

HEADLINES



RASP WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychiatry

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HEAD LINES

Message from the Department Head



Dr. Vincent Agyapong.

It's a time of celebration in the department. Between celebrating graduates, preparing to welcome new students, and so many department members being recognized for their achievements, we are proud of another great year.

On April 25, we held our annual W.O. McCormick Academic Day, organized around the theme Trauma and Related Disorders. Thank you to everyone involved for making this another successful event.

We celebrated the second anniversary of the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program (RASP) on May 2. The event was hosted with the Mental Health and Addiction Program in Nova Scotia Health Central Zone where different stakeholders spoke in support of the program. RASP was recognized with an international award and the program will be expanding across the province. We are grateful for the support of everyone who spoke at the event and to all members of the RASP team. Together we are making a meaningful difference in the lives

of many Nova Scotians by improving their access to psychiatric consultations.

Excitingly, our new academic centre, the [Centre for Global Mental Health](#), officially launched on May 30. We were honoured to be joined by several speakers including Dr. David Anderson, Dean, Faculty of Medicine (video message); the Honourable Brian Comer, Minister, Office of Addictions and Mental Health; the Honourable Stanley Kutcher, Senator; Dr. Renato Oliveira e Souza, Unit Chief for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Use, Pan American Health Organization; Dr. Graham Gagon, VP research and innovation (acting), Dalhousie University; and, external advisory board members and collaborators. This centre is the culmination of much planning and the implementation of several global mental health initiatives in our department, joining them together under the centre's bold vision and mission. Thank you to everyone who spoke at the launch event and to our partners and collaborators for embarking on this journey with us.

Also in May, department leaders convened to reflect on the Department of Psychiatry's 2020-2025 strategic plan and to identify new strategic directions for 2026-2030 and alignment with the Faculty of Medicine's strategic plan. Thank you to everyone who attended and participated in this important process.

The annual year-end celebration of education was held on June 13 where we recognized and celebrated learners who are completing their programs. We were also proud to recognize some faculty, residents, and

graduate students during an annual awards presentation at the event. Congratulations to the following recipients of residents' choice and resident awards: Dr. **Sarah Fancy** (Teacher of the Year Award), Benjamin Fong (Above and Beyond Award), Dr. **José Mejía** (PGY-5 Excellence Award), Dr. **Celia Robichaud** (Junior Mentorship Award), Dr. **Josh Green** (Senior Mentorship Award), Dr. **Emilie Comeau** (Junior Resident Professionalism Award), Dr. **Jared Allman** (Senior Resident Professionalism Award), Dr. **Louise Moodie** (Clerks' Choice Award), Dr. **Dana Wiens** (Horizon Health Network Saint John Zone PGY-1 Resident of the Year Award), Dr. **Emilie Comeau** (Dr. Charles J. David Memorial Prize in Psychiatry), Dr. **Lauren Miller** (Dr. Herb Orlik Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Resident Award), Dr. **Jay Toulany** (Geriatric Psychiatry Resident Award), Dr. **Jared Allman** (Dr. Harris Lee Barton Scholarship), Drs. **Talia Bond**, **Julia LeBlanc**, and **Lousie Moodie** (Dr. Robert and Stella Weil Fund in Psychiatry Prize), Dr. **Sophie Church** (Dr. W.O. McCormick Award), and Drs. **Emma Hazelton-Provo** and **Lauren Miller** (Alexander H. Leighton Resident of the Year Award).

This year we introduced two, new graduate student awards. Congratulations to the first-ever recipients of these awards: **Holly Carbyn**, recipient of the Dr. Benjamin Rusak Graduate Student Award (Masters) and **Medard Adu**, recipient of the Dr. Patrick McGrath Graduate Student Award (Doctoral).

Several of our MSc and PhD students will be defending their theses or dissertations this summer,

and I wish them all well. Current and incoming graduate students are also successful in receiving scholarships. Congratulations to: **Ian Armstrong, Lee-Ann Olmstead, Cameron MacGillivray, Bronwyn Inness, Zachary Hubshman, Joseph Nosko, Nami Trappenberg, Andem Effiong, and Ashley Francis.**

In February 2025, our psychiatry undergraduate education program welcomed learners from the Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) program. Thank you to all our faculty who supervised these new learners.

This year, I continued my annual engagement sessions with residents. I'm always thankful for these opportunities to meet with groups of learners, faculty, and staff and for them to share their experiences and perspectives with me. Seeing how we all work together to support our department's goals is rewarding.

On the research side, department members continue to be successful in securing grants and publishing papers. Congratulations to Drs. **Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum, Phil Tibbo, Nick Delva, Ben Rusak, Lara Hazelton, Linda Liebenberg, Jill Chorney, Ejemai Eboreime, Lori Wozney, Lukas Propper, Barbara Pavlova, Martin Alda, Rudolf Uher, Normand Carrey, Gail Eskes, Keri-Leigh Cassidy, and Amy Gough.**

On July 20, we will host our annual [Summer Celebration](#) at the St. Mary's Boat Club. This event is a great opportunity to connect with your colleagues. I hope you can join us for a BBQ and a fun-filled day of activities for all.

We were pleased to welcome the following new faculty members to the department: Drs. **Muhammad Javed, Justine Dol, Delali Fiagbe, and Corrine Boudreau.** We also

said farewell to Drs. **Shannon MacDonald and Abuah Amaka.** We wish you well.

Our bi-annual meeting was held on April 29 where we presented departmental dedicated service, leadership, and mentorship awards. Congratulations to Drs. **John Aspin and Shannon MacDonald** on their Dedicated Service Awards; to Drs. **Allan Abbass, Martin Alda, and Cheryl Murphy** on their Leadership Awards; and to Dr. **Patricia Pearce**, the recipient of the 2025 Dr. Aidan Stokes Mentorship Award.

Thank you and congratulations to Dr. **Tanya Pellow** on receiving the department's Extra Mile Award, and to Monica MacKinnon and Dr. **Hugh Maguire**, recipients of the department's Special Recognition Award.

Several faculty members were recognized with Faculty of Medicine awards at its Annual Faculty Meeting. Awards were presented in the areas of global health, education, research, clinical practice, mentorship, and community service. Congratulations to Drs. **Ian Mackay** (Community Teacher of the Year Award), **Kazue Semba** (Excellence in Basic Research Award), **Kara Dempster** (Early Career Investigator Award), **Martin Alda** (Award for Career Excellence in Research Mentorship), **Kim Good** (Award of Excellence in Teaching for PhD Faculty), **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** (Dr. Allan Cohen Memorial Award for Community Service), and **Aaron Keshen** (Award of Excellence in Clinical Practice).

We also congratulate Drs. **Alexa Bagnell** and **Maria Alexiadis** for achieving the Canadian Certified Physician Executive (CCPE) Designation; RASP locum Dr. **Archana Unnikrishnan** for clearing her Royal College of Physicians and

Surgeons exam; Dr. **Joseph Sadek** for receiving recognition from the Government of Ontario for his education work across Canada; Drs. **Michelle MacDonald, Christopher Murphy, Ngozi Ezeanozie, and Ahmed Saleh** for completing the Physician Leadership Development Program through Doctors Nova Scotia and the Canadian Medical Association; and, Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** on his appointment to the Board of Directors for Doctors Nova Scotia.

Dr. Vincent Agyapong
Head, Department of Psychiatry,
Dalhousie University
Head, Department of Psychiatry, NS
Health Central Zone

RASP wins international award



Dr. Vincent Agyapong with members of the RASP team.



Matt White (left) and Dr. Vincent Agyapong (right).

In May 2025, the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program (RASP) received international recognition. The program was awarded the American Psychiatric Association (APA)'s Bronze Psychiatric Services Achievement Award. This award recognizes outstanding programs that deliver services to people with mental illness or disabilities that have overcome obstacles and that can serve as models for other programs.

