

# HEADLINES



**PHD IN PSYCHIATRY RESEARCH PROGRAM SEES ITS FIRST GRADUATE**



**DALHOUSIE**  
UNIVERSITY

**PSYCHIATRY**  
CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

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# HEAD LINES

# Message from the Department Head

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Dr. Vincent Agyapong.

As we near the end of another calendar year and prepare for the holiday season, we can reflect on what has been a productive and rewarding fall.

The department is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in several ways, one of which is through community engagement. As part of activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary, we are hosting a public engagement event in collaboration with the Mental Health and Addiction Programs at Nova Scotia Health Central Zone and IWK Health. The event is taking place on Saturday, Nov. 30 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in Room 301, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Halifax Central Library. Members of the public will hear about the newest mental health services closing treatment gaps for equity-deserving populations: Transcultural Mental Health Program, Concurrent Addiction and Mental Disorders Program, Rapid Access and Stabilization Program, and Neuropsychiatry Program.

This fall, we announced the Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund as a new internal funding

opportunity. The fund aims to encourage initiatives in clinical care, education, or research aiming to close gaps in serving and engaging equity-deserving populations in our community.

We released the department's [2023/24 Annual Report](#) highlighting our accomplishments in education, research, clinical care, and social policy & advocacy. The report is available on the department's website.

This fall we also hosted two annual research events: a public panel discussion on Oct. 31, and our 34<sup>th</sup> annual Research Day on Nov. 1. Both events featured a timely discussion on the use of digital interventions and AI in mental health care. My thanks to our keynote speaker, Dr. Jaime Delgado, as well as to all the panelists, presenters, and event organizers. You can read more about these events in this edition of Headlines.

In October, we welcomed our new Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health, Dr. **Lori Wozney**. We congratulate Dr. Wozney on this appointment and look forward to what she will bring to this research portfolio.

As you'll read in this issue of Headlines, our PhD in Psychiatry Research program was proud to see its first graduate, Dr. **Sarah DeGrace**, convocate this fall. We also congratulate MSc graduates **Anastasia Harris, Julia Fraiha, Mikaela Ethier-Gagnon, Thomas Snooks, Isaiah Burton, Nick Murray, and Simon Leger**.

Our postgraduate education program is preparing for CaRMS in January 2025, and our undergraduate program is completing another block of Skilled Clinician.

Preparations are also underway for our annual W.O. McCormick Academic Day scheduled for April 25, 2025.

The Medical Humanities Program announced the winners of its annual writing competition. Congratulations to the 2024 postgraduate trainee winner, Dr. **Kara Yeung** (Dalhousie University), and to the 2024 medical student winner, Camelia Ursu (University of Calgary), as well as honourable mentions Dr. **Lauren Miller** (Dalhousie University) in the postgraduate trainee category, and Aparna Kuchibhatla (Queen's University) and Priya Khalsa (University of Toronto) in the medical student category.

Our department, in collaboration with Queen's University, organized a Neuropsychiatry Education Day Workshop that was held on Oct. 26. Held in a hybrid format, the workshop convened residents from Neurology and Psychiatry departments of both institutions, as well as doctors from various specialties affiliated with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons and the University of Ghana's Department of Psychiatry. My thanks to the collaborators, organizers, and attendees. More information about the workshop is available in this edition of Headlines.

In early October, we also hosted the fifth annual Trans Health Symposium "Integrated primary care for gender diverse, non-binary & transgender people across the lifespan" providing education on gender-affirming care to a variety of health professionals including physicians, social workers, therapists, and nurses.

We were pleased to welcome the following new faculty members to the department: Drs. **Alex**

**Whynot, Alim Awadia, Mackenzie Armstrong, Courtney Handford, and Lori Wozney.** We also said farewell to faculty members: Drs. **Kathleen Howell, Sameh Hassan, Muhammad Aamer Khan, and Cynthia Calkin.**

On Nov. 5, 2024, we hosted our fall bi-annual full faculty meeting, and were pleased to recognize the following department members with awards: Dr. **Selene Etches** received the Educator of the Year Award; Dr. **José Mejía** received the Dr. Larry Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award; Professor **Archie Kaiser** received a Special Recognition Award, and **Michelle LeBlanc** and Drs. **Saravana Muthu, Cynthia Calkin, Mary-**

**Ann Hudec, and Sameh Hassan** received Dedicated Service Awards. Congratulations to you all.

Many other department members continue to be recognized for their outstanding work. Congratulations to Dr. **Joseph Sadek** who received an award for his suicide prevention work; Dr. **Tomas Hajek** and his PhD student, Dr. Vochoskova, who received the first prize from the Czech Neuropsychopharmacological Society for original research in clinical psychopharmacology for the manuscript “Weight and metabolic changes in early psychosis-association with daily quantification of medication exposure during the first hospitalization;” and, **Lorielle**

**Dietze** winner of the Hebb Student Award for Best Oral Presentation, along with the following recipients of Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry awards – Dr. **Celia Robichaud**, recipient of the 2024 Excellence in Education Award; Dr. **Normand Carrey**, recipient of the 2024 Certificate of Special Recognition; and, Dr. **Suzanne Zinck**, recipient of the 2024 Paul D. Steinhauer Advocacy Award.

**Dr. Vincent Agyapong**  
Head, Department of Psychiatry  
Dalhousie University  
Head, Department of Psychiatry  
NSHA Central Zone

## Social Policy & Advocacy Initiatives Fund

Funding is available for projects in clinical care, education, or research aiming 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.

**APPLY NOW!**

Email [SPAC@dal.ca](mailto:SPAC@dal.ca) for application information.



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CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

# PhD in Psychiatry Research program sees its first graduate



On Oct. 23, 2024, Dr. Sarah DeGrace convocated with her PhD in Psychiatry Research, making her the program's first graduate.

On Oct. 23, 2024, Dr. **Sarah DeGrace** convocated with her PhD in Psychiatry Research, earning her a distinct place in the Department of Psychiatry's history as the program's first graduate. Dr. DeGrace was one of two Indigenous PhD students in our graduate program.

"Being the first graduate of the PhD in Psychiatry Research program represents the culmination of years

of work, not only from myself, but from the many mentors who contributed to the creation of this program and to my development within it," says Dr. DeGrace. "For me, this milestone is a personal accomplishment that I feel reflects a shared commitment in the Department of Psychiatry to advancing mental health research in meaningful ways. It also feels like a responsibility to set a strong

foundation for future students and contribute to the program having a reputation of excellence."

Dr. DeGrace holds a Bachelor of Science degree (honours) from Acadia University and is also a graduate of the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry's MSc program, which she completed in one year instead of the standard two. After completion of the MSc in Psychiatry Research program, she joined the department's first cohort of PhD students in 2021.

"Having our first PhD convocating from the new doctoral program in psychiatry research is very gratifying as it is the culmination of over two decades of work in planning out, applying for, having approved, and commencing our graduate programs — first the MSc program and now the PhD program," say Dr. **Sherry Stewart**, coordinator, psychiatry research graduate programs, and Dr. **Kim Good**, associate coordinator.

Throughout graduate studies, Dr. DeGrace was supported with internal and external scholarships. Her MSc thesis was published as a first-authored manuscript, and her PhD research has resulted in five publications. Dr. Sherry Stewart was her mentor for both her MSc and PhD studies.

"We are very proud of all that Dr. DeGrace has achieved — consistently attracting external funding for her graduate-level studies, winning several awards, securing funding for her research endeavours, mentoring junior

students, and publishing all of her five dissertation studies,” say Drs. Stewart and Good. “Dr. DeGrace has shown that it is possible to complete our new doctoral degree in the allotted time and not skimp on the quality of the dissertation research. We wish her all the best in the next stage of her research career.”

While her publication record is a personal achievement, having her research inform clinical work would make her most proud, says Dr. DeGrace.

For Dr. DeGrace, her interest in psychiatry research began “with a fascination with the mechanisms of the human mind, particularly those of which we aren’t overly aware,” she says.

“I suspected something automatic was happening in the case of addictions and mental health, with so many folks with lived experience reporting anecdotally that they wish they could cease their substance use, but finding themselves reaching for it without thinking, especially when faced with stress and trauma reminders. Being able to take my musings from late high school/early university and learn how to actually study that process has been so incredibly cool.”

