

W.O. McCORMICK ACADEMIC DAY

**Bridging the Silos: Comprehensive
Care for Individuals with Persistent
Psychotic Disorders**

Friday, April 24, 2026

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Westin Nova Scotian Hotel



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychiatry

Academic Day 2026 Schedule

- 8–8:30 a.m. Conference day registration for confirmed participants
- 8:30–8:45 a.m. Welcome
- Dr. Vincent Agyapong**
Head, Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University
Chief of Psychiatry, Nova Scotia Health Central Zone
- Opening remarks
- Jennifer Glennie**, Deputy Minister, and
Kim Stewart, Associate Deputy Minister
Office of Addictions and Mental Health
- Dorothy Edem**
Co-Director, Mental Health and Addictions Program
Nova Scotia Health Central Zone
- 8:45–9 a.m. Introduction to the format and overview of the day
- Dr. Cheryl Murphy**
Conference Chair, Director of Continuing Professional Development, Department of Psychiatry
Dalhousie University
- 9–10 a.m. Keynote Presentation
- Disordered/Disorganized Communication and Ways To Address It
Dr. Lena Palaniyappan
- 10–10:45 a.m. Early Identification of Risk and Primary Prevention Among Offspring of Parents with Severe Mental Illness
Dr. Rudolf Uher
- 10:45–11 a.m. Coffee Break

Each presentation time includes 15 minutes of Q&A.

11 a.m.–Noon	Keynote Presentation Housing is Health: Addressing Homelessness for People with Mental Disorders, from Policy to Practice Dr. Vicky Stergiopoulos
Noon–1 p.m.	Lunch
1–2 p.m.	Long-Acting Injectables: Practical Use in Everyday Psychiatry Dr. Kara Dempster
2–2:15 p.m.	Coffee Break
2:15–3:40 p.m.	Roundtable Discussion Challenges and Opportunities in the Comprehensive Care of Individuals Living with Persistent Psychotic Disorders – Dr. Jason Morrison (Moderator) Strengthening the Family System through Families Matter and Affected Ones – Chris McWilliam Implementing Equity and Diversity in Early Psychosis Care – Krista Ellsworth
3:40–3:55 p.m.	Closing Panel All presenters
3:55–4 p.m.	Closing Remarks/Door Prize Dr. Cheryl Murphy

Each presentation time includes 15 minutes of Q&A.

Speakers

Dr. Lena Palaniyappan

Keynote Presentation: Disordered/Disorganized Communication and Ways to Address It

Dr. Lena Palaniyappan is a practicing psychiatrist; he works with youth and families experiencing severe mental illnesses such as psychosis. Following his bachelor's degree in psychology, he completed his medical training at Stanley Medical College in Chennai, India followed by a Master's and PhD in Psychiatry at the University of Nottingham in the UK. He currently holds the Monique H. Bourgeois Research Chair and directs the Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health at the Douglas Research Centre. He is also the Chief Editor of the Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology Journal. His work on neuroimaging in psychosis led to the Global Rising Star Award from the Schizophrenia International Research Society (SIRS) and a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Early Career Foundation Grant. His research program is geared towards optimizing long-term mental health outcomes and pathways of care for individuals with serious mental disorders that often start in adolescence. His work centres on developing an understanding of the brain mechanisms involved in mental states such as psychosis and depression and in generating developmentally informed tools to predict outcome after first-episode psychosis and non-invasive treatment approaches.

Areas of interest: Youth Mental Health, Psychosis, Relapse, Speech, Natural Language Processing, Predictive analysis, Neuroimaging, Digital health, Early intervention

Dr. Rudolf Uher

Presentation: Early Identification of Risk and Primary Prevention Among Offspring of Parents with Severe Mental Illness

Dr. Rudolf Uher, M.D. Ph.D is a psychiatrist and Canada Research Chair in Early Intervention in Psychiatry at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada. He completed a PhD in Neuroscience at Charles University, Psychiatry residency at the Maudsley Hospital, and a fellowship Affective Disorders at the Institute of Psychiatry, UK. Dr. Uher investigates early markers of risk for mental illness and personalized treatments for depression. He leads the FORBOW project that follows over 600 youth in Nova Scotia with the aim to establish early antecedents of mental health and illness. Dr. Uher also leads

the OPTIMUM-D trial which is testing biomarker-based treatment selection for major depressive disorder, and the Data Science platform of the Canadian Biomarker Integration Network in Depression ([CAN-BIND](#)).

Dr. Vicky Stergiopoulos

Keynote Presentation: Housing is Health: Addressing Homelessness for People with Mental Disorders, from Policy to Practice

Dr. Vicky Stergiopoulos is a Senior Scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto. She has served in several administrative roles in the past, including Vice-Chair, Clinical and Innovation (2017-2022) and co-Director of the Division of Adult Psychiatry and Health Systems (2012-2017) in the Department of Psychiatry, as well as Physician-in-Chief at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2016-2022), Psychiatrist-in-Chief at St. Michael's Hospital (2011-2016) and Medical Director, Inner City Health Associates (2017-2011).