The Rapid Access and Stabilization Program (RASP) is an initiative of Nova Scotia Health and Dalhousie University's Department of Psychiatry.

Launched to address long-standing barriers faced by patients and primary-care providers in accessing timely psychiatric support, RASP has delivered comprehensive psychiatric assessments and digital mental health support (Text4Support) to more than 2,300 unique patients across Nova Scotia's Central Zone in just two years.

Key program impacts include:

- 1673% increase in access: In Nova Scotia's Central Zone, access to psychiatrists for patients referred by primary care providers rose by 1673% comparing the 2022/2023 (pre-RASP) and 2024/2025 (post-RASP) fiscal years.
- 25% of referrals seen by RASP: In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, one in four individuals referred — or self-referred — to the Central Zone Mental Health and Addictions Program were scheduled for an assessment with a RASP psychiatrist.
- Expanded access for complex cases: With a distinct and centralized RASP in place, 24% more patients with complex mental health needs were connected with psychiatrists through community mental health programs for ongoing care.

The APA's recognition of RASP underscores the importance and impact of this innovative model. This achievement reflects the dedication of the psychiatrists, operational leaders, and administrative staff who have worked tirelessly to expand mental health care access. We extend our sincere thanks to the Government of Nova Scotia for its vital support and funding.

Congratulations to the RASP team!

[Announced](#) in late May 2025, the program will be expanding across the province.

Celebrating two years of RASP

Expanding access, enhancing care: The role of rapid access programs and digital tools in meeting individual and community mental health needs (RASP anniversary event)

On May 2, 2025, the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry and the Mental Health and Addiction Program at Nova Scotia Health Central Zone hosted an event in celebration of the second anniversary of the Rapid Access and Stabilization Program (RASP).

Speakers included Nova Scotia Health physician and operational leaders, representatives of community partner organizations,

person with lived experience, RASP psychiatrists, and special guest speaker Dr. Jitender Sareen, Head, Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba Chair, Association of Chairs of Psychiatry in Canada (ACPC).

Media coverage: [Rapid access to psychiatry program wins praise from doctors, patients in Halifax](#) (Canadian Press article)

During the event, Dr. Agyapong, head of psychiatry for Dal and NS Health Central Zone, and Matt White, director, Mental Health and Addictions, NS Health Central Zone, presented a special recognition award to Monica MacKinnon, manager, clinical adult outpatient, for her dedicated support in setting up the Concurrent Disorders program and for RASP.



Research Report

GRANTS

- Dr. **Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum** (Primary Applicant), Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** (Co-Applicant), and Sarah Lefurgey, RCMP Cpl. (Retired) (Collaborator), *Person-centered Teaching Regarding Stress and Trauma Related Disorders for Psychiatry Residents*. Department of Psychiatry Curriculum Development Grant.
- Dr. **Phil Tibbo** (PI), *Evaluating a brief virtual cognitive remediation therapy intervention for those with early phase psychosis and substance misuse in NS/NL: Addressing challenges in underserved areas*. 2025 CRISM Atlantic Node's Rural Access and Telehealth Working Group Funding Call.

PUBLICATIONS

- Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** and Dr. Nikhita Singhal. Editorial "Leadership education and rural leadership." Canadian Journal of Physician Leadership, Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 2025. <https://cjpl.org/cjpl-volume-11-number-1/leadership-education-and-rural-leadership/>



Brain Repair Centre Neuroscience Roadshow

In June 2025, Dr. **Phil Tibbo** spoke to two grade 12 classes at Citadel High School as part of the Brain Repair Centre's Neuroscience Roadshow. **Joey Nosko** (MSc in Psychiatry Research student) helped out after the talk and they led the group through an exercise around psychosis risk.



Dal Psychiatry welcomes Master of Physician Assistant Studies students

Faculty may have noticed new learners completing psychiatry rotations this winter. In February 2025, the psychiatry undergraduate education program welcomed students in the [Master of Physician Assistant Studies \(MPAS\) program](#).

"It's exciting to welcome MPAS students to our clinical services," says Dr. **Lara Hazelton**, director of education for Dal's Department of Psychiatry. "For most department members, this is the first time working with this group of learners. I've been impressed with how eager the psychiatrists are to understand the needs of MPAS students so they can offer them rich and meaningful learning opportunities."

The MPAS is a new program offered in Dalhousie's Faculty of Medicine. Learners complete a psychiatry block as a core rotation, just like Medicine, which has similar goals and objectives as for medical students, says Olivia Bachmann, director, MPAS program.

"Having a discrete psychiatry rotation enables PA clerks to better recognize and manage psychiatric disorders, handle crisis situations, understand medication interactions, and navigate legal and ethical considerations. It aims to improve patient communication skills and reduce stigma, leading to better overall patient care."

As part of the psychiatry undergraduate program, MPAS students learn to "conduct comprehensive psychiatric evaluations, evaluate and manage co-morbidities of psychiatric and medical illness, develop and carry out (under supervision) a bio-psycho-social management plan, and develop an appreciation of where the PA role can impact the



delivery of psychiatric and mental health services in collaboration with psychiatrists," says Bachmann.

Dr. **Sanjana Sridharan**, section head for Acute, Consultation, and Emergency Psychiatry, has supervised two MPAS students on the Short Stay Unit for a month each.

"I see a lot of value in providing good psychiatric orientation and skills for MPAS students, no matter what specialty they choose," says Dr. Sridharan. "I could see a palpable enthusiasm and motivation from them to learn interview and de-escalation skills in an acute setting. I saw the amount of time they spent with inpatients listening to them and advocating for them, and showing a sense of accountability for the patients distributed to them."

Feedback from patients was also positive. "They specifically mentioned how they enjoyed the non-judgmental style and therapeutic interactions from my two students," she says.

Physician Assistants can help bridge the gap between an increasing demand for mental health services and a shortage of primary and psychiatric providers, says Bachmann.

"By exposing our clerks to a psychiatry rotation, they will be more inclined to seek employment opportunities in that discipline after graduation."

The first cohort of MPAS students will finish clerkship in December 2025 and will be granted provisional licencing under the CPSNS following completion of clinical training.

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

Join us as a tutor for 2025/2026 undergraduate sessions

We're on the lookout for enthusiastic tutors to join our team for the upcoming undergraduate teaching sessions. If you're interested in participating, or haven't yet added your preferences to your IPP, there's still time to sign up! Reach out to us at **Psych.Undergrad@dal.ca** to get involved.

Summer Internship in Psychiatry (SIIP) welcomes 10 Med 1 students

From May 26 to 29, 2025, we were delighted to host 10 Med 1 students from both campuses of Dalhousie's Medical School for our annual Summer Internship in Psychiatry (SIIP). Throughout the week, these students had the invaluable opportunity to delve deeper into the field of psychiatry. They engaged with psychiatrists from various specialties, interacted with psychiatry residents, and connected with allied health professionals. The program included interactive educational sessions, interview skills practice, clinical elective placements, and social events with our residents. A special thank you goes out to the resident planning committee for their outstanding effort and dedication in organizing this enriching experience!

Med 2 Skilled Clinician process

We are preparing for the fall 2025 Skilled Clinician 2 (SC2) course. As in previous years, SC2 will run in three, 4-week blocks, starting August 28 and ending November 13.

Thank you to all faculty who have already signed up for these three blocks. We still have opportunities available for faculty interested in teaching SC2 during the first block.

Finalizing the master rotation schedule for 2025-26

We're excited to announce that the master rotation schedule for the 2025–26 academic year is now finalized. Fewer Med 3 students are projected for the upcoming year, but we're pleased to confirm that four active distributed sites — Amherst, Kentville, Truro, and Yarmouth — will continue to provide diverse and comprehensive educational opportunities.

Med 4 elective process

All Med 4 students from Dalhousie, other domestic universities, and international institutions can apply for psychiatry electives through the AFMC portal. We thank all services and faculty who have collaborated with us in placing these elective requests.