Dr. DeGrace expresses gratitude to everyone who supported her through her journey, especially her supervisor, Dr. Sherry Stewart, for her insight and encouragement.

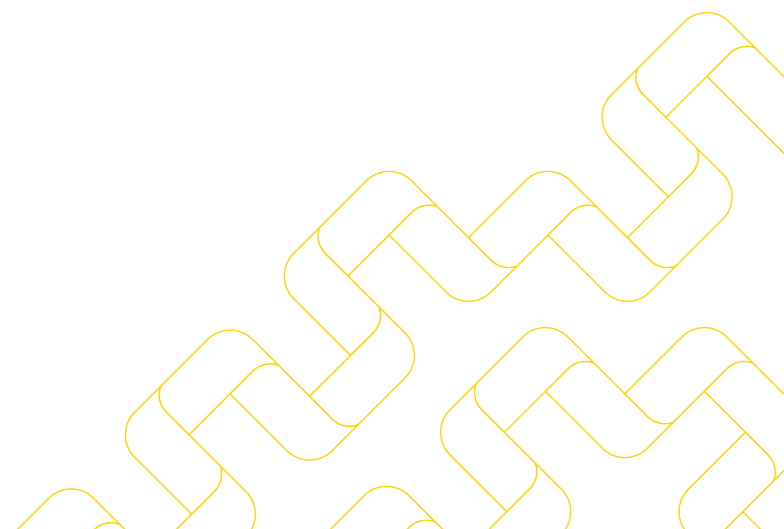
“I feel very lucky to work with someone who has stayed so passionate for her work throughout her career, and I hope to emulate that throughout mine as well.”

Now that her PhD studies are complete, Dr. DeGrace is taking up a Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Mood, Anxiety, and Addiction Comorbidity (MAAC) Lab at Dalhousie University, where she’ll continue her research on PTSD and Cannabis Use Disorder. She is

also teaching Psychology classes at Dalhousie and Saint Mary’s University.

She looks forward to seeing the program continue to grow and foster more important research in psychiatry, she says, and shares some advice for anyone considering the program.

“Find mentors and peers who can support you through it, as graduate school is inevitably going to be difficult. It is also very rewarding, especially if your supervisors and peers also challenge you to think critically about your work. Finally, stay focused on the real-world implications of your research. It can be easy to lose sight of this when you’re in the thick of it, but seeing our research inform clinical practice is ultimately why we do this!”



# Research Report

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## RESEARCH EVENTS

### Use of digital interventions and AI in mental health care: promise and perils



Panelists at the public panel discussion “Use of digital interventions and AI in mental health care: promise and perils” on Oct. 31, 2024. From left to right: Drs. Vincent Agyapong, Lori Wozney, Jaime Delgadillo, Sageev Oore, JianLi Wang, and Phil Tibbo.

Each year, to coincide with the Department of Psychiatry Research Day, the department hosts a public discussion on an important topic for researchers and the local community. This year’s panel discussion “Use of digital interventions and AI in mental health care: promise and perils” was held at the Peggy Corkum Music Room on Oct. 31, 2024.

Dr. Phil Tibbo, Director of Research, moderated the discussion, and

attendees heard from panelists: Dr. Jaimie Delgadillo, our Research Day keynote speaker; Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Head of the Dal Department of Psychiatry; Dr. Sageev Oore, Canada CIFAR AI Chair; Associate Professor, Faculty of Computer Science, Dalhousie University; and, Research Faculty Member, Vector Institute; Dr. JianLi Wang, Professor; Canada Research Chair in Health Data Science and Innovation, Departments of Community Health & Epidemiology,

and Psychiatry, Dalhousie University; and Affiliated Scientist, Nova Scotia Health; and, Dr. Lori Wozney, Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health; and, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University.

Thanks to all for a great interactive and lively discussion.

## Research Day 2024

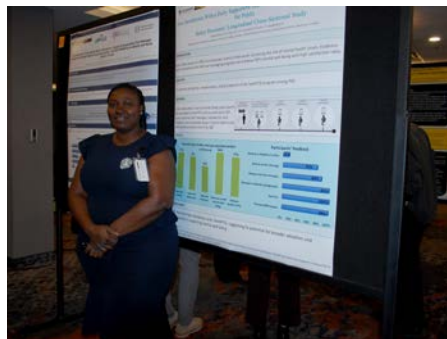
The department's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Day was held on Nov. 1, 2024 at the Atlantica Hotel Halifax. The event was again successful with many abstracts submitted and # of attendees. The organizers thank all those who attended for coming out to support student research and continuing to make Research Day such a popular event.

Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, Department Head, provided a welcome address. Opening remarks were provided Dr. David Anderson, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and by Dr. **Phil Tibbo**, the department's Research Director.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Jaime Delgado Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Sheffield, UK. His presentation "Advances in personalized and precision mental health care" opened the event.

There were 11 oral presentations scheduled for the day and 52 poster presentations. Unfortunately, the day was cut short, and the afternoon session was cancelled due to a power outage. Students who were scheduled for an oral presentation in the afternoon will present at the department's grand rounds on Dec. 11, 2024.

Research Day award winners will be announced in a future edition of the Headlines.





# Students representing the Department of Psychiatry home and abroad

Submitted by: Linzhi Wu

Throughout this year, Dr. **Tomas Hajek's** team of students and researchers presented their work at Canadian and international conferences, showcasing their passion for research and their original findings on bipolar disorders, obesity, and brain structure. To illustrate their individual contributions:

**Sean McWhinney** represented the Department of Psychiatry at the annual Society of Biological Psychiatry (SBP) meeting in Austin, TX, showing the interplay between metabolism, brain structure and cognition in first episode psychosis. This study was the first to show a direct relationship between indicators of obesity, changes in brain structure, and poorer cognitive outcomes in a psychiatric population. This research adds to mounting evidence that preventing weight gain during treatment may improve clinical targets.

**Lorielle Dietze** presented a talk at the Canadian Society for Brain, Behaviour, and Cognitive Sciences (CSBBCS) conference in Edmonton, Alberta on white matter in obesity and bipolar disorders, winning the Hebb Student Award for Best Oral Presentation. She also presented a poster at the 2024 International Society for Bipolar Disorders (ISBD) meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland on an ENIGMA study using a multivariate analysis to investigate factors outside the diagnosis of bipolar disorders that impact white matter diffusivity.

**Julia Fraiha-Pegado** presented at the annual CSBBCS conference in Edmonton, AB and the ISBD conference in Reykjavik, Iceland,

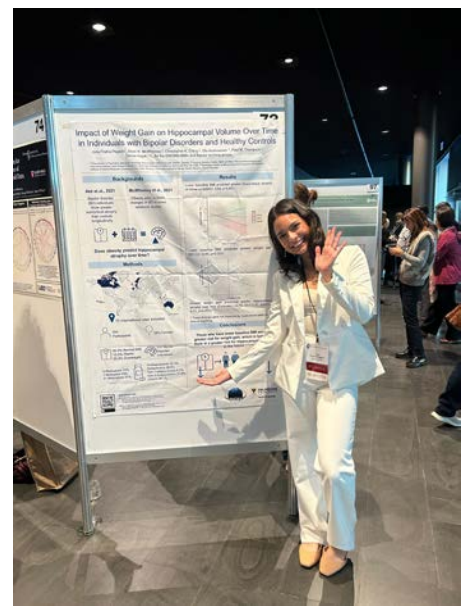
showing low BMI to be a risk factor for hippocampal atrophy in both bipolar disorder individuals and controls.

**Maya Selitser** represented the Department of Psychiatry at the SBP conference in Austin, TX and the annual CSBBCS meeting in Edmonton, AB, demonstrating diabetes to be the strongest predictor of altered brain structure, compared to hypertension and obesity.

