Mentoring the Next Generation of Indigenous Health Researchers
by Allison Piché

The Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network is one of eight networks across Canada working with students, faculty, staff, and community partners to identify the mentorship needs of Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students, and new investigators. In late 2016, Dr. Caroline Tait, Dr. Tom Graham, and the Social Sciences Research Lab (SSRL) administered a survey where respondents indicated the top three areas of academic mentor support as being: encourage mentorship from Indigenous elders; offer safe, productive, and regular spaces to conduct mentoring; and to help build community engaged research partnerships.

Thanks to funding support from CIHR’s Institute for Aboriginal Peoples Health Training Grant, we are working on creating the above opportunities for students and evaluating the impact of our mentorship program over the course of the training grant. This will include conducting interviews in the coming months with a broader representation of students and staff, focusing particularly in areas with an underrepresentation of Indigenous students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Ongoing program assessment will allow our program to respond and adapt to student needs, develop network activities that foster interdisciplinary and intergenerational mentorship, and provide meaningful student research opportunities.

Our network is uniquely positioned to assist the University of Saskatchewan and the Health Science Colleges’ response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s ‘Calls to Action’ as they relate to post-secondary education and community health and wellness advancement. In particular, action twenty-three “call[s] on all levels of government to: Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health care field; ensure the retention of Aboriginal health care providers in Aboriginal communities; [and] provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.” In order to fulfill this call, our network is investing in emerging Indigenous health students and researchers and creating a community of...
Dr. Oluwafemi Oluwole

The Department of Pediatrics wishes to extend a warm welcome to our new Resident Research Coordinator, Dr. Oluwafemi Oluwole. Dr. Oluwole will be working in this position on a casual basis, as he is also currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the College of Nursing and the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture (CCHSA) working with Dr. Donna Rennie.

Dr. Oluwole completed his undergraduate degree in Agriculture from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and a Master's degree in Environmental Science from the University of Greenwich, United Kingdom. His MSc work, funded by the Department for International Development, focused on pesticide exposures and respiratory health symptoms among children and adults in rural communities in Nigeria. This was his first foray into research involving child health and has led to efforts aimed at educating and training farmers on safe handling of pesticides. In 2009, Dr. Oluwole joined the Centre for Global Health, University of Chicago as a Research Associate and led two international projects on pediatric asthma and maternal health in urban and rural communities in Nigeria. This work included epidemiological studies that have included questionnaire report, lung function testing, measures of atopy, and assessments of household air pollution and pregnancy outcomes. His research found lower rates of physician-diagnosed asthma in rural compared to urban children despite similar or increased asthma-related symptoms in rural children. The results were consistent with evidence from studies on childhood asthma conducted in the United States, Canada, and other countries suggesting that rural living has a protective effect against the development of childhood asthma. Environmental factors have mostly been the most common explanation for these differences. However, having had a background from rural Nigeria and knowledge and experience of respiratory issues in rural communities, Dr. Oluwole was interested in finding an alternative explanation to the variations in urban-rural childhood asthma prevalence.

Eager to pursue his research question, he went on to complete his Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan under the supervision of Dr. Josh Lawson in the Department of Medicine and the CCHSA. His doctoral research project, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research through the prestigious Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, focused on urban-rural childhood asthma diagnostic patterns, asthma severity and phenotypes. The project presented a unique opportunity to investigate if the lower asthma...
Indigenous Mentorship

Indigenous intellectuals ready to tackle the requirements of a young and growing Indigenous population. The strength of our network is our potential to weave Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and lived experience, with interdisciplinary health-focused research and training. Saskatchewan is home to nationally and internationally recognized Indigenous health researchers, and our network’s aim is to attract high quality Indigenous mentees and new investigators to the province, as well as grow our provincial talent. Alongside this, we will learn from our mentee/mentor community in order to better align institutional standards with community engaged research and scholarship that is accountable to the Indigenous peoples of Saskatchewan and beyond.