Welcome to our new representatives!

We are happy to announce two new members of our committee: Dr. **Leigh Meldrum** and **Hong Xie** (COO), who recently joined us.

MEDICAL EDUCATION NEWS

Medical education publications:

- Bahji, A., Danilewitz, M., Crockford, D., **Delva, N.**, & **Rusak, B.** (2023). Assessing research competency development in Canadian psychiatry residency programs: A systematic review and future directions. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 11, 20503121231216846. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20503121231216846>
- **Hazelton L**, Lazor J, Buckley H, Hamilton JL. Six ways to get a grip on recruiting “Occasional Faculty Developers”. *Can. Med. Ed. J* [Internet]. 2024 Dec. 30 [cited 2025 Jan. 28];. Available from: <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cmej/article/view/79462>

Have you published medical education scholarship?

Send the citation to **Mandy.Esliger@nshealth.ca** to have it included in a future issue of Headlines.

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

Resident research spotlight



Dr. **Alison Toron** (PGY-5) presented her research *Meaning out of “Madness”: Representing Psychosis in the Memoir* at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) convention in Los Angeles in May 2025.

End of the Year Celebration

The annual Department of Psychiatry End of the Year Celebration was held on June 13 at the Prince George Hotel. The event is a celebration of postgraduate education and an opportunity to honour teachers and learners in the department.

Resident choice awards

- Teacher of the Year Award: Dr. **Sarah Fancy**
- Above and Beyond Award: **Benjamin Fong**
- PGY-5 Excellence Award: Dr. **José Mejía**
- Junior Mentorship Award: Dr. **Celia Robichaud**
- Senior Mentorship Award: Dr. **Josh Green**
- Junior Resident Professionalism Award: Dr. **Emilie Comeau**
- Senior Resident Professionalism Award: Dr. **Jared Allman**

Resident awards

- Clerks' Choice: Dr. **Lousie Moodie**
- Horizon Health Network Saint John Zone PGY-1 Resident of the Year Award: Dr. **Dana Wiens**
- Dr. Charles J. David Memorial Prize in Psychiatry: Dr. **Emilie Comeau**
- Dr. Herb Orlik Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Resident Award: Dr. **Lauren Miller**
- Geriatric Psychiatry Resident Award: Dr. **Jay Toulany**
- Dr. Harris Lee Barton Scholarship: Dr. **Jared Allman**
- Dr. Robert and Stella Weil Fund in Psychiatry Prize: Drs. **Talia Bond, Julia LeBlanc, and Louise Moodie**
- Dr. W.O. McCormick Award: Dr. **Sophie Church**
- Alexander H. Leighton Resident of the Year Award: Drs. **Emma Hazelton-Provo and Lauren Miller**



From left to right: Drs. Kathleen Singh, program director, geriatric psychiatry subspecialty residency program; Laura Downing, associate director, postgraduate education; Petra Rafuse; LeAnne Revell; Alison Toron; Jared Allman; Kyle Godden; Sophie Church; Eileen Burns; Ali Manning, director, postgraduate education; Celia Robichaud, program director, child and adolescent psychiatry subspecialty residency program; and, Vincent Agyapong, department head. Photo by Zuya Production.

Celebrating our graduates

We would like to congratulate our graduates and wish them the very best in their future practice.



Dr. Jared Allman

What was your favourite memory from your residency? The resident retreats at White Point.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? You will get as much out of residency as you put in; read as much as you can and find good mentors early in training.

Where will you be working after residency? Vancouver Island Health Authority-Salt Spring Island

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? Too many to pick just one. Drs. Nunes, Abbass, Awara and Black were important figures in my development over the five years.

What is your next big adventure? Moving back to the west coast!

When you look back at your residency training, what is the most important thing you learned? It was a privilege to have the opportunity to learn ISTDP during my time at Dal.



Dr. Eileen Burns

What was your favourite memory from your residency? Eating daily lunches with the Geri Psych team!

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? The days are long, but the years are short -time really does fly by, so try to make sure you set time aside for fun!

Where will you be working after residency? I will be completing the Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Residency Program here at Dal!

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? The Geriatric Psychiatry team have all mentored me in their own way. Special shout outs to Dr. Mark Bosma, Dr. Kathleen Singh, Dr. Cheryl Murphy, and Sarah Krieger-Frost for helping support my development and confidence

What is your next big adventure? My next big adventure is my upcoming maternity leave!

When you look back at your residency training, what is the most important thing you learned? There are so many things that have been learned over the years, it is hard to say what has been the most important. Something I have learned over the years is to trust my instincts and never skip lunch.

Bonus question: What is your favourite type of Bubly? This is a hard question, but I would have to go with Lemon Sorbet currently. Followed closely by Lime — a true classic.



Dr. Sophie Church

What was your favourite memory from your residency? One of my favourite memories was last year's Taylor Swift movie night with my co-residents. We turned the Cineplex Park Lane theatre into a full-on Eras Tour, dancing and singing in the aisles like nobody's business. It was the perfect light, fun break from call shifts and exam studying. I'm so lucky to have spent the last five years with such an amazing group of people.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? It is so easy to get caught up in the long hours and to allow residency to become your whole identity. Remember to be a person first, to let yourself laugh and cry and experience all life has to offer. You'll be better equipped to show up for your patients and your loved ones as a result.

Where will you be working after residency? You won't be getting rid of me that easily! I loved residency so much that I'll be completing another year of training in the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Subspecialty program here at Dalhousie and the IWK.

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? I've had the chance to work with so many incredible people during my general training. Thank you to Dr. Ali Manning, for helping me find my passion in child psychiatry and always giving great advice. Drs. Sarah Fancy and Jonathan Brake on the Garron, for assisting me in developing my confidence as a clinician. Drs. Rudolf Uher and Lukas Propper for giving me the opportunity to be part of exciting clinical research with a wonderful team. Dr. Chelcie Soroka for being an amazing role model for organization, education and leadership, and Dr. Celia Robichaud for keeping me on track with EPAs while also making sure I take vacation. I'd also like to give a shout-out to all the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry faculty and administrators for always making me feel welcome and supported. Thank you so much.

What is your next big adventure? Planning a wedding!



Dr. Petra Rafuse

What was your favourite memory from your residency? Spending time with such a fantastic group of co-residents! Whether at a social committee event, annual retreat, over lunch in the lounge, or even late nights studying for the RC Exam.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? Be curious and don't be afraid to ask questions – you're here to learn!

Where will you be working after residency? Still finalizing the details :)

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? I feel fortunate to have learned from many wonderful supervisors during residency. Dr. Saleh and Dr. Ferracuti exemplified the balance between strong clinical knowledge and a truly patient centered approach, something I strive to carry forward. I am also grateful for the ways they encouraged me to trust my clinical judgement, helping me to build confidence.

What is your next big adventure? Looking forward to a summer of spending time with family, playing beach volleyball, camping, and travelling to Europe.

When you look back at your residency training, what is the most important thing you learned? There is a lot of opportunity for growth when you step outside of your comfort zone. (That and pack lots of snacks on call).



Dr. LeAnne Revell

What was your favourite memory from your residency? There are honestly too many to count, but some of my greatest friendships of all time have come from residency, and those friendships are pretty darn special.

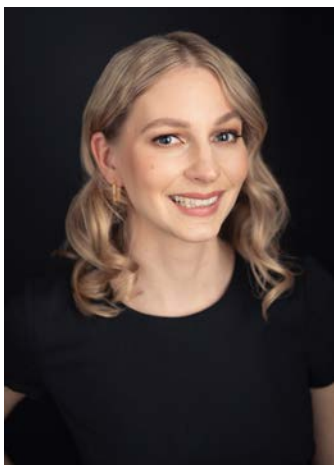
What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? You're going to struggle, not excel at, or not enjoy everything, and that's perfectly okay. Know your strengths and weaknesses, not always to fix them, but to understand yourself better and recognize your blind spots.

