levels of satisfaction on a 5-point Likert Scale satisfaction questions. Qualitative responses were analyzed using provisional coding based on a feasibility theoretical framework examining the following indicators: (a) acceptability, (b) demand, (c) implementation, (d) practicality, (e) integration, (f) adaptation, (g) expansion, and (h) efficacy.

Results: Results indicate that telehealth presents some barriers: (a) implementation barriers including technological difficulties (Service users=42%) and (service providers=59%), and challenging behaviours (Service users=32.5% and service providers=40%, (b) acceptability barriers related to rapport, (c) adaptation barriers related to modifications of material, (d) integration barriers related to training and caregiver capacity. Stakeholders also reported that training and access to digital program resources improved the acceptability of telehealth over time, and client profile was sometimes perceived as a facilitator to receiving telehealth services when clients have advanced technological skills. Both service users and providers reported that practicality of telehealth services is a main facilitator.  The regression results were significant (R=76, F(28.2), P<.001) accounting for 58.1% of the variance in the future use of telehealth.Results suggest that the practicality coefficient (0.64) and acceptability coefficient (0.81) predict its future use. The results of the t-test indicate that service providers reported higher levels of acceptability across all satisfaction questions. The largest difference was reported on the service providers' caring to the child where service users scored a mean M (2.86) and service providers scored a mean M (4.79). The lowest rated item among both groups was about the level of connection between the client and the provider via telehealth compared to in person services

Conclusion: Telehealth contributes to the elimination of accessibility barriers , allows flexibility, and minimal disruption to family routines. However, careful planning and communication between service providers and service users to align their expectations about the service outcomes are recommended. This study provides implications for strategic planning to eliminate organizational and subjective barriers to telehealth autism services, ensuring equitable access to evidence-based services.

**Talk 5**

# From the Voices of Fitness Trainers: Understanding the Volunteer Experience in an Adapted Physical Exercise (APEX) Program through Interviews and Audio Diaries

Chloé VidAmour, Chad A. Sutherland, Paula M. van Wyk, Sean Horton

Purpose/Objective: Adults with developmental disabilities (DD) are more likely to have lower rates of physical activity and sport participation than the neurotypical population. The Adapted Physical Exercise (APEX) program provides a primarily barrier-free, inclusive space for one-on-one fitness training, physical activity, and sport for adults with DD. Undergraduate student volunteers play a key role in the program, working directly with participants to support their fitness goals. Preliminary work has explored the experiences of APEX volunteers, revealing initial misconceptions about individuals with DD and highlighting how participation in the program led to positive experiences and changed perceptions. Building upon this work, this study aims to (1) explore the transformative impact of volunteer interactions with adults with DD in a fitness setting, with a focus on its potential for social change, and (2) deepen our understanding of the factors that contribute to positive experiences for APEX volunteers.

Methodology: Thirteen undergraduate student volunteers participated in the study (six males and seven females aged 19-26 years). Program sessions were six weeks in duration, with eight volunteers completing one session, and five completing two sessions (i.e., 12 weeks). Volunteers participated in two semi-structured interviews, at the beginning and end of their term, to explore perceptions of the APEX program and how those perceptions may have changed over the course of their involvement. Additionally, volunteers completed biweekly audio diaries to capture real-time reflections of their experiences. Specific questions were provided to volunteers that guided their recordings, which were then submitted to the research team. Volunteers who completed six weeks submitted two audio diaries, while those who completed 12 weeks submitted four.

Results: Findings draw upon 26 interviews and 35 audio diaries. Developing themes from the volunteers highlight positive experiences with the APEX program and the individuals with DD they supported. The data analysis for this research project is still in progress.

Discussion/Conclusion: This study advances the field of adapted exercise and disability, focusing on physical activity and sport as a tool for social change. By exploring volunteer perceptions, this study contributes to the ongoing development of the APEX program and promotes the social model of disability through enhanced awareness, inclusion, and meaningful engagement in physical activity, positively impacting both volunteers and participants.