Dr. Stergiopoulos has a keen interest in mental health policy and the redesign of our system of mental health care for the purpose of system improvement. Her program of research focuses on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of interventions aiming to improve housing stability, service coordination and recovery of adults experiencing serious mental health and addiction challenges and social disadvantages.

Dr. Stergiopoulos completed her medical training at Dalhousie University and residency training in psychiatry at the University of Toronto. She holds a MHSc in Health Administration from the University of Toronto's Institute for Health Policy, Management and Evaluation and completed Director's Education Training at the Rotman School of Management.

Dr. Kara Dempster

Presentation: Long-Acting Injectables: Practical Use in Everyday Psychiatry

Dr. Kara Dempster, MD, MSc FRCPC is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Associate Clinical Director of the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program. As a clinician-scientist, her work focuses on the care of young adults experiencing a first episode of psychosis and on identifying the neurobiological mechanisms

underlying treatment-resistant schizophrenia. Her research integrates clinical, neuroimaging, and electrophysiological approaches to support earlier, precision-based treatment strategies. Dr. Dempster serves on the Boards of Directors for Early Psychosis Intervention Canada and Early Psychosis Intervention Nova Scotia and is committed to advancing evidence-informed care for individuals with psychotic disorders.

Dr. Jason Morrison

Roundtable Discussion: Challenges and Opportunities in the Comprehensive Care of Individuals Living with Persistent Psychotic Disorders

Dr. Jason Morrison, MD, FRCPC is a psychiatrist in Halifax and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University. He specializes in early intervention for psychotic disorders and is closely involved with the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program (NSEPP), supporting individuals experiencing first-episode psychosis.

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Morrison teaches and mentors medical learners and contributes to research focused on improving mental health care and outcomes. He is recognized for his commitment to patient-centered, recovery-oriented care.

Chris McWilliam

Presentation: Strengthening the Family System through Families Matter and Affected Others

Chris McWilliam, BKin, OT Reg. (NS) is a seasoned occupational therapist with Nova Scotia Health, where he has dedicated almost 20 years to supporting individuals and families affected by mental health and addictions. Chris works clinically with the Dartmouth Community Mental Health and Addictions Clinic, serves as the Occupational Therapy Professional Practice Leader, is a guest lecturer and past faculty member with Dalhousie University School of Occupational Therapy and was most recently elected to the Board of Directors for the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. His lived experience supporting a loved one after a severe mental health crisis profoundly shaped his approach to practice, deepening his understanding of the challenges families face and inspiring his advocacy for family inclusion in care delivery. Chris co-facilitates two provincial family support programs, *Families Matter in Mental Health* and *Affected Others* and he has been recognized both provincially and nationally for his contributions to advancing mental health and addictions care, student learning, and professional education.

Krista Ellsworth

Presentation: Implementing Equity and Diversity in Early Psychosis Care

Krista Ellsworth is a Registered Nurse and the Clinical Practice Educator for Early Psychosis Intervention Nova Scotia (EPINS). She has extensive experience in mental health, with roles at the IWK Health Centre, Global Affairs Canada, and Nova Scotia Health. In her current position, she provides evidence-informed education to clinicians and stakeholders across the province. She is dedicated to enhancing access to care and promoting culturally responsive services for equity-denied populations. Outside of work, Krista enjoys travelling, yoga, and spending time with her family.



Learning Objectives

Conference Objectives

After attending the conference, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the syndrome of disorganized communication and ways to address it in the care of those with psychotic disorders. (*CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Communicator*)
2. Discuss the role of homelessness for individuals living with severe and persistent mental illnesses. (*CanMEDS roles: Health Advocate, Medical Expert*)
3. Describe an approach to early identification and intervention for those at risk of development of psychotic disorders. (*CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Scholar*)
4. Discuss the role of long-acting injectable medications in the management of people living with psychotic disorders. (*CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Collaborator*)
5. Discuss common challenges, barriers, supports and solutions in the care of individuals with persistent psychotic disorders. (*CanMEDS roles: Leader, Collaborator, Health Advocate*)

Presentation Objectives

Presentation: **Disordered/Disorganized Communication and Ways to Address It**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the core features of disorganization as a syndrome within severe and persistent mental illnesses. (*CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert*)
2. Identify evidence-based and emerging approaches for assessing disorganized communication, including both rating scales and computational/NLP methods. (*CanMEDS roles: Scholar, Medical Expert*)
3. Consider the importance of addressing disorganized communication in clinical settings. (*CanMEDS roles: Communicator, Medical Expert*)

Presentation: **Early Identification of Risk and Primary Prevention Among Offspring of Parents with Severe Mental Illness**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Quantify risk for major mood and psychotic disorders in offspring of affected parents. *(CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Communicator)*
2. List developmental antecedents to severe mental illness. *(CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Scholar)*
3. Discuss the pros and cons of offering early interventions to non-treatment seeking youth. *(CanMEDS roles: Professional, Health Advocate)*