Where will you be working after residency? I'm currently completing my subspecialty residency in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Dalhousie, and I'm hopeful to work here in the Maritimes following this.

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? I've been so fortunate to have had many mentors throughout my residency, both among senior residents and staff. I truly wouldn't have made it through without Marissa LeBlanc, someone I have looked up to from the start and always will.

What is your next big adventure? Parenthood - baby coming in September!

When you look back at your residency training, what is the most important thing you learned? Whether clinical or personal, trust your instincts, and know that reaching out for help is good judgment.



Dr. Alison Toron

What was your favourite memory from your residency? My fondest memory from residency will be the relationships I was fortunate to develop. I began residency with the plan to get my work done, learn as much as I could, pass my exams, and get back to my home province as quickly as possible. I never intended or expected to meet the closest friends I have ever had, and I am grateful for them every day.

What is one piece of advice you'd give to an incoming PGY-1? Read the DSM early!

Where will you be working after residency? Fredericton, NB

Who was a mentor of yours during residency? How did they help support your development as a psychiatrist? I have been fortunate to have so many great teachers and mentors. Dr. Awara in particular encouraged me to think critically and use precision in diagnosis, which I hope to carry forward throughout my career.

What is your next big adventure? I will be working as an inpatient psychiatrist in Fredericton and continuing to live my country life in the backwoods of NB.

When you look back at your residency training, what is the most important thing you learned? Stay humble, be open, and never stop learning.

PSYCHIATRY GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

Celebrating graduate students



From left to right: Dr. Kim Good, associate coordinator, graduate programs; Holly Carbyn (MSc student); Steven Jackson (MSc student); Samuel Obeng Nkrumah (MSc student); Medard Adu (PhD student); and, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, department head. Photo by Zuya Production.

At the year-end celebration of education event on June 13, 2025, we recognized students in our Psychiatry Research MSc and PhD programs who are completing their programs. Two, new graduate student awards were presented for the first time to:

- **Holly Carbyn** (supervisor Dr. **Sandra Meier**), recipient of the Dr. Benjamin Rusak Graduate Student Award (Masters).
- **Medard Adu** (supervisor Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**), recipient of the Dr. Patrick McGrath Graduate Student Award (Doctoral).

These awards are based on academics, publications/presentations, and leadership ability within the program.

Congratulations to the award recipients and all those defending their thesis or dissertation this summer!

Our graduate students have received the following scholarships for the 2025-2026 academic year:

- **Ian Armstrong** (incoming MSc, Psychiatry Research student supervised by Dr. **Patrick McGrath**) has received a Canada Institutes of Health Research -Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters (CIHR -CGSM) and Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarships -Masters (NSGSM, honorary award due to FGS capping policies).
- **Lee-Ann Olmstead** (incoming MSc, Psychiatry Research student supervised by Dr. **Kara Dempster**) has received a Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarships -Masters (NSGSM).
- **Cameron MacGillivray** (incoming MSc, Psychiatry Research student supervised by
- Dr. **Tomas Hajek**) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship.
- **Bronwyn Inness** (first year MSc, Psychiatry Research supervised by Dr. **Sandra Meier**) has received a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada Graduate Scholarships -Masters (SSHRC CGSM).
- **Zachary Hubshman** (first year MSc, Psychiatry Research supervised by Dr. **Rudolf Uher**) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship
- **Joseph Nosko** (first year MSc, Psychiatry Research supervised by Drs. **Phil Tibbo** and Alissa Pencer) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship.

- **Nami Trappenberg** (first year MSc, Psychiatry Research supervised by Dr. **Aaron Keshen**) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship.
- **Andem Effiong** (second year PhD student supervised by Drs. **Ejemai Eboreime** and Rita Orji) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship.
- **Ashley Francis** (fourth year PhD student supervised by Drs. **Derek Fisher** and **Phil Tibbo**) has received a Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship.

We have six MSc, Psychiatry Research thesis defences and three PhD, Psychiatry Research dissertation defences happening this summer. Notices for each defence will be shared with the department at least a week prior to the defence date.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEWS

2025 W.O. McCormick Academic Day



The conference chair and speakers for the 2025 W.O. McCormick Academic Day.

The 2025 W.O. McCormick Day was held on April 25 at the Atlantica Hotel.

Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, department head, welcomed 156 attendees to the event. **Matt White**, co-director of the Mental Health and Addictions Program (Central Zone), provided opening remarks. Dr. **Cheryl Murphy**, director of continuing professional development and conference chair, introduced the format and provided an overview of the day. The conference was educationally approved/

co-sponsored by Dalhousie University Continuing Professional Development and Medical Education.

This year's topic was Trauma and Related Disorders. The day consisted of a full schedule of informative presentations related to the theme. Presentations were:

- Posttraumatic stress disorder and related biopsychosocial care: an overview, presented by Dr. **Amjad Bin Faidh** and Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick**

- Understanding Intergenerational Trauma in Indigenous Communities, presented by Dr. Christopher Mushquash
- Psychiatric disability assessment following psychological trauma of Afghan national humanitarian aid workers in an ongoing war zone, presented by Dr. **Nyassa Navidzadeh**
- Navigating the Therapeutic Process: Supporting Clinicians and Patients in PTSD Treatment, presented by **Dr. Margaret (Leigh) Meldrum**, Rory MacIsaac, and Danielle Hopkins
- Management of Common PTSD Comorbidities: Case Based Discussion, presented by Dr. **Sonia Detillieux**

The day concluded with a panel featuring the day's speakers to take questions from the audience.

A feedback survey was circulated to all event attendees. Thank you to everyone who attended the event, provided feedback, and thank you to our speakers!

R.O. Jones Memorial Lecture

On May 21, Dr. Olayinka Omigbodun presented the R.O. Jones Memorial Lecture. The topic was "Building Child and Adolescent Mental Health Capacity in sub-Saharan Africa: Opportunities, Obstacles, and Optimism."

Named in honour of the late Dr. Robert Orville Jones, who among his many achievements, founded the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry in 1949 and was the charter president of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, the R.O. Jones Memorial Lecture is held annually in conjunction with the Atlantic Provinces Psychiatric Association annual conference.

Call for Rounds Speaker Suggestions – We're Looking for Your Input!

Do you have a speaker in mind who would bring value and insight to our upcoming Grand Rounds? Please send your suggestions to Dr. **Cheryl Murphy**. We'd love to hear your ideas and build a strong, engaging Grand Rounds together!

Year-End Celebration

The Year-End Celebration was held on June 13, 2025.



Photos by Zuya Production.

Mental health as a human right: New Dal centre champions global access and education

By Penney Miller



The launch of a new [academic centre](#) at Dal signals a deepening of a shared commitment to one of the most pressing challenges of our time — global mental-health disparities.

That's how the Dalhousie Centre for Global Mental Health's inaugural director described the creation of the new academic hub at a launch event in late May.

"Mental health is a universal human right, yet access to effective and culturally appropriate care remains an unfulfilled promise for millions around the world," said Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, who is also head of psychiatry for Dalhousie and Nova Scotia Health Central Zone.

The new academic centre, housed in Dal's Department of Psychiatry, will contribute to reducing gaps in mental health treatment worldwide through cutting-edge research, innovative care, education, and advocacy.

Leaders in government, academia, and international organizations spoke in support of the centre at the event on May 30.

A shared vision

The centre's work will align around a number of key issues, including:

- innovative and scalable mental health services and programs
- understanding mental health determinants in vulnerable populations
- promoting mental health literacy and resilience
- educational excellence and capacity building
- building strong and sustainable partnerships
- fostering global networks for research and practice

"This new centre is a powerful example of how Dalhousie is living out its mission as a global leader in health research and education," said Dr. David Anderson, dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

"As the centre establishes itself as a hub for global collaboration, including its aspirations to work with the WHO and PAHO, it stands as an example of what's possible when we combine academic excellence with a deep commitment to social responsibility and health equity," added Dr. Anderson.

