

PATHWAYS

A Hoarding Research Partnership Publication

2023

Winter/Spring

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Spring is just starting to show itself in Vancouver—the early season blooms are colouring community spaces and neighbourhood yards. For me, it's such a hopeful time of year.

I've been thinking a lot about the idea of hope lately, especially as written about by Yahne & Miller, "Hope as will, way, horizon and action." At The Centre we are accepting the challenge put forward by my friend and former colleague Dr. Stephanie Wahab, "to dream and reimagine how we care for people". We are taking our individual hope and using it to create a re-imagined future in community-based interventions for hoarding. Hope fuels our commitment to conducting research that facilitates the development of tools and best practice recommendations that are collaborative and multi-sector. Through our scholarly work and partnerships, we are contributing resources for hoarding assessment and intervention planning that will center the person with lived experience, and their wisdom about their lives and behaviour, and their homes. It's a hopeful time of year in nature and with all that is blooming at The Centre!

Christiana Bratiotis,
PhD, MSW,
Associate Director



RESEARCH UPDATES



From 2017-2019, our research team at The Centre worked in close partnership with [Beacon Communities](#) (Beacon), an affordable housing provider with properties in the northeastern region of the United States. In general, there is limited research on housing providers' perspectives, goals, and interventions as related to hoarding. Given the seriousness of residential fires, homelessness, and the privacy around domestic matters, our research provides insights into the practices of Beacon as one notable housing provider that has institutionalized a portfolio-wide response to hoarding as a social and housing concern.

Two members of our research team (Christiana Bratiotis & Kate Kysow) visited some of Beacon's properties in the Boston area during the spring of 2018 to interview property managers, resident service coordinators and maintenance staff about how the problem of hoarding is conceptualized in the context of affordable housing. They also explored how front-line housing staff experience hoarding intervention as well as their experience of the implementation of Beacon's hoarding protocol. We are in the final stages of drafting a manuscript to submit for publication. We look forward to sharing the important things we learned from Beacon and sincerely hope that other affordable and social housing providers can take something from this research to benefit their efforts to support people who hoard and compassionately address hoarding in their properties.

RECENT CENTRE PROJECTS



Regular readers of this newsletter will recall that we are working on a measure of severity and types of environmental risk in hoarded homes. We are testing the

Home Environment Assessment Tool for Hoarding (HEATH) in several sites. In the first phase of these field tests, our partners at two Ontario branches of the Canadian Mental Health Association (Champlain East and Lanark County) pilot-tested the tool in their setting and provided us with hard numbers as well as details on their qualitative experiences using the tool.

We have now begun the second phase of field trials. The Hoarding and Decluttering Program at Community and Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS) in Aurora, Ontario provides decluttering support services to older adults who are at risk of losing their tenancy. They have been collecting data on the HEATH since December 2022. By comparing the HEATH results with the CHATS usual practice of a thorough assessment of risks and functioning in the home, we can gain evidence of the validity of the HEATH. We also plan to test whether the HEATH captures changes that occur when the client works with an in-home decluttering coach.

In addition, the Guelph Fire Department has recently begun to use the HEATH as a part of their Fire Prevention inspections. With these data, we will be able to test how well the HEATH reflects fire orders to address fire safety violations. We are very excited to be collecting field trial data on the HEATH and look forward to sharing the results with you!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Simon Sheppard is a third-year undergraduate student in the Honour's Psychology program at the University of British Columbia. During his time at UBC he has received several academic awards, including the UBC Presidential Scholars Award (2020), UBC *Tuum Est* Experiential Award (2020), and the UBC Trek Excellence Scholarship (2022).

Since joining the Centre in the summer of 2021, Simon has participated in a program evaluation with our community partners at Lookout Housing and Health Society. There, he and Persephone Larkin collaborated with the Lookout decluttering team to build relationships and understand residents' experiences in the program. He is also co-writing a manuscript about our recent study on hoarding stigma among service providers and the general public. Simon is currently collecting data for his Honours thesis project, which examines how steps to promote personal autonomy might relate to outcomes of unwanted interventions for hoarding.

STUDY RECRUITMENT



The Centre is not currently recruiting study participants, however we would like to bring your attention to the **International Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation's upcoming 28th Annual Conference**.

This in-person conference will take place July 7-9, 2023 at the Marriott Marquis in San Francisco, and is geared toward mental health professionals, researchers, and anyone impacted by OCD and related disorders, including hoarding. If you are interested in learning about the latest research, treatment, and practices for OCD-related disorders, including hoarding, you won't want to miss it! Registration should be opening soon. To learn more, check out the conference [here](#).

Student Spotlight (continued)

In his free time, Simon can be found skateboarding around campus, learning new songs on the guitar, hitting the slopes on his snowboard, or hiking around B.C. He is a big fan of chips, including both the potato and tortilla variety.



COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

In this edition of *Pathways*, Simon Sheppard interviewed Terri Bailey, Counselor at the Hoarding Disorder Foundation of Alberta (HDFA). Below is a summary of their interview.



What is the overall mission of your organization?