Presentation: **Housing is Health: Addressing Homelessness for People with Mental Disorders, from Policy to Practice**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the health and social needs of people experiencing homelessness. *(CanMEDS roles: Health Advocate, Medical Expert)*
2. Describe barriers to ending homelessness for people with mental disorders – from policy to practice. *(CanMEDS roles: Leader, Health Advocate)*
3. Describe models of high support housing for adults with mental disorders in Canada, and identify ethical and clinical tension related to resident autonomy, safety, and recovery-oriented practice. *(CanMEDS roles: Professional, Medical Expert, Collaborator)*

Presentation: **Long-Acting Injectables: Practical Use in Everyday Psychiatry**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Highlight the importance of LAI use for relapse prevention. *(CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Health Advocate)*
2. Identify when an LAI is indicated. *(CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert)*

3. Discuss an approach to choosing an LAI. (*CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Leader*)
4. Introduce new and emerging LAI treatments. (*CanMEDS roles: Scholar*)
5. Establish how to guide discussions around LAI treatment. (*CanMEDS roles: Communicator, Collaborator*)

Roundtable Discussion: **Challenges and Opportunities in the Comprehensive Care of Individuals Living with Persistent Psychotic Disorders**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss with peers issues they face in the work they do with people living with psychotic disorders, including individual and systemic challenges and barriers. (*CanMEDS roles: Collaborator, Leader*)
2. Network and make connections with others who care for those living with psychotic disorders. (*CanMEDS roles: Collaborator, Professional*)

Presentation: **Strengthening the Family System through Families Matter and Affected Others**

Learning objectives:

At the end the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the family education and support programs available in Nova Scotia. (*CanMEDS roles: Health Advocate, Medical Expert*)
2. Identify appropriate referral processes for connecting families to these programs. (*CanMEDS roles: Collaborator, Leader*)

Presentation: **Implementing Equity and Diversity in Early Psychosis Care**

Learning objectives:

At the end the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Analyze the findings of the ANS Youth Study to identify how they form the strategic framework for current health initiatives, specifically the role of the first African Nova Scotian/Black Patient Navigator. *(CanMEDS roles: Health Advocate, Leader)*
2. Evaluate the systemic challenges and clinical successes identified within the study to improve service delivery for African Nova Scotian youth. *(CanMEDS roles: Health Advocate, Medical Expert)*
3. Formulate a plan to adapt and integrate the ANS Youth Study framework into their own departmental equity and inclusion practices. *(CanMEDS roles: Leader, Collaborator)*
4. Describe the roadmap for ongoing and future Early Psychosis care initiatives in Nova Scotia to ensure alignment across provincial healthcare services. *(CanMEDS roles: Leader, Collaborator, Health Advocate)*

Presentation: **Closing panel (all speakers)**

Learning objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Clarify questions they have related to severe and persistent psychotic illness that have arisen from prior experience and/or the conference presentations. *(CanMEDS roles: Medical Expert, Scholar)*
2. Identify individual areas for ongoing learning related to the comprehensive care of individuals diagnosed with persistent psychotic disorders. *(CanMEDS roles: Scholar, Health Advocate)*

Continuing Professional Development

Certification/Accreditation

Educationally approved by Dalhousie University Continuing Professional Development and Medical Education



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CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT &
MEDICAL EDUCATION

This activity meets the certification criteria of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and has been certified by Dalhousie University Continuing Professional Development and Medical Education for up to **5.5** Mainpro+[®] Certified Activity credits.

This activity is an Accredited Group Learning Activity (Section 1) as defined by the Maintenance of Certification Program of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and approved by Dalhousie University Continuing Professional Development and Medical Education. You may claim a maximum of **5.5** hours (credits are automatically calculated).

This program has not received any external financial support.



Evaluation

This year's evaluation can be found electronically at:

MORNING SESSION Evaluation Survey:

<https://surveys.dal.ca/opinio/s?s=83501>

AFTERNOON SESSION Evaluation Survey:

<https://surveys.dal.ca/opinio/s?s=83502>

OVERALL EVENT Evaluation Survey:

<https://surveys.dal.ca/opinio/s?s=83503>

IMPORTANT:

Please note the evaluation surveys will close on
Sunday, May 10 at 11:59 p.m.

Planning Committee

Dr. Cheryl Murphy (Chair)

Director, Continuing Professional Development
Department of Psychiatry

Dr. Liana Aires

Family Medicine Planning Committee representative

Dr. Katharine Black

Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Education
(Community Mental Health) and Psychotherapy
Committee representative

Dr. Mark Bosma

Psychiatrist & Section Head, Geriatric Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry

Dr. David Gardner

Representative from non-psychiatric Department of Psychiatry faculty

Dr. Lara Hazelton

Department of Psychiatry Education Director and
CPDME Faculty representative

Dr. Sonia Murray

Psychiatrist, Operational Stress Injury Clinic

Dr. Lukas Propper

Professor & Director of Education
Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

The Planning Committee has no conflicts of interests to disclose.

Special thanks:

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