Enhancing access

The centre brings together several global mental health initiatives. These include the [Rapid Access and Stabilization program](#) (RASP) which improves access to psychiatry consultations in the Halifax area. RASP began two years ago and will expand across the province.

The Honourable Brian Comer, Minister of Addictions and Mental Health, highlighted the importance of partnerships and innovative approaches to improving timely access to mental health care for Nova Scotians.

"As we know, mental health can be quite complex," he said. "There are many building blocks. We need to build up a system for everyone across the province."

He said global centres like Dal's will be invaluable, bringing together like-minded people to drive progress, challenge thinking, and "help build the blocks that we need to move forward."

Increasing knowledge and skills

The centre's other initiatives include a [special-interest forum](#), [guest lecture series](#), international fellowship program, and resident elective exchange program.

Dal's [Masters in Global Clinical Psychiatry](#) (pending [MPHEC](#) approval) is the centre's hallmark educational program. The one-of-a-kind, online program is designed to expand expertise in clinical psychiatry among primary-care providers globally to address gaps in specialized psychiatric care.

"By meeting learners where they are and providing education that is both accessible and practice-driven, the centre is helping to build mental health workforce capacity in regions around the world, while enhancing care in under-resourced communities here in Canada," said Dr. Graham Gagnon, Dalhousie's acting VP of research and innovation.

Establishing relationships

True to its motto "mental health equity through global partnerships," the centre sees collaborations as key to its success. Its advisory board includes members from national and international organizations. Formal agreements for education initiatives like the international fellowship program and resident exchange program are already in place.

"Today's launch is more than the inauguration of a new academic centre," said Dr. Renato Oliveira e Souza, unit chief for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Use, Pan American Health Organization. "It's a bold affirmation of our shared commitment to advancing health equity both regionally and globally."

Several research projects in the Department of Psychiatry relate to global mental health, demonstrating why the department is an ideal site

for the centre, said faculty member Dr. **Linda Liebenberg**, as she highlighted several researchers.

Collaborations exist with researchers in Canada, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Brazil, Australia, UK, South Africa, and several European countries.

A history of global impact

The Honourable **Stanley Kutcher**, a Canadian Senator and former head and faculty member in Dal's Department of Psychiatry, delivered a keynote reflecting on several global mental health initiatives during his time with Dalhousie.

Senator Kutcher, who also served as the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health at Dal, described the centre's launch as a personal and moving moment.

He said some impacts of the initiatives are still felt in global communities.

"This will be a mutually beneficial journey," said Senator Kutcher.



From left to right: Senator Stanley Kutcher, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, and the Honourable Brian Comer, Minister of Addictions and Mental Health.

Dr. Mutiat Sulyman participates in 3rd Annual Health Professional Exploration (HPE) Day

On April 25, 2025, Dr. **Mutiat Sulyman** participated in the 3rd Annual Health Professional Exploration (HPE) Day, hosted by PLANS (Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians). Held at the North Preston Community Centre, this event was created to expose junior high school students of African descent to a range of careers in health care through interactive, culturally relevant experiences.

HPE Day featured hands-on stations, health profession booths, and presentations from Black professionals across various

disciplines. The goal of the event is to promote early engagement, representation, and leadership in health fields among African Nova Scotian youth.

Dr. Sulyman represented both the MD Program and the Department of Psychiatry, offering an engaging and thoughtful experience at the MD booth. She guided students through a breathing exercise, using it as a tool to highlight the intersection between mental and physical health and to introduce concepts related to stress management and emotional wellness in the context of medical practice.

Her approachable presence and meaningful interaction with the students provided not only education, but inspiration — demonstrating the importance of visibility, representation, and mentorship in medicine and mental health. Dr. Sulyman's participation helped create an inclusive and empowering environment, leaving a lasting impression on the next generation of future health professionals.



Clinic at Empoo, Masai, Mara, Kenya

You may remember reading about the school at Empoo, Masai Mara, Kenya. A clinic is much needed to provide basic medical care (including in-patient and maternity services) for the community. Dr.

Pippa Moss, through The Fundy Peace Foundation, has raised funds to complete the basic structure and we now need help to 'raise the roof' — literally!



Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

AWARDS/RECOGNITION

Congratulations to Dr. **John Aspin** for receiving the Department of Psychiatry Dedicated Service Award.

Congratulations to Dr. **Selene Etches** who was interviewed for the article "Shifting the Balance: The Need for Mental Health Parity" in Mind Over Matter magazine, April 2025.

Congratulations to Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** on receiving Canadian Certified Physician Executive recognition at the Canadian Physician Leadership Conference in Vancouver, BC, May 23, 2025. <https://physicianleaders.ca/2025-recipients/>

CAP GRANTS

Linda Liebenberg, Jill Chorney, Ejemai Eboreime, Daphne Hutt-Macleod, Shannon Johnson, Ifeyinwa Mbakogu, Nancy Ross, Madine VanderPlaat, **Lori Wozney** (2025-2026). Relational Change: Understanding the mechanisms of resilience-promoting service delivery for youth. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant. \$95,591 for one year received in May 2025.

CAP PRESENTATIONS

- Dr. **Lori Wozney** presented at Department of Psychiatry Clinical Academic Rounds; "The Digital Dilemma: is technology helping or harming our approach to youth mental health?" on April 2, 2025.
- Dr. **Lukas Propper** presented at the Department of Pediatrics Trainee Research Day poster presentation: "The CALM" Study: A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial of Sertraline vs. Placebo in the Treatment of Anxiety in Children and Adolescents with Neurodevelopmental Disorders" on April 3, 2025.
- Dr. **Lori Wozney** presented a webinar, "User-friendly or user-flop? Creating digital mental health tools youth will use," as part of DIVERT Mental Health's educational sessions on April 29, 2025.
- Dr. **Sabina Abidi**, along with Laura Carnegy, CNS, presented "An Approach to Assessment of Youth with Psychotic Disorder" at the May 2, 2025 meeting of Early Psychosis Intervention Nova Scotia.
- Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** presented a webinar, "PANDAS/PANS: Presentation and Treatment for our Community Hospitals" for the Nova Scotia Community Hospital Programs on May 8, 2025.
- Dr. **Katie Radchuck** co-presented with Matias Gay, RN, for the Nova Scotia Community Hospitals program, "Suicidality in Adolescence – Tools to Measure and Strategies to Mitigate the Risk," on May 22, 2025.
- Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** presented to parents at Halifax Independent Schools at Sacred Heart, "The Power of Parent Presence in the Digital Era," May 1, 2025.
- Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** presented at inaugural Canadian Unfolding PANS PANDAS Conference in Calgary, Alberta, "PANS PANDAS in Children and Adolescents Presenting to a Regional Health Center and the Importance of Medical Collaboration," May 29, 2025.

CAP RESEARCH

CAP research highlight

Dr. **Sarah Fancy**, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and Physician Co-lead for the Garron Centre, and Dr. Laura Miller, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist in Mental Health and Addictions, are collaborating on a study: "Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome and Pediatric Auto-immune Neuropsychiatric Syndrome Associated with Strep (PANS&PANDAS): A retrospective chart review."

Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) is a syndrome involving the acute onset of neuropsychiatric and behavioural symptoms in pediatric patients. Pediatric auto-immune neuropsychiatric disorders

associated with streptococcal infections (PANDAS) is a condition under the umbrella of PANS, specifically triggered by a Group A strep infection. Overlap with other neurological and psychiatric conditions, as well as a lack of evidence-based guidelines for treatment and/or diagnosis, presents challenges for clinicians in providing appropriate care.

The goal of this study is to gather data on severe PANS and PANDAS cases requiring acute inpatient care to better elucidate how child and youth in the Maritime provinces are presenting in terms of symptoms and response to treatment. Data will be collected retrospectively from charts scanned into medical

records at the IWK for patients with consideration of a PANS or PANDAS diagnosis and admitted to the Garron Centre from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2025.