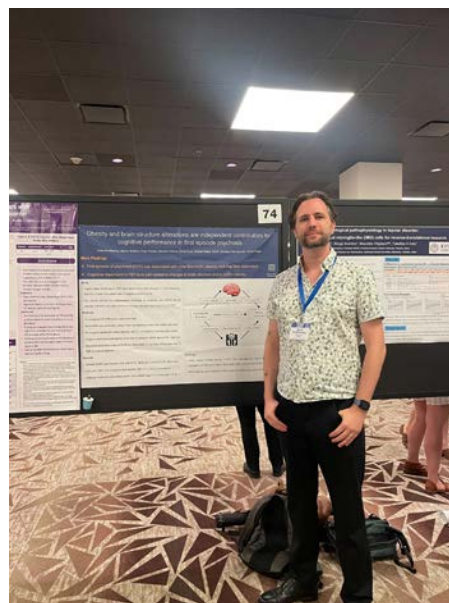
As the end of the year approaches, the Hajek lab members look forward to kicking off new projects, collaborating with their international colleagues, and finalizing current initiatives.



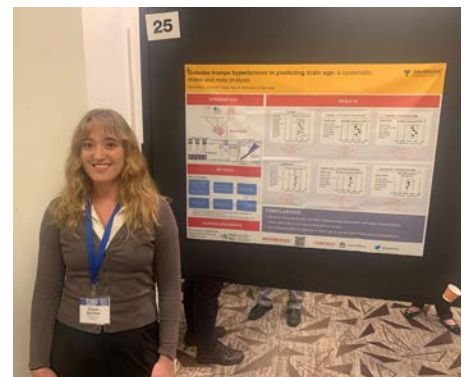
Lorielle Dietze.



Julia Fraiha-Pegado.



Sean McWhinney.



Maya Selitser.

# Evidence of Sleepwell's effectiveness published and presented home and abroad



**Sleepwell** is a research and knowledge mobilization program that aims to reduce insomnia medication overuse and increase the uptake of cognitive-behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTi) for long-term health outcomes. Sleepwell has been active and productive in 2024. The program's website ([mysleepwell.ca](https://mysleepwell.ca)) exceeded 10,000 monthly visitors this fall. Several updates to the program have been completed, including the creation of a French version of the website ([mieux-dormir.ca](https://mieux-dormir.ca)) and the addition of two new menu items: Clinicians that shares information about CBTi training opportunities and offers tools for better insomnia care (more details below) and Stories that features experiences of clinicians and patients with using Sleepwell. Here's a quick round-up of Sleepwell's recent activities.

## ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

### JAMA Psychiatry

Findings from the **YAWNS NB** (Your Answers When Needing Sleep in New Brunswick) study were published in **JAMA Psychiatry** in September ([doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.2731](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2024.2731)), demonstrating the effectiveness of a direct-to-patient mailed

intervention in reducing sedative use and improving sleep outcomes. Conducted by departmental faculty **Drs. David Gardner, Andrea Murphy, and Malgorzata Rajda**, this 3-arm, 6-month, randomized clinical trial involved 565 older adults in New Brunswick with long-term use of benzodiazepines and z-drugs (BZRAs). Participants were randomized to receive the Sleepwell or EMPOWER package by mail or no package (treatment-as-usual). The Sleepwell group experienced the greatest reduction in sedative use (26.2% stopped and 20.4% reduced their BZRA dose >25%), while also achieving better sleep outcomes irrespective of sedative use status.

### Conference presentations

In September, **Dr. Rajda** presented a subanalysis of the main findings of the YAWNS NB study at the **27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the European Sleep Research Society in Seville, Spain**, and **Dr. Gardner** in partnership with a YAWNS NB study participant Georges Marcoux (who joined online) gave a keynote presentation at the **2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Deprescribing in Nantes, France**. Georges' inspiring story, among several more Sleepwell Stories, is available at [mysleepwell.ca](https://mysleepwell.ca).

In October, **Dr. Murphy** gave two presentations at the **19<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Menopause in Melbourne, Australia** on long-term sedative use and its relation



From left to right: Dr. Gardner, Dr. Judith Davidson (Queen's University), and Dr. Rajda at the ESRS Conference in Seville, Spain.

to menopause. In November, **Dr. Gardner** also presented at the **Canadian Society for Addictions Medicine Conference in Hamilton, Ontario**. On November 28, **Dr. Gardner, Dr. Murphy**, and psychologist and sleep specialist **Dr. Lucas Eberhardt De Master** are offering an in-person workshop for family physicians on CBTi and sedative deprescribing at the [98<sup>th</sup> Annual Dalhousie Fall Refresher](#).

### NEW TOOLS FOR INSOMNIA CARE

New tools for better insomnia care have been posted to the *Clinicians* page of [mysleepwell.ca](https://mysleepwell.ca). **Katya Kruglova**, Sleepwell's research associate, has been collaborating with provincial and national medical and pharmacy societies to disseminate details about these resources. Four brief videos demonstrate how to efficiently use Sleepwell's resources as part

of your patient care activities, including:

- sedative deprescribing
- introducing your patients to CBTi
- starting CBTi while deprescribing sedatives
- supporting your patients through CBTi

### SLEEPWELL BOOKLETS AVAILABLE SOON

Updated versions of the Sleepwell booklets used in the YAWNS NB study including *How to Stop Sleeping Pills* and *How to Get Your Sleep Back* will soon be available through the program's website.

### UPCOMING WEBINAR

**Drs. Gardner and Rajda** will be hosting a free, online, cross-Canada webinar on **February 4, 2025**. Both members of the public and clinicians are welcome. Learn more and register at [mysleepwell.ca/events](https://mysleepwell.ca/events).

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### PUBLICATIONS

- **Awara, M., Green, J.T.** Exploring the Quality-of-Care Dynamics of Inpatient Psychosocial Rehabilitation in Community-Based Mental Health Services: A Comprehensive Analysis. *Community Ment Health J* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-024-01325-z>
- **Awara, M. A., & Green, J. T.** (2024). Clinical Outcomes and Cost Implications of a Community Psychosocial Rehabilitation Service for Severe and Persistent Mental Illness in Nova Scotia, Canada. *Healthcare*, 12(18), 1904. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12181904>

### Declaration of Helsinki Revision

- World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants. *JAMA*. Published online October 19, 2024. [doi:10.1001/jama.2024.21972](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.21972)

### PRESENTATIONS

- Dr. **Joseph Sadek** was invited to present at Grand Rounds for the Department of Psychiatry, McGill University on October 11 (presentation “Suicide prevention and Artificial Intelligence”) and Department of Psychiatry, University of Montreal on October 1, 2024 (presentation “Advances in ADHD management”).
- Dr. **Joseph Sadek** was recognized by the Hon. Mrs. Justice Mabel Agyemang, Chief Justice, Turks & Caicos Islands for his presentation of the professional development seminar Continuing Mental Wellness, to members of their Bench, Bar and all their Judicial Education Institute stakeholders.

### IN THE MEDIA

TRIC GRANT: MENTAL HEALTH FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS: Dr. **Ejemai Eboime**'s research was featured in the QEI Times. [Read the article.](#)

# Early Psychosis Intervention Nova Scotia (EPINS) Hosts Annual In-Person Gathering

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EPINS recently hosted their 3<sup>rd</sup> annual in-person event in Halifax at the St. Mary's Boat Club on November 15. Attendees included over 40 multidisciplinary mental health and addictions clinicians, health service managers, and directors from across Nova Scotia.

This annual event allows for clinicians from across the province to network and strategize on ways to enhance services in different areas of the province. Learning what is working well or what others are also struggling with allows teams to explore opportunities to collaborate to enhance capacity in their areas.

The event encouraged open discussion throughout the day regarding many provincial initiatives underway including streamlining the intake process for specialty services, standardized routine outcome monitoring, care pathways, and education projects for family members and clinicians.

Dr. **David Whitehorn**, Clinical Nurse Specialist, discussed the development of early psychosis intervention services in Nova Scotia with a distinguished perspective as the single Registered Nurse employed when the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program (NSEPP) was established in 1996. Dr. Whitehorn highlighted major milestones that occurred from then until EPINS became recognized as a provincial specialty service in 2018.

Rachel Church, Occupational Therapist and Licensed Research Coordinator, shared many of the past, ongoing, and future research projects taking place in Nova Scotia. There was great interest from the group in enhancing inclusion of individuals and families in rural



areas, as well as how to become involved in research. Strategies were identified and will be further explored collaboratively with clinicians across the province and the NSEPP research team.