Interested in connecting with our network? You can find us online at www.usask.ca/groups/indigenous-mentorship or e-mail us at sk.imnp@usask.ca Or come see us in person! This month, we’re hosting a networking night in partnership with the Indigenous Graduate Students’ Council (IGSC) on January 31st from 5-7 pm, Graduate Student Association Commons (1337 College Drive). Here, you’ll learn from the Student Employment and Career Centre networking ideas and strategies and meet colleagues and senior scholars doing Indigenous research on campus. Snacks provided!

SAVE THE DATE!

Household biomass fuel use, asthma symptoms severity, and asthma underdiagnosis in rural schoolchildren in Nigeria: a

Recent Publications & Presentations from U of S Researchers

Dr. Oluwafemi Oluwole

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prevalence in rural compared to urban children was due to asthma under-diagnosis in rural compared to urban children. The core idea was that through a blinded physician assessment of asthma and/or the use of clinical lung function assessments with symptoms history, more rural children could be identified as cases for asthma. Findings from the study revealed evidence of significant asthma under-diagnosis in rural compared to urban settings and the possibility of misdiagnosis of childhood asthma in the absence of objective clinical assessments. The results are currently in press for publication with the Journal of Asthma.

Dr. Oluwole looks forward to continuing his research on child and rural health. Currently, he has been awarded a two-year Postdoctoral fellowship by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation to investigate asthma phenotypes and healthcare utilization patterns among children in Saskatchewan using a large population-based database that covers almost 99% of Saskatchewan children born between 1995 and 2014. He hopes to continue to expand collaborations with clinicians, researchers, other professional healthcare workers, and patients in research aimed at improving respiratory health among children.

In Dr. Oluwole’s role as the Pediatric Resident Research Coordinator, he will be available to assist our residents with their research projects, including: matching residents with supervisors, formulation of research ideas, assistance with ethics applications and statistical analysis, and more. We ask that pediatric residents please contact Dr. Oluwole at, email: oluwafemi.oluwole@usask.ca; phone: 306-844-1225; office: RUH 3726.

Dr. Ben Tan

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infections (i.e. pneumococcal, meningococcal and Haemophilus influenzae serotypes), varicella and zoster, influenza, rotavirus. The vaccines for these infections do not necessarily cover every serotype, hence it is important to know why disease lingers or re-emerges. The group is also introducing surveillance for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), especially if an RSV vaccine becomes available. Unlike other surveillance systems, which collects data passively (retrospectively), IMPACT monitors collect data in real-time, or shortly after patient discharge (active surveillance). IMPACT target data are analysed every several years, and have led to a myriad of publications, presentations at meetings, and also used for decision making regarding vaccine programs in the provinces. Both Dr. Tan and Dr. McConnell supervise these activities.

"Can Baby Friendly and Fed is Best Co-Exist?"

Thursday, Feb 8th, 2018

Presented by:
Dr. Krista Baerg
Associate Professor
Department of Pediatrics
University of Saskatchewan

and
Julie Smith-Fehr
Maternal Services Manager
Healthy & Home/Prenatal Care Program
Saskatchewan Health Authority

"Worried Kids Worrying About Worry: An Approach to Anxiety in Children"

Thursday, Feb 15th, 2018

Presented by:
Dr. Madhav Sarda
Staff Psychiatrist
Department of Psychiatry
Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
University of Saskatchewan

Pediatric Grand Rounds take place every Thursday, 11am-12pm, East Lecture Theatre (room G763), Royal University Hospital

The Children’s Health Research Trust Fund (CHRTF) was established in 1983 to help raise funds to support child health research at the University of Saskatchewan. As all donated funds are endowed, the CHRTF has continued to grow to become an important partner in helping advance research in the Department of Pediatrics. For further information about the CHRTF: http://www.medicine.usask.ca/pediatrics/research/CHRTF. To Donate to the CHRTF: http://give.usask.ca/online/chrtf.php