The Hoarding Disorder Foundation of Alberta works to provide a trauma-sensitive response for people living with hoarding disorder in Alberta through support groups and case management. At HDFA, we aim to collaborate with relevant partners and services to provide safe spaces to support wellness.

How does the HDFA work with hoarding?

The HDFA uses a multidisciplinary harm-reduction approach when working with hoarding. On the ground, as a new organization, this means that we've worked to secure funding for support groups and drop-in services for people living with hoarding disorder. In the future, among our many hopes and dreams for our organization, we're looking to secure funding to expand our services to include on-site practical support for decluttering, as well as counselling services.

Tell me about an innovative aspect of the HDFA approach to helping clients with hoarding.

We were recently awarded a grant through the City of Edmonton. This grant has allowed us to create a new program of ours called "Safety Days". Safety Days consist of trauma-sensitive support in

the event of a hoarding-related crisis. This can include, for instance, situations where someone is getting evicted, or their children are being taken due to risks associated with hoarding.

Safety Days include three components: Pre-support, where the person is prepared for the actual intervention and provides the team with feedback; Safety Day, the day of the actual intervention; and finally Post-support, which occurs to manage possible traumatic responses associated with interventions.

This approach is fairly new for us, and we're really excited about working with more people.

What does HDFA pride itself on related to hoarding in the community?

Beyond simply building up the organization and becoming an official non-profit, we have a number of things we're quite proud of. Just recently, during our first ever Safety Day we helped a client who was at risk of losing custody of their children as a result of safety concerns in the home due to hoarding. Thanks to the intervention, and our 12 helpful onsite members, our client was able to retain custody of their children, and we are now working to set up long-term support for the family.

Community Partner Highlights (continued)

This year, we're hoping to work on developing relationships and co-writing grants with Indigenous land organizations. We recognize that the needs of each community are different, and part of reconciliation means working to support the needs of Indigenous communities on their own terms, in ways that are sensitive to their rich culture.

How is your partnership with the Centre meaningful?

From a multi-disciplinary perspective, it's like we're part of this larger Canadian community. It makes me excited that we can come together as a country to really work toward something. From this excitement comes the desire to be privy to new work that the Centre is doing, and new ways of working, being and speaking. It makes me feel like I'm a part of something bigger than myself.

LEARN THE LINGO



In this section, we hope to clear up confusion about some commonly misunderstood terms and definitions related to the concept of hoarding.

Squalor vs. Poor Sanitation

Squalor is a term that is used to refer to home conditions that are severely unhygienic, such as the presence of rotting food, human or animal waste, or pest infestations. However, people with lived experience of hoarding – and their advocates – have begun to call for a shift from using the term squalor to referring to poor sanitation.

Why the shift? Squalor connotes filthy and wretched conditions, often due to poverty, and it carries the stigma of degradation. The term carries a value judgment that can perpetuate stigma against people who hoard, erroneously conflating the conditions of a home with who the resident is as a person.

Sanitation, on the other hand, is a term used in public health to refer to systems for keeping conditions sufficiently hygienic to maintain healthiness. The starting point here is healthful conditions such as drainage, ventilation, clean water, and fresh food. The term sanitation, even when qualified as “poor sanitation” avoids the negative connotations of “living in squalor”. To keep the emphasis on health and safety, reduce stigma about hoarding, and use language that is respectful to the person whose home it is, we invite you to join us in being thoughtful about the impact of language on our clients and transition to discussing sanitation instead of squalor.

RESOURCES



In each edition of Pathways, we draw your attention to some resources on hoarding that we hope will be relevant and valuable to you.

The Wellington Guelph Hoarding Response Network provides an immersive and comprehensive free e-learning module for hoarding responders. The [Hidden Treasures](#) online module presents three realistic case studies, each with distinct learning outcomes.

Every case study is built around engagement with a fictional client who has unique challenges related to hoarding. Responders role play as an outreach worker who is tasked with building rapport with the client, assessing complex hoarding situations, and creating intervention plans informed by a harm-reduction approach. Through the case study homes, learners can see depictions of hoarding conditions, and the three clients are brought to life through realistic scripts, compelling voice acting, and interactions that differ depending on the learner's choice of action.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Centre for Collaborative Research on Hoarding at the UBC Vancouver campus acknowledges that it is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x̣ṃəθ̣ḳʷəỵəm (Musqueam) people. Each of us at the Centre acknowledges our presence as settlers, and thus visitors, on this land.

As a research centre that specializes in hoarding intervention, our work serves as a frequent reminder of the significance and sacredness of one's "home". We acknowledge the presence of our campus and our research Centre on these lands, and recognize the displacement of the Musqueam people who have called them home for millennia.

We know that the production of knowledge has always been a source of pride for the Musqueam people, and this pride is something that we share.

We honour the Musqueam, the traditional knowledge keepers of this land, in all of our scholarly pursuits and commit to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation.



ABOUT US

The Centre for Collaborative Research on Hoarding is a multidisciplinary group based in the UBC Department of Psychology. Faculty from the UBC School of Social Work and Departments of Psychology and Sociology work together with our community partners to better understand hoarding and to promote evidence-informed interventions to keep everyone safe and comfortably housed.

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