Dr. **Philip Tibbo**, EPINS Clinical Director and Past President of the Canadian Consortium for Early Intervention in Psychosis (CCEIP), presented on national initiatives and projects being led by the consortium including the upcoming national virtual conference on November 29 that includes expert presenters from Nova Scotia. Clinical order sets, monitoring tools, and podcasts were of interest to the group with discussion about education delivery methods and training for medication initiation and health monitoring.

This in-person event has proven to be a unique opportunity for clinicians to all learn and work together to enhance early psychosis intervention services both in their areas and provincially. Feedback has consistently been overwhelmingly positive, and clinicians are appreciative of such an opportunity. EPINS would like to thank all those that were able to attend and for the

ongoing support from management and senior leadership across the province.

If you have any questions regarding early psychosis intervention services, please contact Brittany Chisholm at **[BrittanyC.Chisholm@nshealth.ca](mailto:BrittanyC.Chisholm@nshealth.ca)**.

# Education Report

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## UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

### Welcome to our new representatives!

We are excited to welcome Dr. **Julia Leblanc** as the new resident representative and **Luke MacDonald** as the new clerkship representative.

### Med 2 Skilled Clinician block nearing completion

Our Med 2 Skilled Clinician block wraps up in mid-November. A big

thank you to our faculty, residents, and volunteers for their dedicated participation!

### 2024-25 Summer Internship in Psychiatry (SIIP) preparations underway

Preparations for the 2024-25 Summer Internship in Psychiatry have begun. Student registration will be open from January 13-25, 2025. This one-week program

is available to Med 1 students interested in exploring psychiatry.

### Elective requests update

We continue to accept elective requests for both home and visiting electives. We are experiencing an increase in elective applications.

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## POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION NEWS

### Resident retreat

The resident retreat was held in October at White Point Beach Resort. We extend our gratitude to the department for generously funding the retreat through the Kilpatrick Fund.

We would like to extend a huge **THANK YOU** to all the staff who covered the call schedule during the retreat! Dr. **Sonia Dettleux**, Dr. **Leigh Meldrum**, Dr. **Mark Paramlall**, Dr. **Deborah Parker**, Dr. **Sarah Fancy** and Dr. **Kate Stymiest**.

### CaRMS

During the month of October, we had a virtual open house for CaRMS candidates. The Education Team is still in the planning stages of next year's virtual CaRMS. CaRMS interviews for all candidates, including local applicants, will be taking place over two weeks in January 2025. We will be sending out invites for psychiatrists and residents to volunteer for one if not two exams.

### Upcoming Events

#### Mid-Year STACER Exams

- December 2
- December 3
- December 5

#### CaRMS 2025

- January 20, 12:00 pm–5:00 pm
- January 21, 9:00 am–2:00 pm
- January 30, 12:00 pm–5:00 pm
- January 31, 9:00 am–2:00 pm

## Career evening

On the evening of November 1, the PGME office hosted a career evening at the Dalhousie Medical School. It was aimed at providing the medical students with information about a career in Psychiatry. A **THANK YOU** to our Chief Residents, Dr. **Emma Hazelton-Provo** and Dr. **Lauren Miller** for their effort in creating an amazing display. We would also like to express our appreciation to Drs **Daniel Higham, Qëndresa Sahiti, Alex Stephenson** and **Abbey MacLellan** for their attendance, along with faculty members, Drs **Alexandra Manning** and **Laura Downing**. We would like to extend our gratitude for Dr. **Ashley Crane** joining us from Kentville with her various felt brains!



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## PSYCHIATRY RESEARCH GRADUATE PROGRAM NEWS

### PhD in Psychiatry Research program's first graduate



Dr. Sarah DeGrace.

Congratulations to Dr. **Sarah DeGrace**, our first graduate of the PhD in Psychiatry Research program who convocated on October 23, 2024. Dr. DeGrace completed her BSc (honours) at Acadia University (2020) followed by her MSc in Psychiatry Research in our department (2021). Despite obstacles put in her way by the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. DeGrace completed the normally two-year MSc in a single year! Her MSc thesis examined the role of personality in explaining sex differences in distress and adherence to public health containment strategies during the pandemic. Dr. DeGrace published her MSc thesis as a first authored manuscript in *Personality and Individual Differences*. And she won the Best Presentation of Research Award for her MSc

thesis work at the 2021 Faculty of Medicine Graduate Student Research Day. Dr. DeGrace was admitted in the first cohort of our new PhD in psychiatry research program in the fall of 2021. Her PhD thesis, entitled "Trauma cue-induced affect, craving and automatic cognitions: Exploring the mechanistic underpinnings of co-occurring posttraumatic stress and cannabis use disorders," consisted of five scientific contributions. First, Dr. DeGrace completed a scoping review on the use of the cue reactivity paradigm (CRP) in psychiatry research to study mechanisms underlying the high rates of comorbidity of PTSD and substance use disorders which she published as a first-authored book chapter in an edited book on *Stress-Related Disorders*. Next,

she conducted four experimental studies using the CRP in cannabis users with trauma histories to study trauma cue-induced affective and cognitive processes that may contribute to PTSD — cannabis use disorder comorbidity, filling several important gaps in this area of knowledge. She published all four empirical papers as first author in the *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *Cannabis*, *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, and *Behavior Research and Therapy*, respectively. For both her MSc and PhD, her mentor was Dr. **Sherry Stewart** and her committee members were Drs. **Phil Tibbo**

and **Igor Yakovenko**. The external examiner for her MSc was Dr. Dean McKay from Fordham University in the Bronx and the external examiner for her PhD was Dr. Jennifer Read from the University at Buffalo. Dr. DeGrace was successful in securing funding for her dissertation research with a grant from the Nova Scotia Health Research Fund as primary investigator and a cannabis and mental health catalyst grant from CIHR and the Mental Health Commission of Canada as co-investigator. She was continuously externally supported throughout her graduate studies with a Nova Scotia Black and

Indigenous Graduate Scholarship from Dalhousie Faculty of Graduate Studies, a graduate scholarship from the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans, a MacQuarrie Scholarship from the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation, a Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship, and a L’Oreal Canada-UNESCO Scholarship for Women in Science. Dr. DeGrace is now completing a post-doctoral fellowship with Dr. Stewart in a related field, applying for a Mitacs fellowship, and serving as a sessional instructor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at Dalhousie.

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## Congratulations to the Psychiatry Research program graduates!



Several students from Psychiatry Research programs received their diplomas at the fall convocation. Congratulations to the graduates!

Front row, left to right: Anastasia Harris (MSc), Julia Fraiha (MSc), Sarah DeGrace (PhD), Mikaela Ethier-Gagnon (MSc).

Back row: Thomas Snooks (MSc), Isaiah Burton (MSc) and Nick Murray (MSc).

Missing: Simon Leger (MSc).

## CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEWS

### SAVE THE DATE: Annual W.O. McCormick Day, April 25, 2025

We are delighted to announce the Annual W. O. McCormick Academic Day, which will be held on **April 25, 2025**, at the Atlantica Hotel. This prestigious event celebrates academic excellence and innovation, bringing together scholars, educators, and students from various disciplines.

It will captivate our participants with engaging panel discussions and insightful presentations, while also providing ample opportunities for networking and professional connections during lunch and coffee breaks.

#### You Should Read This! – Call for Submissions

**The seventh annual grand rounds, You Should Read This! will take place on December 18, 2024.**

This will be the final clinical academic rounds of 2024, and will be hosted by Drs. **Lara Hazelton, Jason Morrison, Talia Bond** (PGY4), and **Kara Yeung** (PGY4).

Have you read something this year that has changed your practice?  
Did you come across an article or book this year that you wish you had read years ago?  
Have you found yourself thinking *everyone should read this!*

This is your chance to share that article or book!

**We are asking for members of the Department of Psychiatry to submit their favourite articles, op-eds, commentaries, websites, and books (clinical, non-fiction, fiction) they have read in the last year. The publications do not have to be from 2024.**

**We welcome recommendations that are psychiatry-based, but also those that are non-clinical but lifted your spirits (books/albums/shows etc), with the hopes of including a few heartwarming recommendations.**

We will share all of your recommendations during our presentation on December 18, as we reflect on the past year, and look ahead to 2025. After the rounds, we will compile a list of all the submissions to be circulated to the department.