Research Ethics Board (REB) approval has been granted, and the research team has begun the screening and data abstraction process. Once all data is abstracted, basic proportional reporting of trends in symptoms and treatments will be summarized in a manuscript intended for publication. This data will be used by the PANS/PANDAS working group within the IWK to help shape treatment algorithms and future studies.

CAP publications

Freeman K, Zwicker A, Fullerton JM, Hafeman DM, van Haren NEM, Merranko J, Goldstein BI, Stapp EK, de la Serna E, Moreno D, Sugranyes G, Mas S, Roberts G, Toma C, Schofield PR, Edenberg HJ, Wilcox HC, McInnis MG, **Propper L, Pavlova B**, Stewart SA, Denovan-Wright EM, Rouleau GA, Castro-Fornieles J, Hillegers MHJ, Birmaher B, Mitchell PB, **Alda M**, Nurnberger JI, **Uher R** (2025). Polygenic Scores and Mood Disorder Onsets in the Context of Family History and Early Psychopathology. JAMA Network Open, 8(4), e255331. [Epub] PubMed ID: 40238098. Published on Apr 01, 2025

Somerville M, **Wozney L**, Gallant A, Curran JA. Designing eHealth Interventions for Pediatric Emergency Departments: Protocol for a Usability Testing Study With Youth, Parent, and Clinician Participants. JMIR Res Protoc 2025;14:e64350. Published on April 14, 2025

Serge Dupuis et **Carrey N**; "Le Moulin a Fleur de Sudbury; quartier ouvrier, territoire candien-francais". Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa. Published on May 2025.

CAP EDUCATION

Nova Scotia CAP Academic Retreat

An academic retreat for all Nova Scotia child and adolescent psychiatrists was held on April 11, 2025.

The hybrid retreat was well attended both in-person and virtually.

Presentations included:

- Early Trauma and its Impact on Mental Health, presented by Dr. **Jennifer Cumming**
- Nurse Family Partnership in Nova Scotia, presented by Dr. **Normand Carrey**
- Balint Groups, presented by Dr. **Ali Manning**

CAP Journal Club

Journal Club was held with CAP resident Dr. **Sophie Church** leading discussion about the gut microbiome and child and adolescent mental health on May 27, 2025.

Section of Geriatric Psychiatry

PUBLICATIONS

- Anna Skosireva, Linda Gobessi, **Gail Eskes, Keri-Leigh Cassidy**, Effectiveness of enhanced group cognitive behaviour therapy for older adults (CBT-OA) with depression and anxiety: A replication study, *International Psychogeriatrics*, Volume 37, Issue 2, 2025, 100013, ISSN 1041-6102, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inpsyc.2024.100013>.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1041610224000140>
- Neil-Sztramko, S. E., Levy, A., Flint, A. J., Goodarzi, Z., **Gough, A.**, Trenaman, S. C., ... & Iaboni, A. (2025). Pharmacological treatment of anxiety in older adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 12(6), 421-432. [Read more](#).

MEDIA

The art of compassion is a powerful tool

Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy was interviewed for an article by Starr Cunningham, President and CEO of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, for the Chronicle Herald's Senior Living special published on March 25, 2025.

[Read the article](#) from the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia's website.

AWARDS

Congratulations to Dr. **Ian Mackay** for receiving a Faculty of Medicine Community Teacher of the Year Award.

Geriatric Psychiatry subspecialty program

We are pleased to announce Dr. **Alec Watts** will be starting the Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty training on July 1, 2025. Please join us in wishing him continued success and all the best in this next chapter of his studies!

One Person **One Record**

The One Person One Record (OPOR) Program is working with Nova Scotia Health, IWK Health, the Department of Health and Wellness and other healthcare partners to implement a provincial clinical information system in 2025 and 2026. To support this significant transformation, a Provincial Readiness and Empowerment for Practice Adoption and Regional Excellence (PREPARE) strategy has been developed.

A pillar of the PREPARE Strategy is the establishment of Transition Teams. These groups are organized by care area and include representation from physicians, clinicians, and healthcare employees. The goal of Transition Teams is to ensure IWK Health and Nova Scotia Health future users of the OPOR-CIS receive the information they need to build confidence and comfort in the changes associated with the implementation. Transition Team members play a critical role in driving local transformation efforts, with a focus on knowledge transfer, practice integration, and strengthening best practices ahead of the OPOR-CIS implementations.

The Mental Health and Addiction (MHA) Transition Team began on March 25 and will consist of six biweekly meetings, ending in early June. On average there are 70-75 participants at each 90-minute session with excellent engagement. Feedback from participants has highlighted the comprehensiveness of the content, and resources provided. Topics have included digital documentation, transitions in care, medication management, non-clinical devices etc. and MHA specific content such as MHA's use of retail pharmacies, and how that workflow will exist in future state, the MHA provincial intake service, and considerations for a provincial

program, securing of highly sensitive information etc.

The intention is for participants to share knowledge gained through the Transition Teams with their local team and service area. We recognize that, depending on go live schedules, some participants program/zone may not be live until late 2026. The [OPOR Hub](#) (login required), which is a Sharepoint site only accessible to users on IWK Health or Nova Scotia Health networks, is an excellent resource and repository for materials. The OPOR Hub is updated each week with the recordings of the sessions, presentation content and useful materials such as one pagers and Q&A documents

If you have any questions, please contact the OPOR Program Team at opor@nshealth.ca

Mental Health and Addictions Program news

Update on Intake Transformation Changes

To improve accessibility and streamline service navigation, Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) implemented several key updates to their intake process in April.

One of the biggest changes was the introduction of an **online booking system**, allowing clients and families to schedule initial intake appointments at their convenience. This system will help reduce phone wait times and provide more flexibility for those seeking support.

We are also encouraging clients to use **self-referral options** as the primary way to access intake, ensuring they can connect with services more quickly. By directing individuals to self-refer, we can expedite the process and better

prioritize urgent cases while reducing delays caused by third-party referrals.

In addition to these system improvements, we are actively **recruiting new team members** to expand our capacity and enhance service delivery. Ongoing **education and training** initiatives are also in place to support staff development and ensure our team is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our clients.

Where Central Intake is a shared phone service and system access point with MHAP at Nova Scotia Health and the IWK, the teams have worked collaboratively to ensure service alignment. Some of the changes that Nova Scotia Health is adopting are parallel to

IWK practices with the intent to standardize central intake services across the province.

People will be able to self-refer by contacting the provincial Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service at 1-855-922-1122 or they can book online at prebooking.nshealth.ca. For more on Nova Scotia Health's Intake service, please go [here](#) and for more on the IWK Intake, please go [here](#).

These updates reflect our commitment to providing accessible, client-centered care. We appreciate your patience as we continue to roll out these changes and welcome any feedback. For more details or assistance with the new intake process, please reach out to our team.

Nova Scotia Health enhances primary care access to psychiatry

Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) is improving access to psychiatric consultations and assessments for patients referred by their primary care providers. The program is optimizing a pathway for rapid access to psychiatry connecting patients with the care they need sooner – from diagnosis to treatment.

This rapid access pathway will roll out in stages, starting at adult community mental health and addictions clinics in the eastern zone this summer, with the northern and western zones to follow. Psychiatry consultation will continue to occur within adult community mental health clinics across the province.

It builds on the success seen with the Rapid Access Stabilization Program (RASP), which launched in the central zone two years ago.

Read the full news release [here](#).

Social Policy & Advocacy

Doctors Nova Scotia education session on cultural safety

At its recent 2025 annual conference, Doctors Nova Scotia offered an education session that explored how physicians can help Indigenous patients feel safe and respected in healthcare.

Presenters Dr. Margot Latimer and Ms. Julie Francis provided a brief overview of the history

and geography of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and Indigenous people in Canada, as well as content related to health, healing and care strategies.

