

EENet Student Spotlight: Featuring Victoria Jakobson

Victoria Jakobson is a graduate student pursuing her Master's of Social Work at the University of Toronto. Ms. Jakobson is the Research Coordinator for "Guidelines for community-based research in mental health and addictions," a project by the Re:searching for LGBTQ Health Systems & Health Equity Research Group at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Before joining the team, Victoria completed a BA with Honours in Sociology and Gerontology in the Maritimes and taught English in Korean public schools. Her research interests include LGBTQ older adults, baby boomers, and the impact of the aging population, as well as feminist theory and queer theory.



Project Title: Guidelines for community-based research in mental health and addictions

Team members:

Lori Ross, CAMH
Jennifer Chambers, Empowerment Council
Joyce Brown, Working for Change
Victoria Jakobson, University of Toronto

Evidence Exchange Network (EENet; formerly OMHAKEN) actively promotes the use of research evidence in decision-making by providing an infrastructure to connect research to mental health and addictions research stakeholders across Ontario, develops targeted KT products and tools, and supports interactive exchanges. The EENet Management and Resource Centre is located in the Provincial System Support Program at CAMH.

How do people with lived experiences want to be involved in research?

Community-based research (CBR) is research that involves the communities in which it takes place. Areas like Aboriginal health and HIV research have largely embraced CBR; these fields tend to ensure that community members are key participants in the research process. But relatively little research in the area of mental health and addictions involves the community in an equitable way. As a result, people with lived experience of mental health and addictions have not had much of an opportunity to inform the research process.

“Guidelines for community-based research in mental health and addictions” hopes to help change all of that. The project is working to develop guidelines for CBR. The end product will be a user-friendly document that will encourage the use of CBR by those undertaking research in the area of mental health and addictions. The partners on this project include the CAMH Community Advisory Committee for Research (CACR) members, the Empowerment Council, and Working for Change.

“I think community-based research is important,” says Victoria Jakobson, who will help co-facilitate focus groups involving people with lived experience. “CBR tackles the power relationships that exist in the research process. It helps makes the research process more equitable.”

Participants will be invited to talk about their stories through a series of open-ended questions. The focus groups aim to help the research team better understand how people with lived experience would like to be involved in research projects. They will also help to refine the newly developed CBR guidelines.

THE PROJECT AIMS TO:

- Create a space for people with lived experience to share their stories and help inform the research process;
- Make the research process more equitable and collaborative; and
- Make user-friendly CBR guidelines accessible to those who do research in the area of mental health and addictions.

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What's next for Victoria?

Victoria is aiming to co-facilitate three focus groups in April. She hopes that there will eventually be a second part to the study, which will include focus groups for researchers. Victoria is also working on the Pathways to Effective Treatment project, which will ask women and/or trans people of all sexual orientations about their experiences with depression and seeking mental health services.

For more information about the study and to obtain detailed results, please contact Victoria Jakobson at: Victoria.jakobson@mail.utoronto.ca or visit <http://lgbtqhealth.ca/projects>.

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