To recommend an article or book, please send us a reference along with a couple of sentences about why it is important or interesting.

Everyone who submits a suggestion will have their name entered into a draw for a fabulous prize!

Please email Talia ([taliam.bond@nshealth.ca](mailto:taliam.bond@nshealth.ca)) or Kara ([kara.yeung@nshealth.ca](mailto:kara.yeung@nshealth.ca)) by December 1st with your recommendation, or if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for contributing!



# Division of **Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

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## FACULTY UPDATES



Warmest welcome to Dr. **Lori Wozney**, the new Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health, whose five-year term began on October 14, 2024.

Program at IWK Health. She is also an Affiliated Scientist (Psychology), at IWK Health, Affiliated Scientist at Maritime SPOR Support Unit (MSSU), and Centre Investigator at the Centre for Research in Family Health (CRFH). Dr. Wozney earned her PhD in Human Performance Technology from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

Congratulations to Dr. **Ali Manning** on being appointed the Director of Postgraduate Education for the Department of Psychiatry for a five-year term effective September 1, 2024.

Dr. Wozney is an Assistant Professor in the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry, and Scientific Lead, Mental Health and Addictions

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## Awards/recognition

The following CAP faculty members were honoured at the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry's 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Winnipeg in September:



Congratulations to Dr. **Celia Robichaud** on receiving the 2024 Excellence in Education Award, presented by the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

From left to right: Drs. Alexa Bagnell, Celia Robichaud, and Sabina Abidi.



Dr. Alexa Bagnell (left) and Dr. Sue Zinck (right).

Congratulations to Dr. **Sue Zinck** on receiving the 2024 Paul D. Steinhauser Advocacy Award, presented by the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.



Dr. Sabina Abidi (left) and Dr. Normand Carrey (right).

Dr. **Normand Carrey** was presented with a Certificate of Special Recognition by the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

## CAP PRESENTATIONS

Several C&A psychiatrists presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Conference, held September 21–24, 2024:

- Dr. **Alexa Bagnell** gave a keynote entitled “Evolution and Innovation of Youth Mental Health Services in Canada”
- Dr. **Normand Carrey** and Dr. **Jennifer Cumming** presented a workshop “How to Set Up a 0–5 Infant Mental Health Clinic”

- Dr. **Sandra Meier** co-presented “Screen Time, Motives, and Mental Health in Youth” at a research symposium
- Dr. **Sabina Abidi**, Dr. **Alexa Bagnell**, Dr. **Sarah Fancy**, and Dr. **Kyle Godden** presented a workshop entitled “An Approach to Identification and Treatment of Complex Neuroinflammatory Presentations”

Dr. **Selene Etches** presented to the Senate of Canada on the topic of mental health and addictions parity on September 20.

Dr. **Celia Robichaud** presented “Navigating ADHD in Primary Care: From Diagnosis to Treatment and Beyond” on Virtual Hallway on September 20.

## CAP EDUCATION

### CAP subspecialty program updates

PGY-4s Dr. **Talia Bond**, Dr. **Julia LeBlanc**, and Dr. **Kara Yeung** have accepted offers to join the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Subspecialty Residency Program, beginning July 1, 2025. Dr. LeBlanc and Dr. Yeung will be studying in the regular CAP training program, while Dr. Bond will train in the rural track position.

## CAP RESEARCH

### CAP research highlight

Drs. **Selene Etches** and **Nadine Nejati**'s recently co-authored paper titled, “Identifying and Treating Catatonia in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders: A Case Series”, has been accepted for publication in the Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CACAP).

The article focuses on the identification and treatment of catatonia in children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders. The aim of the case series is to support

increased clinician awareness of pediatric catatonia, particularly in children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as to encourage the consideration of the full spectrum of treatments available, including electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).

Three cases are presented of children ages 7, 14, and 10, with diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and Prader-Willi syndrome, respectively. Each had symptoms consistent with catatonia, observed within the

context of admission to a pediatric inpatient unit for acute behavioural regression. Each of the cases had an initial trial of benzodiazepine therapy with inadequate response, followed by treatment with bilateral ECT. Marked improvement was noted after ECT treatment, with no apparent adverse effects.

The full paper is accessible as an early release article on [CACAP's website](#) at the time of this write up, with the finalized publication expected in the journal's next available volume release.

## CAP publications

**Kutcher, S. and Bagnell, A. (2024)**

'Rapid access to effective mental health care for youth should be a national priority', *The Hill Times*, 15 October.

**Abidi, S. and Miller, L. (2024)** *Journal of Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: Review of "Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children & Adolescents, 5th edition.*

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## Dr. Selene Etches presented to the Senate of Canada

*Submitted by Dr. Selene Etches*

On Thursday, August 29 I received an email from the office of the Honourable Senator Sharon Burey, Senator for Ontario, requesting "an informal meeting to discuss the important issue of mental health parity in Canada". Intrigued, I responded in the affirmative and a Zoom meeting was arranged for Tuesday, September 3. During that meeting, Senator Burey spoke of her commitment to have Canada federally recognize parity between mental health/addictions and physical health, similar to what was already made law in the United States in 1996 and the United Kingdom in 2012. Mental health parity, also called parity of esteem, means "valuing mental health as much as physical health in order to close inequalities in mortality, morbidity, or delivery of care" (Mitchell, Hardy & Shiers, 2017). International experiences with parity laws have shown that such federal initiatives can result in improvements in mental health and addictions prevention, access, integration, quality, and perception of care.

Senator Burey invited me to submit a written Senate committee brief

(due Tuesday September 10) outlining my understanding of mental health and addictions parity, what I am already working on in this area, and what policy and legislative levers I feel are indicated to make this vision a reality. In addition, I was invited to present a three-minute speech in person in Senate Chambers in Ottawa on Friday September 20.

I feel privileged to have had this experience but what a learning curve! I must admit that I went from blankly thinking "what are you talking about?" in the initial Zoom meeting (I might have been doing some side Googling on "mental health parity" during the conversation while nodding and smiling) to an intense two-week immersion on this topic and how to advocate effectively on a federal level. The resource "An Essential Guide to Science Advocacy: equipping scientists to advocate effectively across Canada" was invaluable in my preparation. I researched American and UK parity laws and implementation challenges as well as position statements on parity from Canadian

organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Organization and the Canadian Association of Social Workers. My final brief focused primarily on the need to ensure addictions and concurrent disorders are viewed and treated the same as mental health disorders within any larger discussions on parity. This is because often addictions are neglected even within the mental health system as a whole. This is evidenced by the US parity laws where although the Mental Health Parity Law was enacted in 1996, including addictions under that same parity framework did not become law until the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act of 2008.

During my three minute speech in Ottawa, I drew on advice given to presenters delivering a "three-minute thesis" on their scholarly projects. I compared and contrasted my work as a consultation liaison psychiatrist and as an addiction psychiatrist and the differences noted between treatments and supports given to children and youth identified as having a "physical" illness compared to those with a

“mental” illness. My three main talking points (linked with case-based examples highlighting discrepancies I have seen clinically) were:

1. To prioritize and fund evidence-based addiction research and treatments
2. To fund intensive early intervention addiction treatment programs
3. To ensure that individuals, families, and health care systems know and respond to the fact that childhood grief, trauma, and neglect are preventable risk factors for mental health and addictions issues

Throughout my three minutes of “airtime,” I also tried to make the point that if we view treating addictions and mental health as just as important as treating physical health, the reality is that both mental health and physical health will improve. Hearing from various organizations and individuals (e.g., Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse, Ontario Native Women’s Association, Canadian Pediatric Society, Mental Health Commission of Canada, Canada Public Health Office) during the Senate hearing about what parity would mean to them was inspiring. It was exciting to see Senator Burey’s knowledge and passion to move this initiative forward and to hear the support from other Senators who joined the hearing.

I would like to thank my colleagues in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the IWK, Senator Stan Kutcher, and the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry for supporting my trip to the Senate for this important advocacy work.