# Poster Presentations

*Poster award nominees are indicated with an ** in the program.*

1. **Examining Prevalence and Service Use for Youth with Neurodevelopmental Disorders Admitted to Early Psychosis Intervention: Preliminary Findings**

*Asees Dhinsa*
University of Toronto

2. **** Ashlee's Adventure to Alberta: A Photo, Auto-Ethnography Study of Traveling with Multiple Complexities**

*Ashlee Dagenais*
Brock University

3. **"I am so sorry for the delay…": An Auto-Ethnography of Procrastination in Graduate School**

*Emma Jayne Chaikowsky*
Brock University

4. **Impact Of a National Virtual Brain Health Program on Physical Activity Levels of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Their Caregivers**

*Emma Yang*
University of Toronto

5. **** Graduate Training in Applied Behaviour Analysis: Interprofessional Collaboration**

*Gemma Graziosi*
Western University

6. **Parent-Report Inattention Relates to Children's Brain Responses to Novel and Target Stimuli**

*Holly Lockhart*
Brock University

7. **** Virtual Group–Based Mindfulness Intervention for Intellectual Disability Support Staff: A Feasibility Study**
*Jocelyn Tan*
Canadian Mental Health Association

8. **Staff Feedback on a Consult-Liaison Model for Psychiatric Inpatients with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities**
*Madeline Sanders*
Canadian Mental Health Association

9. **Behavioural and Neural Responses to Cognitive Distractibility in High Sensory Sensitivity Children and Adolescents: An ERP Study**
*Lauren Stepien*
Brock University

10. **** The Health and Experiences of Aging Sibling Caregivers of Adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities**
*Liaba Amir*
University of Toronto

11. **** Co-Developing Knowledge Products to Evaluate Effective Communication and Collaboration with The Special Olympics Community**
*Omi Smolkin*
University of Toronto

12. **ADHD Traits and Sensory Processing Patterns: A Gender-Based Analysis**
*Yasaman Zahed*
Brock University

**Remember to vote for your favourite posters (People's Choice Award) and rank posters from your most to least preferred**

## Research Day Schedule

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|---|---|
| **8:30-9:00** | **Poster Session 1**<br>***Poster Evaluation*** |
| **9:00-9:15** | **Opening Remarks & Land Acknowledgement**<br>Courtney Bishop, Co-Chair |
| **9:15-10:45** | **Keynote Speaker**<br>Drs. Rosemary Condillac, Barry Isaacs, Ivan Brown, and Maurice Feldman |
| **10:45-11:00** | **Break** |
| **11:00-11:30** | **Presentation 1**<br>***Bridging the Knowledge Gap: Social Work Students' Learning Needs for Practice with Individuals with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities.***<br>Anna Przednowek, Dr. Kelly Harding |
| **11:30-12:00** | **Presentation 2**<br>***Community Engaged Research to Enhance Supports for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities***<br>Courtney Bishop, Katelyn Soucie-Vukmanich, Emily Bulten, Breanna Henry, and Charles Haugh |
| **12:00-1:00** | **Lunch**<br>***Networking and Poster Session 2*** |

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| **1:00-1:40** | ***Datablitz (5 Min Each)***<br>1. **Impact of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure on Cognitive and Immune Functioning in Aging Male and FemaFrole Sprague Dawley Rats: A Longitudinal Study**<br>Sunny Qureshi<br>2. **An Examination of Pyramidal Behaviour Skills Training with Frontline Supervisors, their Direct Support Professionals and the Impacts on those Accessing Service**<br>Charles Haugh<br>3. **A Review of Systematic Reviews: Analysis of Interventions for Employee Burnout**<br>Katelyn Soucie-Vukmanich<br>4. **Telehealth Autism Services: Service Users' and Providers' perspectives**<br>Jessica Monaghan<br>2. **m the Voices of Fitness Trainers: Understanding the Volunteer Experience in an Adapted Physical Exercise (APEX) Program through Interviews and Audio Diaries**<br>Chloe VidAmour<br>**Questions & Answer for All** |
| **1:40-2:10** | **Presentation 3:**<br>***Integrating Friendship and Diversity in an Inclusive Summer Day Camp***<br>Emily Villani, Jessica Monaghan |

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|---|---|
| **2:10-2:40** | **Presentation 4:**<br>***Unpacking the Passport Program: Experiences of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Families with Ontario's Direct Funding***<br>Anna Przednowek |
| **2:40-3:15** | **Break** |
| **3:15-3:45** | **Presentation 5:**<br>***Exploring Access and Utilization of Passport Funding: Perspectives of People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families***<br>Alison Mclean, Nicole Flynn, Kathryn Primrose, Yvonne Spicer, and Theresa Somerton |
| **3:45-4:15** | **Presentation 6:**<br>**Updates on Participatory Action Research Network (PARN)**<br>Ashlee Dagenais, Theresa Somerton, and Yvonne Spicer<br>Emily Bulten, Maisie Babiski, and Olivia Dobson<br>Dr. Laura Mullins |
| **4:15-4:30** | **Poster Presentation Voting** |
| **4:30-5:00** | **Awards and Closing Remarks** |
| **5pm** | ***Depart Conference*** |

**Please take a moment to provide us with some feedback!**