[Read more](#) and [watch](#) the session recording.

Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund

Funding is available for academic initiatives in the areas of education, clinical care, or research to close gaps in serving and engaging equity-deserving populations in our community.

The Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund is available to all members of the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry including residents, fellows, AFP physicians, graduate students, research faculty, cross appointed and adjunct faculty, and administrative staff.

LEARN MORE & APPLY



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Department of Psychiatry

Department News

Canadian Consortium for Early Intervention in Psychosis (CCEIP) news features department members

- Dr. **Kara Dempster** will present “Use of Life Long Injectables” in EPI Experts Webinar Series on Sept. 19, 2025 from 12 to 12:45 p.m. EDT.
- Department members are among the authors of two posters CCEIP will be presenting at IEPA 15:
 - Canadian Consortium for Early Intervention in Psychosis: Connecting EPI clinicians through knowledge translation Authors: Howard Margolese, Nicola Otter, **Phil Tibbo**
 - Real-World Examination of The Rates of Long Acting Injectable Attrition After Discharge from an Early Psychosis Program Authors: **Candice Crocker**, Tom Hastings, Marc-Andre Roy, Nicola Otter, **Phil Tibbo**

Family Education Videos

Early Psychosis Intervention Nova Scotia (EPINS) developed a series of family education videos featuring some department members. EPINS received a grant from the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia to create four professionally-developed education videos aimed towards family members and loved ones. The videos are 4-6 minutes in length and were designed as ‘talking points’ to give families some initial information that they can then discuss further with the treatment team, and also for families that may have barriers to accessing the treatment team and other educational opportunities.

1. What is Psychosis (Dr. **Sabina Abidi** and Laura Carnegie)
2. Getting Help/Treatment (Dr. **Jason Morrison**)

3. Recovery/Relapse Prevention (Dr. **Kara Dempster**)
4. Substances & Psychosis (Dr. **Phil Tibbo**)

[View the videos.](#)

MEDIA

- [Rapid access to psychiatry program wins praise from doctors, patients in Halifax](#) Drs. **Vincent Agyapong** and **Jason Morrison** in The Canadian Press
- [Patience, kindness key to aiding wildfire evacuees from Sandy Lake First Nation](#) Dr. **Vincent Agyapong** in CBC News
- [Ketamine therapy for treatment-resistant depression: Q&A with QEII psychiatrist Dr. Abraham Nunes](#) Dr. **Abraham Nunes** in QEII Foundation News
- [‘This is a life-changing treatment’: Donor support can help more people living with treatment-resistant depression](#) Dr. **Abraham Nunes** in QEII Foundation News
- [‘Being able to feel joy again’: QEII Foundation raising funds for ketamine treatment program](#) Dr. **Abraham Nunes** in CTV News
- [‘I have a life back’: How ketamine therapy is helping these Nova Scotians find relief from depression](#) Dr. **Abraham Nunes** in CBC News
- [Ketamine Therapy Could Mark Breakthrough in Depression Treatment](#) Dr. **Abraham Nunes** on CTV Your Morning
- Dr. **Abraham Nunes** on News 95.7 [Todd Veinotte Show](#), June 10, 2025, around 24 minute mark.
- [New Centre for Global Mental Health unites researchers to prioritize care](#) Dr. **Vincent Agyapong** in Dalhousie Medical Research News
- [Mental health as a human right: New Dal centre champions global access and education](#) Dr. **Vincent Agyapong** in Dal News

Strategic planning leadership retreat

Department leaders convened over two days (evening of May 22 and a full day on May 23, 2025) to reflect on the Department of Psychiatry's 2020-2025 strategic plan and to identify new strategic directions for 2026-2030 and alignment with the Faculty of Medicine's strategic plan. Dr. **Hugh Maguire**, chief of Psychiatry for the Northern Zone, was also presented with the department's Special Recognition Award for championing equity, diversity, and inclusivity.



Department Head annual residents' engagements

Department head Dr. **Vincent Agyapong** continued the annual engagement outings with small groups of residents. These sessions provide meaningful opportunities where residents can share their perspectives and experiences and how we can all contribute to the shared goals of our department's Transformational Plan.



FACULTY CHANGES

Arrivals

- Dr. **Muhammad Javed** joined the department as an assistant professor effective April 2, 2025. Dr. Javed will be working on 7 Lane. Dr. Javed can be reached at **Muhammad.Javed@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Justine Dol** joined the department as an adjunct effective May 15, 2025. Dr. Dol is located at the IWK and can be reached at **Justine.Dol@dal.ca**
- Dr. **Delali Fiagbe** joined the department as an adjunct effective May 15, 2025. Dr.

Fiagbe is located at the University of Ghana Medical School in Accra, Ghana. He can be reached at **dkfiagbe@ug.edu.gh**

- Dr. **Corrine Boudreau** joined the department as an assistant professor effective May 15, 2025. Dr. Boudreau is located at the South Shore Regional Hospital, Bridgewater. Dr. Boudreau can be reached at **corrine.boudreau@nshealth.ca**

Welcome to you all!

Departures

- Dr. **Shannon MacDonald** is resigning from the department effective June 13, 2025
- Dr. **Abuah Amaka** is resigning from the department effective June 23, 2025

We wish you well!



SUMMER CELEBRATION
Sunday, July 20, 2025 | 1 to 8 p.m.
St. Mary's Boat Club, Halifax, NS

✈ KAYAKING | 🍷 PLAY | 🎭 PUPPET SHOW | 🎯 LAWN GAMES
🎨 ARTS & CRAFTS | 🍴 BBQ | 🏠 PLAYGROUND

Join us for the summer celebration at St. Mary's Boat Club!

- Open to everyone in the Department of Psychiatry (residents, grad students, faculty and admin staff)
- Bring a friend, partner and/or children
- St. Mary's Boat Club overlooks Northwest Arm - inside space, outside deck, access to canoes, kayaks, tennis courts, and Conrose Park green space
- Accessible for people with limited mobility



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Department of Psychiatry

Learn more & register:



Registration will close at 11:59 p.m. on
Friday, July 11, 2025.

Questions? Email Minh.Nguyen@dal.ca

AWARDS & HONOURS

Department members honoured with Faculty of Medicine Awards

The following Department of Psychiatry members were recognized with Faculty of Medicine awards presented at the annual faculty meeting on June 3, 2025. Congratulations!

- Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, recipient of the Dr. John Savage Memorial Award for Faculty Leadership in Global Health
- Dr. **Martin Alda**, recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Award for Career Excellence in Research Mentorship
- Dr. **Kara Dempster**, recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Early Career Investigator Award
- Dr. **Kim Good**, recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Award of Excellence in Teaching for PhD Faculty
- Dr. **Aaron Keshen**, recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Award of Excellence in Clinical Practice
- Dr. **Ian Mackay**, a recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Community Teacher of the Year Award
- Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick**, recipient of the Dr. Allan Cohen Memorial Award for Community Service
- Dr. **Kazue Semba**, recipient of the Faculty of Medicine Excellence in Basic Research Award

Dr. Abraham (Rami) Rudnick appoint to Doctors Nova Scotia's Board of Directors

Congratulations to Dr. **Abraham (Rami) Rudnick** on his appointment to the Board of Directors for Doctors Nova Scotia.

Department members complete Physician Leadership Development Program

Congratulations to Drs. **Michelle MacDonald**, **Christopher Murphy**, **Ngozi Ezeanozie**, and **Ahmed Saleh** for completing the year-long Physician Leadership Development Program through Doctors Nova Scotia and the CMA in May 2025.



Drs. Alexa Bagnell and Maria Alexiadis achieve Canadian Certified Physician Executive (CCPE) Designation

Congratulations to Drs. **Alexa Bagnell** and **Maria Alexiadis** for achieving their Canadian Certified Physician Executive (CCPE) Designation.