#### References:

Mitchell AJ, Hardy S, Shiers D. (2017). Parity of esteem: addressing the inequalities between mental and physical health care. *BJPsych Advances*, 23(3):196-205

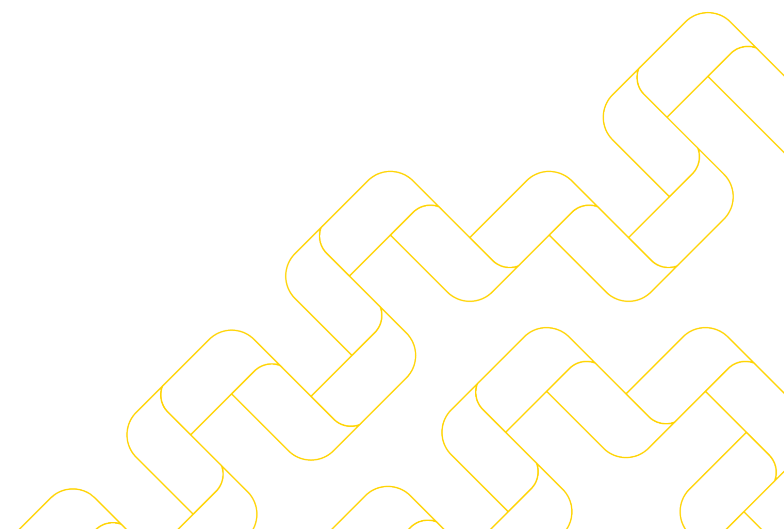
United States Parity Law — [The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act \(MHPAEA\) | CMS](#)

Health and Social Care Act UK — [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#)

Essential guide to science advocacy — [An Essential Guide to Science Advocacy](#)

Mental health in the balance: ending the health care disparity in Canada. (2018). Canadian Mental Health Association.

Mental health parity in Canada: legislation and complementary measures. (2019). Canadian Association of Social Workers.



# Section of Acute, Consultation, and Emergency Psychiatry

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## Neuropsychiatry Education Day Workshop: Comprehensive Report



Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Dr. Mark Paramlall, Dr. Sultan Darvesh, Dr. Sherry Hu, Dr. Christine McClelland, participants.

### Overview

The Neuropsychiatry Education Day Workshop, organized by the Department of Psychiatry in collaboration with Queen's University, successfully convened residents from Neurology and Psychiatry departments of both institutions. The event also included doctors from various specialties affiliated with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons and the University of Ghana's Department of

Psychiatry. Funded by a Department of Psychiatry education grant, the workshop utilized a hybrid format to facilitate both in-person and virtual attendance. This initiative was the culmination of a year-long collaboration among Dr. Elvina Chu (Queen's University), Dr. **Mark Paramlall** (Dalhousie University), and Dr. **Erik Faunberger** (Neuropsychiatry SIG resident representative), with educational input from Dr. **Lara Hazelton**.

### Participant demographics

The workshop had over 70 registrants in multiple sites between Canada and West Africa. The event drew professionals from multiple specialties, creating a rich interdisciplinary environment with representation from Psychiatry, Neurology, General Practice and medical students. The work indicated a strong collaboration between the Dalhousie University Global Partnership with the

Department of Psychiatry, University of Ghana and was facilitated by the visiting department head Dr. **Delali Figabe**.

### **Program structure**

The workshop was meticulously organized into six comprehensive sessions, each addressing crucial aspects of neuropsychiatry. Dr. **Vincent Agyapong** (Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University) welcomed all the attendees and launched the event.

The first session on Neurological and Psychiatric Assessment was expertly led by Dr. **Christine McClelland** and Dr. Kristen Ikeda, focusing on foundational skills in neurological and psychiatric evaluation. This was followed by an in-depth exploration of Delirium and Dementia, facilitated by Dr. Pradeep Arya using a problem-based learning format. The third session on Stroke and Cognition, presented by Dr. Sherry Hu and Dr. Sultan Darvesh, provided comprehensive coverage of post-stroke neuropsychiatric manifestations and bedside cognitive testing methodologies.

The afternoon sessions began with Emergency Psychiatry and Acute Assessment, led by Dr. Elvina Chu and Dr. Nicholas Cothros, addressing critical aspects of emergency care and autoimmune encephalitis. This was followed by an innovative session on Movement Disorders and Functional Cognitive Disorder, presented by Dr. Shirlene Sampson and Dr. Roger McKelvey. The day concluded with a multi-disciplinary panel discussion on Acquired Brain Injury, featuring insights from psychiatry (Dr. Elvina Chu), psychiatry (Dr. Jessica Trier) and neuropsychology (Dr. Martin Logan) perspectives.

### **Teaching methodology**

The workshop employed a diverse range of teaching approaches to

ensure comprehensive learning. These included traditional didactic lectures enhanced by case-based panel discussions and problem-based learning scenarios. Practical demonstrations were integrated throughout the sessions, complemented by interactive learner-centered activities and integrated panel discussions that fostered engaging dialogue among participants.

### **Learning outcomes**

The effectiveness of the workshop was evidenced through comprehensive pre and post-test analyses. Participants demonstrated marked improvement in their understanding of neuropsychiatric concepts and clinical examination techniques. Notable advances were observed in participants' comprehension of Functional Neurological Disorders and their understanding of the intricate relationships between neurology and psychiatry.

### **Participant feedback**

#### **Strengths**

The workshop received strong positive feedback regarding its teaching methods, with particular praise for the case-based discussions and practical demonstrations. Participants highly valued the content quality, noting its direct relevance to clinical practice and the evident expertise of the presenters. The hybrid delivery model was particularly appreciated for its accessibility to international participants.

#### **Areas for improvement**

Time management emerged as a key area for enhancement, with participants suggesting a multi-day format to allow for more in-depth discussions. Content-related feedback included requests for pre-reading materials and the addition of paediatric neuropsychiatry topics. Technical aspects required

attention, particularly regarding virtual platform capabilities and internet connectivity for international participants.

### **Recommendations for future events**

Future iterations of the workshop would benefit from extension to a two-day format, allowing for more comprehensive coverage of topics. The inclusion of paediatric neuropsychiatry components and strengthened virtual platform capabilities would enhance the learning experience. Additional recommendations include the provision of pre-workshop materials, development into an accredited course, and improved technical support for international participants.

### **Conclusion**

The Neuropsychiatry Education Day Workshop achieved its educational objectives while highlighting the growing global interest in neuropsychiatric education. The successful integration of international participants established a strong foundation for future cross-institutional educational collaborations. Despite minor technical challenges, the workshop demonstrated the effectiveness of hybrid learning formats in delivering complex neuropsychiatric education. The event's success and the constructive feedback received provide valuable insights for future educational initiatives in the field of neuropsychiatry.

# Section of Geriatric Psychiatry

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## Farewell to Dr. Sameh Hassan

The Geriatric Psychiatry team held a farewell dinner for Dr. **Sameh Hassan** at Fawn Restaurant. Dr. Hassan served the department for more than 15 years of service and he will be greatly missed. During his career, Dr. Hassan had participated in Geriatric Psychiatry outreach, worked on the GPAIU, and been instrumental in developing the rTMS service.



## Welcome to new members of the Section of Geriatric Psychiatry

Dr. **Mackenzie Armstrong**, recent graduate from the Geriatric Psychiatry Residency Program, joined our section on October 1, 2024. He will be working three days per week on the outreach team at the Nova Scotia Hospital (NSH),

and two days per week covering Dr. **Christelle Boudreau's** maternity leave in Bridgewater until March 2024, at which time he will increase his time to four days per week with the NSH outreach team.

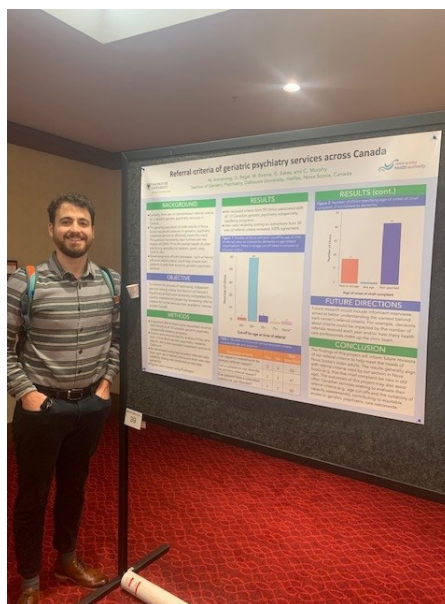
The section also welcomed a new research assistant named **Luc Rivet**.

