

ALUMNI SUCCESS SERIES

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By Queen's Psychology
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Dr. Michael Seto is a proud alumnus of the Queen's Clinical Psychology Program, PhD '98. His PhD advisor was Vern Quinsey, a professor emeritus and former Chair of the department. Dr. Seto credits his excellent training in clinical and forensic psychology at Queen's for building the solid foundation that prepared him for his career as a clinician scientist. "From university-affiliated hospitals, first in Toronto at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health from 1994 to 2008, as a psychologist and research scientist, and then at [The Royal Ottawa Health Care Group](#) since 2008, again as a psychologist and now forensic research director, I've been able to carry out the blend of clinical and research work that I enjoy," Dr. Seto says. "Clinical work generates new, interesting research questions and is in turn informed by the best available scientific evidence."

Dr. Seto believes it is this fusion of clinical science and practice that has contributed to his professional successes. As an example he cites his recognition in 2020 from the Canadian Psychological Association with the Donald O. Hebb Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology as a Science. "Most of my clinical and research focus has been on sexual offending

against children and one of its major motivations, sexual attraction to children in the form of pedophilia,” Dr. Seto explains. “This work has included research on etiology, diagnosis and assessment, and treatment.”

Frustrated by the mostly reactive approach society takes to child sexual abuse – through law enforcement and treatment for survivors and perpetrators, after abuse has already taken place – Dr. Seto has increasingly shifted his focus onto perpetration prevention, consistent with a public health framework to the problem of child sexual abuse.

Recently, Dr. Seto along with colleague Elizabeth Letourneau (Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, John Hopkins University) and their respective teams, received a US\$10.3 million grant from the [Oak Foundation](#) for a five year program of work to translate knowledge to action in child sexual abuse perpetration prevention. The award was featured in a recent [Globe and Mail article](#). “This is the largest grant by far that we are aware of in this area,” Dr. Seto says. “Our five year plan is to identify existing perpetration prevention interventions; select the most promising interventions based on a set of transparent, objective, and equitable criteria; fund or carry out evaluations of the top candidates; and share what we learn through an online capacity-building hub. Our ambition is to drive evidence-based perpetration prevention at an international level.”

Read the [Globe and Mail article](#)

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