Dr. Alexa Bagnell is head of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and chief of Psychiatry and senior physician at IWK Health. Dr. Maria Alexiadis, is a physician at the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis program, senior medical director of the Primary Health Care and Chronic Disease Network at Nova Scotia Health, Initiative Lead for Primary Care Transformation with Nova Scotia Health and the Department of Health and Wellness, Government of Nova Scotia, and Head of the Department of Family Practice for Nova Scotia Health's Central Zone.

The [Canadian Certified Physician Executive \(CCPE\)](#) credential recognizes and advances physician leadership and excellence through a national, peer-generated, standards-based assessment process.



Dr. Maria Alexiadis (left) and Dr. Alexa Bagnell (right).

Dr. Joseph Sadek recognized by Government of Ontario

Dr. **Joseph Sadek** received recognition from the Government of Ontario for his education work across Canada. Congratulations!



Dr. Tanya Pellow receives Extra Mile Award

Congratulations to Dr. **Tanya Pellow** for receiving the department's Extra Mile Award!

The Department of Psychiatry's Extra Mile Award has been created to recognize exceptional contributions by department members who have truly gone "the extra mile" in service to the department by advancing its mission in the areas of education, research, clinical care, and advocacy.

Recipient: Dr. Tanya Pellow

Nominated by: Dr. Mahmoud Awara

Dr. Tanya Pellow was nominated for her outstanding dedication, compassion, and collaborative spirit in clinical service and quality improvement within the Department of Psychiatry.

Over the years, Dr. Pellow has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to

the well-being of patients and colleagues. She went above and beyond by providing full coverage for the Sackville Community Mental Health Team during a colleague's three-month sabbatical, offering high-quality care while gaining deeper insight into outpatient team operations. She has been a pillar of strength at the Recovery and Integration service at the Bedford/Sackville Clinic since its inception, working with some of the most complex and vulnerable patient populations. Her clinical presence is marked by flexibility, conscientiousness, and a deep respect for the values of recovery-oriented care.

What truly sets Dr. Pellow apart is her leadership in addressing systemic issues impacting patient safety and access to care. Her advocacy played a vital role in recent changes to emergency support processes, following a critical incident highlighting

longstanding safety concerns at the Sackville site. She has also demonstrated initiative and forward thinking in launching a quality improvement project with a colleague to develop a violence risk communication tool, an essential step toward strengthening safety and inter-professional communication across teams. Despite the many competing demands on her time, she continues to show resilience and a proactive approach to learning, particularly as she prepares for the OPOR transition and seeks to integrate innovations into her clinical work.

Dr. Pellow exemplifies what it means to go the extra mile. Her work is grounded in humility, mutual respect, and a relentless drive to improve systems for patients and colleagues. She has been a tremendous asset to the department, and this recognition would be a fitting tribute to her tireless efforts and quiet leadership.



EXTRA MILE AWARD

**Do you have a colleague who deserves to be recognized for going "the extra mile?"
Consider nominating them for the Extra Mile Award!**

The Department of Psychiatry's Extra Mile Award recognizes exceptional contributions by faculty and staff who have truly gone "the extra mile" in service to the department by advancing its mission in the areas of education, research, clinical care, and advocacy.

LEARN MORE & MAKE A NOMINATION [HERE](#).

Department members honoured at bi-annual meeting

Congratulations to the following recipients of departmental awards that were presented at our bi-annual meeting on April 29, 2025.

2025 Dr. Aidan Stokes Mentorship Award

This annual award recognizes and honours a faculty member who has demonstrated exceptional mentorship and leadership in their work with the department. The award is named in honour of Dr. Aidan Stokes who dedicated his career to fostering a culture of strong leadership and mentorship within the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry.

The 2025 Dr. Aidan Stokes Mentorship Award recipient is Dr. **Patricia Pearce**.

Dedicated Service Award

The Dedicated Service Award recognizes departing department members who have served the department for at least 10 years.

The Dedicated Service Award recipients are Drs. **John Aspin** and **Shannon MacDonald**.

Leadership Award

The Leadership Award was established to recognize department members who have served in a leadership role with the department for at least five years and are leaving their roles.

The Leadership Award recipients are:

- Dr. **Allan Abbass** (for the role of Clinical Academic Leader – Centre for Emotions and Health)
- Dr. **Martin Alda** (for the role of Clinical Academic Leader – Mood Disorders Program)
- Dr. **Cheryl Murphy** (for the role of Chair of the Competence Committee)

RASP locum clears Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada exam

Congratulations to Dr. **Archana Unnikrishnan** for clearing her Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada exam. Dr. Unnikrishnan is our locum for RASP until the end of December 2025.

Recognizing our administrative staff

Do you know a Dalhousie University Psychiatry administrative employee who deserves to be recognized for their extra efforts?

Let us know by filling out the form on the homepage of dalpsychiatry.ca.

Dr. Agyapong and department managers in the Department of Psychiatry have launched a new employee appreciation program that will recognize employees regularly for their contribution to the academic, research, and clinical work of the department.

This is a great way to recognize staff who make sure services are staffed, learners feel supported, research is productive, and budgets are balanced.

Questions or issues with the form?

Contact jen.brown@nshealth.ca

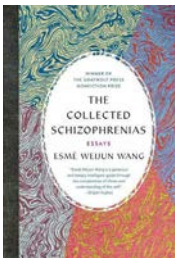
DoP Medical Humanities / Spring Summer 2025

ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

Good news for procrastinators: **Deadline extended to June 30, 2025.**

The competition is open to Canadian medical students, residents, and fellows, who are invited to submit reflective essays, poetry, or short fiction exploring the intersection of mental health and the humanities. For full details, please visit the [Medical Humanities webpage](#).

Med Hum. Book Club: Summer Reading List



***The Collected Schizophrenias* by Esmé Weijun Wang**

A powerful collection of essays that blends personal narrative with cultural and medical analysis of severe mental illness. Drawing from her own experience with schizoaffective disorder, Wang challenges clinical assumptions and explores the complexities of identity, diagnosis, and survival. It's a deeply human, intellectually rigorous work that invites reflection on the lived realities behind psychiatric labels. Winner of the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize.



***Ordinary Notes* by Christina Sharpe**

A lyrical and thought-provoking collection of 248 brief reflections that explore memory, grief, care, and the emotional weight of history. Blending personal narrative, cultural criticism, and literary insight, Sharpe invites readers to consider how loss and inherited experience shape our everyday lives and ways of knowing. This book offers a rich entry point into discussions about how structural and intergenerational forces impact individual identity and therapeutic engagement.



***Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

This dystopian novel, shortlisted for the Booker Prize, subtly interrogates identity, medical ethics, and the human cost of scientific progress. Its haunting and understated narrative invites reflection on the meaning of personhood and the boundaries of biomedical responsibility. The novel was adapted into film in 2010 and is available to stream on Disney+.

STAYED TUNED FOR OUR NEXT BOOK CLUB MEETING IN EARLY FALL.

SAVE THE DATE / All-Resident Med Humanities Session / AUGUST 27, 2025

Upcoming Health Humanities Conference in Portland, Oregon

The **American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH)** will host its **27th Annual Conference** from **October 22–25, 2025**, at the Oregon Convention Center in **Portland, Oregon**.

This interdisciplinary gathering brings together professionals from medicine, philosophy, literature, law, and the arts to explore pressing issues in bioethics and health humanities. For more information or to register, visit [ASBH.ORG](https://www.asbh.org).

For more information on the Department of Psychiatry Medical Humanities program, please contact Dr. Leigh Meldrum, Medical Humanities Coordinator, at margaret.meldrum@nshealth.ca.

HEADLINES **SUBMISSIONS**

Headlines provides a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and items of general interest to the faculty, fellows, students, and staff of the Department of Psychiatry.

The next issue of **Headlines** will be distributed in **September 2025**.

Please send all submissions to **Penney.Miller@nshealth.ca**



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Department of Psychiatry