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## Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Program

Dr. **Mackenzie Armstrong** recently presented his subspecialty scholarly project at the Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry (CAGP) Annual Scientific Meeting. His project was quality assurance in nature and examined referral criteria of geriatric psychiatry services across Canada.

Dr. **Eileen Burns** also attended CAGP to accept the Geriatric Psychiatry Subspecialty Resident Award for developing, implementing, and evaluating a simulation educational experience for PGY3 psychiatry residents titled "Dementia Experience." She will present her project at next year's CAGP.



Dr. Mackenzie Armstrong.



Dr. Eileen Burns (left).



# Provincial mental health and addictions program to standardize person-centered care at adult outpatient clinics across Nova Scotia

By Remo Zaccagna, Senior Communications Advisor, Mental Health and Addictions



From left to right: Dr. Christian Hahn, Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Nadine Wadden, Katie Schipilow-Marsh, and Melanie Caulfield.

Nova Scotians seeking care at adult outpatient community mental health and addictions clinics will benefit from improved person-centered care, that is culturally responsive, and evidence-based consistently matched to their needs anywhere in the province.

Currently, the adult outpatient clinics run by Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) offer timely, evidenced-based services, but with some variation between zones and teams.

Improvements underway will support standardizing assessment and treatment options across the province through the establishment of clinical care pathways.

"It started in recognizing that as a program we are well positioned to leverage our current strengths within our existing adult community mental health and addictions clinics to provide a consistent approach to how clients access and receive care," said Nadine Wadden, co-lead and director of mental health and addictions in the Eastern Zone.

"It's about improving the patient's experience, ensuring they get the right care at the right time, but also providing the necessary training and clinical support to our clinicians doing the work."

The project is part of ongoing work within the MHAP to expand capacity and access to evidence-based mental health and addictions care across Nova Scotia.

The six care pathways being established, which are specifically designed for Tier 3 services, are: major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, substance use and gambling disorders, borderline personality disorders, trauma-related disorders, and psychotic disorders.

A major component of the quality improvement of the project is embedding measurement-based care, which will improve collaborative care decisions and track outcomes. The first care pathways to be implemented are for major depressive disorders and anxiety disorders with the remaining to follow over time.

"Standardization of care and process must also allow flexibility that matches our commitment to provide inclusive, culturally safe care," Wadden said.

Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, co-lead of the project and the Chief of Psychiatry in the Central Zone at MHAP and the Head of the Department of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University, said while the clinics currently provide good services and programs, the new

framework will allow the MHAP to “lay a foundation to build upon and strengthen each team and each clinic to be able to do the work more consistently.”

This revamp is expected to have wider benefits to the overall healthcare system outside of the community adult mental health and addictions clinics.

“With mental health, it’s always if you are able to do more community-based treatments, then you get more for your dollar,” Dr. Agyapong said. “So, this is what I see as the most important thing, because if we can get it right at the community level, we reduce the number of

patients who go to the emergency department, the number of patients who are admitted. If we can get this one right, then we can reduce the dependency on beds.”

Both Wadden and Dr. Agyapong said the project would not have been able to get to this point without the support from Melanie Caufield, Katie Schipilow-Marsh, and advanced practice lead Dr. Christian Hahn, and as well as many MHAP staff and physicians who all contributed to the development of the care pathways and continue to support implementation across the adult community clinics.

## Department **News**

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### **International Fellows Welcome Reception**

The department held a welcome reception for six International Fellows from Ghana and the Middle East. The International Fellows work in Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health clinical programs, contributing to patient care while training and gaining new clinical skills which they would use to set up new specialized services in their home countries after their training in Nova Scotia.



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## Dr. Vincent Agyapong and Senator Stan Kutcher discuss Global Mental Health

In November, Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, Department Head, hosted Senator Stanley Kutcher at the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry. Senator Kutcher was the Department Head for the Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry between 1995 and 2003 and was credited with beginning the department's Global Health Program which unfortunately became dormant after his term as head. They discussed the department's new Global Mental Health Program which was launched three years ago as part of the Transformational Plan. The department's Global Mental Health Program includes the Nova Scotia Transcultural Mental Health and Rapid Access and Stabilization Programs which are closing treatment gaps for vulnerable individuals and communities in Nova Scotia, the flagship International Fellowship Program which promises to expand access to specialized psychiatric care for individuals and communities worldwide, the new Master's in Global Clinical Psychiatry which will be run entirely online and up skill primary care providers in Canada and around the world, the Global Mental Health Guest Lecture series which is serving as a forum for knowledge exchange and dissemination and the Global Mental Health and Leadership Development Special Interest Forum which is promoting leadership training and development in the area of Global Mental Health.



From left to right: Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Huanhong Xie, Dr. Sanjana Sridharan, and Senator Stanley Kutcher.



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## Department Head meets with Ukrainian Ministerial delegation

Recently Dr. **Vincent Agyapong**, Department Head, had the opportunity to meet with the Ukrainian Ministerial delegation when they visited Canada. Thank you to the Mental Health Commission of Canada for hosting the delegation from an incredibly resilient nation, and for the invitation to meet with the team.



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## Department helps attendees of the ISTDP Africa Training Program attend the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial IEDTA conference

Dr. **Allan Abbass** was very pleased to attend the international experiential dynamic therapy association biennial meeting. He is past President of the organization and has been spearheading education in brief psychotherapy around the world. He has started a training program on the African continent that he provides on a voluntary basis. With the help of the Dalhousie University Department of Psychiatry, two attendees from the training program were able to attend the conference in California in November. Pictured here are Dr. Allan Abbass, Dr Engida Girma, Dr Benyam Worku and Cotrainer Nyambura Kamau from the New Washington School of Psychiatry who is a co trainer in the African ISTDP program. This is just one of the ways that the Dalhousie University Department of Psychiatry is leading the world in distributing education.



## Let's Keep Talking Awards

On Oct. 9, the Nova Scotia Mental Health Foundation hosted its annual *Let's Keep Talking*, presented by Bell Let's Talk event. Dr. **Keri-Leigh Cassidy** presented the award for Outstanding Individual to Stacy Darku at the event. The Dalhousie Department of Psychiatry was a returning award sponsor.

[Read more about the event and award recipients.](#)



Stacy Darku (left) and Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy (right). Photo by @stoometzphoto.

## Dalhousie Global Mental Health Guest Lecture Series



**Youth mental health and early intervention:  
A global exigency that calls for global exchange**

**Dr. Srividya Iyer**

Psychologist; Canada Research Chair in Youth, Mental Health and Learning Health Systems (Tier 1); Professor, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University; and, Researcher, Douglas Research Centre.

**Friday, Dec. 6, 2024 | 3 to 4:30 p.m. Atlantic Time**

*In person at the Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub in Halifax, NS & Online*

**LEARN MORE & REGISTER  
NOW USING THE QR CODE:**



Registration will close at Midnight on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024.



In partnership with:



# FACULTY CHANGES

## Arrivals

- Dr. **Alex Whynot**, a psychiatrist, joined the department as an assistant professor effective September 1, 2024. Dr. Whynot is located at the South Shore Regional Hospital and can be reached at **Alex.Whynot@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Alim Awadia**, a psychologist, joined our department as an adjunct, effective September 15, 2024 and can be reached at **alim.awadia@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Mackenzie Armstrong** a psychiatrist, joined the department as an assistant professor effective October 1, 2024. Dr. Armstrong located a geriatric psychiatry outpatient clinic at Mount Hope and can be reached at **mackenziep1.armstrong@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Courtney Handford** a psychiatrist, joined our department as an assistant professor effective October 1, 2024. Dr. Handford will be working as a child and adolescent psychiatrist in Truro and can be reached at **courtney.handford@nshealth.ca**
- Dr. **Lori Wozney** appointed as the Sun Life Chair in Youth Mental Health, joined our department as an assistant professor effective October 14, 2024. Dr. Wozney will be located at IWK Health and can be reached at **lori.wozney@dal.ca**

Welcome to you all!

