

*Congratulations to Stéphanie
Gauvin and Meghan McInnis on
each being awarded funding from
the Canadian Institutes of Health
Research and CIHR Institute
of Gender and Health!*



Queen's Psychology Graduate Students awarded funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and CIHR Institute of Gender and Health

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By Queen's Psychology

Stéphanie Gauvin and **Meghan McInnis** have each been awarded funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and CIHR Institute of Gender and Health (IGH) to attend the Hacking the Knowledge Gap Series: Design Jam. The competition for this year involved funding for a two-day event designed to foster creative problem solving around KTE challenges relevant to the 2017/18 Theme of Innovative Thinking to Support LGBTQI2S Health and Wellness.

The award is designed to support trainees in the development of knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) skills and experience. Across Canada, 33 award recipients came together in Vancouver on February 23 and 24 for a KTE design jam to come up with creative solutions to transmit knowledge to knowledge users and the public. Participants worked in teams consisting of three grantees, as well as design mentors and individuals with lived experience. After the jam, recipients must use the remainder of the funds to put their KTE plan into action.

Stéphanie's research uses inclusive research practices to focus on how couples negotiate and navigate sexual challenges, with a particular focus on how sexual script flexibility is related to sexual well-being in same-gender and mixed-gender couples. Her doctoral dissertation will take a biopsychosocial approach to understand how chemically induced menopause affects sexual and relationship functioning in women who have undergone treatment for breast cancer.

"I am very fortunate to be a part of a lab that is dedicated to inclusive research practices and making sure all voices are heard in research", Stéphanie explains. "We know from research that gender and sexually diverse (GSD) individuals are more likely to face barriers to accessing appropriate healthcare. Although research has been improving our understanding of healthcare concerns for gender and sexually diverse individuals, and how healthcare providers can engage in affirmative practices, a lot of research tends to stay within the academic community and doesn't make it to knowledge users." Stéphanie feels the award will allow her to learn from

experts in knowledge translation and exchange to gain “an appreciation for how to best market my research findings to knowledge users.”

Stéphanie’s design jam team’s project, “Queer Body Stories”, will be a LGBTQ+ community-sourced comic book anthology. The stories will touch on these topics through a variety of perspectives. The messaging of these comics will be drawn from gay men’s health literature, evidence-based clinical research, as well as community members and personal narratives. It is our goal to create this comic book not only as a piece of art but as a tool that can help queer men (gay, bisexual, and trans men) start helpful discussions about body image and health in their own contexts.

“I have known Stéphanie since September 2012, and she has been my graduate student since September 2014”, recalls Dr. Caroline Pukall. “She is now in PhD2 of the clinical psychology program and has amassed many publications from her Master’s degree and other projects, including a measure that she developed called the SexFlex Scale. She is remarkably productive and truly dedicated to her work, and she is a pleasure to work with.”

Dr. Pukall comments that Stéphanie's ultimate goal, through this and other work, is to positively impact the healthcare experiences of GSD individuals. “Through her devotion, tenacity, statistical expertise, and knowledge translation activities, she will certainly impact the field to improve healthcare practices for this population”.

Meghan’s Master's thesis focuses on the experiences of gender and sexually diverse prostate cancer patients, and how they differ from the experiences of heterosexual, cisgender prostate cancer patients. “The specific knowledge gap I addressed in my award application is the inconsistent experiences of gay and bisexual prostate cancer patients when discussing their sexual concerns with their healthcare providers. While some healthcare providers certainly make an effort to understand and address these concerns, others lack knowledge on or else refuse to talk about issues related to gay sexuality,” Meghan says. “Participating in this Design Jam was an excellent opportunity for me to work as part of a collaborative team and gain new perspectives on issues related to LGBTQI2S health and wellness, and cancer care specifically. I'm grateful to have been able to share this experience with Stéphanie!”

Meghan’s grant was sponsored in partnership with the CIHR Institute of Cancer Research. She worked with two other cancer researchers to brainstorm Pride Yourself, a workshop and web site meant to provide LGBTQI2S cancer patients with information on the types of changes one’s body may go through during cancer and treatment (e.g., hair loss, weight changes), and to connect them with support networks and local resources. Dr. Pukall is also Meghan's MSc supervisor and notes, “I have gotten to know her very well and appreciate her high standards of achievement, her capacity for delving deep into topics, her high levels of determination and creativity, and her balanced personality. I was so lucky that she chose to stay at Queen’s for her graduate degree in Clinical Psychology! The results of Meghan's study will have real-world implications for SGD PCa patients, bringing awareness of this patient group and their needs to healthcare providers and administrators, as well as empowering SGD PCa patients with new information to better participate in their own care.”

For more information, see this link: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50531.html>