## Departures

- Dr. **Kathleen Howell** resigned from the department effective September 10, 2024
- Dr. **Sameh Hassan** resigned from the department effective September 30, 2024
- Dr. **Muhammad Aamer Khan** resigned from the department effective October 25, 2024
- Dr. **Cynthia Calkin** retired from the department effective October 31, 2024

We wish you well!

## AWARDS & HONOURS

### **Congratulations to the recipients of Department of Psychiatry awards!**

The department was excited to announce the recipients of the following departmental awards that were presented at our bi-annual meeting on Nov. 5.

#### **2024 Educator of the Year Award**

This award recognizes a faculty member of the Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University who demonstrates excellence in teaching of students and/or colleagues, mentorship of learners and peers in scholarly activity and/or demonstrates leadership and innovation in development of educational programming.

The 2024 Educator of the Year Award recipient is Dr. **Selene Etches**.



Left to right: Drs. Vincent Agyapong, Selene Etches, and Alexa Bagnell.

#### **2024 Dr. Larry Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award**

This award recognizes a faculty member in the Central Zone of Nova Scotia who has demonstrated outstanding performance in their role as a clinical supervisor to learners in the Department of Psychiatry. This award is presented to the faculty member to acknowledge their mentorship, encouragement, and professionalism through the learning environment provided to the medical students and postgraduate trainees on the clinical services.

The 2024 Dr. Larry Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award recipient is Dr. **José Mejía**.



Left to right: Drs. Vincent Agyapong, José Mejía, and Jason Morrison.

### Special Recognition Award

A Special Recognition Award was presented to Professor **Archie Kaiser** for many years teaching Legal Issues in Psychiatry in the Psychiatry residency training program.



From left to right: Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Professor Archie Kaiser, and Dr. Sanjana Sridharan.

### 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:

- **Michelle LeBlanc**
- **Dr. Saravana Muthu**
- **Dr. Cynthia Calkin**
- **Dr. Mary-Ann Hudec**
- **Dr. Sameh Hassan**



From left to right: Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Michelle LeBlanc, and Dr. Alexa Bagnell.

The Outstanding Clinician Award and Distributing Site Outstanding Teacher Award were unfilled.

Congratulations to all the award recipients!



From left to right: Drs. Vincent Agyapong, Saravana Muthu, and Mahmoud Awara.



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## Dr. Joseph Sadek receives award for his suicide prevention work

Dr. **Joseph Sadek** gave five lectures on suicide prevention at a suicide prevention conference in Egypt, Nov. 7 to 9, and received an award for his work. Congratulations Dr. Sadek!



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## Dr. Tomas Hajek, and his PhD student Dr. Vochoskova, received the first prize from the Czech Neuropsychopharmacological Society for original research in clinical psychopharmacology

Team of authors led by Dr. **Hajek** and his PhD student Dr. Vochoskova, received the first prize from the Czech Neuropsychopharmacological Society for original research in clinical psychopharmacology for the manuscript: "Weight and metabolic changes in early psychosis-association with daily quantification of medication exposure during the first hospitalization". This study, published in Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica (PMID: 37528692), tracked daily exposure to medications in people during the first hospitalization for psychosis and linked it to changes in weight and metabolic markers. The research revealed that low to normal baseline weight was the strongest predictor of weight gain on antipsychotic medications. The weight gain in these people was clinically significant in almost half of

them (45.9%) and resulted in early onset of metabolic abnormalities. Low to normal baseline BMI is an actionable predictor, which can be assessed before starting medications and which allows us to be pro-active, not just reactive in addressing weight gain. Psychiatrists should be careful when prescribing second generation antipsychotics to individuals who are normal weight or underweight, as these people are at the greatest risk of medication related weight gain. To view a video presentation of these results, see <https://hajeklab.com/presentations/>

Congratulations!

# Humanities Corner

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## Winners of the 2024 Humanities Writing Competition

The **Department of Psychiatry Medical Humanities Program** is delighted to announce the winners of the 2024 Writing Competition. The quality and creativity of the writing this year was very strong. Submissions included poems, reflective and personal essays, and short stories. Please join us in congratulating the following winners and honourable mentions:

### 2024 Resident Winner:

**Dr. Kara Yeung, Dalhousie University**

[Read Kara's winning entry "The Treatment Plan."](#)

2024 Resident Honourable Mention:

Dr. Lauren Miller, Dalhousie University, "Death and Taxes."

### 2024 Medical Student Winner:

**Camelia Ursu, University of Calgary**

[Read Camelia's winning entry "what and how and why we do: a short pondering on the coalescence of the medical and the natural."](#)

2024 Medical Student Honourable Mentions:

Aparna Kuchibhatla, Queens University, "Home."

Priya Khalsa, University of Toronto, "Recovering from Shame and my Journey Towards Forensic Psychiatry."

Winning entries can be found on the DoP Medical Humanities webpage: [Annual Student Writing Competition - Department of Psychiatry - Dalhousie University](#)

The Medical Humanities Program is excited about next year's competition and will distribute the Call for Submissions in January 2025.

# Residents' Corner

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## RESIDENT RETREAT

On October 6-7, the annual resident retreat was held at White Point Beach Resort located on the south shore of Nova Scotia. A variety of wellness-related and team-building activities were scheduled, which residents (+/- their families) were able to participate in at their leisure. After an afternoon of fun, residents had the opportunity to catch up with each other over dinner, followed by a psychiatry-themed trivia competition organized by Dr. **Olivia Pieroni** (PGY1). Later in the evening,

residents gathered outside to enjoy a bonfire with s'mores (and a few extra snacks thanks to our PDs), while Dr. **Cameron Taylor** (PGY4) employed his fiddle to ensure an authentic east coast experience for all. After we ran out of firewood, an equally fiery game of catchphrase took place amongst a smattering of senior residents, with type-A competitive drives coming out in full-force. Meanwhile, the PGY1 cohort returned to their cabin to engage in an entirely wholesome

group sing-along. And of course, we can't forget the folks who — in the true spirit of wellness — tucked into their bunks early to catch up on some much needed REM sleep.

Monday morning served as the academic epicentre of the retreat (though not before a group of courageous residents braved the waves), as El Jones joined us in-person for an engaging and eye-opening session. El is a Canadian poet, educator, journalist, and

activist known for her work in social justice, especially concerning anti-racism and prisoners' rights. With her background in advocacy and poetry, El highlighted the importance of culturally responsive care, encouraging residents to consider the social determinants of health and the role of justice in healing. Her empowering approach not only deepened residents' understanding of the complex social backgrounds of some of their most vulnerable patients, but also inspired them to advocate for

systemic change within and beyond clinical practice.

A huge thank-you to all residents for joining us on retreat, and to the department for their ongoing financial support of this initiative.

**It is well-known that a sense of mutual trust and genuine connection are at the core of psychological safety, and this event is an essential component in building that within the resident body.**

—Lauren and Emma



A few residents hit the waves for an early morning dip!



A few more residents hit the waves for an early morning dip—captured using a nicer camera!



Drs. Daniel Higham, Alex Stephenson, and Abby MacLellan serenade their fellow PGY1s.



PGY4 Dr. Cameron Taylor (far right) livens-up the bonfire with his fiddle!

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## MENTAL HEALTH HOOPS

Thanks to the combined efforts of Drs. **Jason Morrison** (staff psychiatrist) and **Jay Toulany** (PGY3), there is now a weekly recurring all-levels basketball scrimmage — live and in-action — at the Abbie J Lane. While residents are the primary participants, it has also proved a unique opportunity to connect outside of work with a variety of colleagues including staff psychiatrists, psychology residents, psychiatric nurses, 3<sup>rd</sup> year clinical clerks, 4<sup>th</sup> year elective students, and more! If you're looking for a fun way to get some physical activity and social connection in a 2-for-1 deal, we'd love to see you. Contact Jay at [jay.toulany@nshealth.ca](mailto:jay.toulany@nshealth.ca) for more details. And stay tuned for a potential programming expansion that may or may not include pickle ball...



Drs. Cameron Taylor (PGY4) and Niamh Campbell (PGY4) take a well-deserved break at Mental Health Hoops.



Dr. Lauren Miller (PGY3) takes a shot in aforementioned "live action" at Mental Health Hoops.

## 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 **February 2025**.

Please send all submissions to **[Penney.Miller@nshealth.ca](mailto:Penney.Miller@nshealth.ca)**



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