

PATHWAYS

A Hoarding Research Partnership Publication

2021
Summer/Fall

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



At last, some of the uncertainty and anxiety of the past year is accompanied by blooms of hope. Our research team is still working from home, but we are grateful for all the sunshine here in

Vancouver and a bit of return to normal. Despite the pandemic, this year we have succeeded in getting the Hoarding Research Partnership off the ground. The Advisory Team has met monthly since last September, and the Partnership Communications Committee has been meeting regularly as well. Now that the Ethics Committee has begun meeting, the entire leadership structure is in place. A few weeks ago, after a year of preliminary work, we launched the Delphi survey to get expert service provider consensus on the environmental risk items that will be on the assessment tool we are collaboratively developing. Such impressive resilience and commitment from everyone – together we can accomplish a lot, even in the face of adversity.

Sheila Woody, PhD, RPsych
Director

RESEARCH UPDATES



The Centre is working with community service providers to develop a hoarding assessment tool. This tool is being designed to allow front-line professionals to identify the most important health and safety risks at the initial visit and to assess progress over time. The tool is also intended to promote effective communication among service providers and with clients. Good communication improves case planning and facilitates coordination of interventions.

To consult with highly experienced providers about which health and safety risks should be included in the assessment tool, the Centre is conducting a Delphi survey. The Delphi method is essentially an online version of a focus group or roundtable consultation in which experts come to consensus on the highest-priority items that need to be assessed for health and safety in the home. Our 34 panelists from across Canada and the US work in allied behavioural health care, housing, code enforcement, first responder, animal welfare, and professional organizing. To gain consensus, the Delphi panelists contribute their judgments via several rounds of a survey. Round 1 has already wrapped up, and Round 2 will begin at the end of August. After the panelists arrive at consensus about the most important items, we will construct the assessment tool and begin to test it in community settings.



UBC Centre for Collaborative
Research on Hoarding

RECENT CENTRE PROJECTS



We are delighted to announce that *Lookout Housing and Health Society*, a community partner organization of The Centre, was recently awarded a 3-year [Vancouver Foundation](#)

Systems Change Grant to enhance the capacity of its *Assisted Reduction in Clutter and Hoarding (ARCH)* program. As Co-Investigators on the grant, Drs. Woody and Bratiotis will harness our research knowledge and decades of practical experience to lead the development of a data collection strategy to improve ARCH programmatic outcomes.

The Centre will work collaboratively with *Lookout* to review current intervention strategies and data tracking practices with an eye toward developing, implementing and measuring enhanced approaches that are consistent with *Lookout's* commitment to low barrier, client-centered harm reduction interventions for people who hoard. A student research assistant from The Centre will be embedded within the Lookout team to facilitate data collection by working in partnership with ARCH frontline Tenant Support Worker staff. Simultaneously, Tenant Support Workers will be supported to enhance their hoarding intervention skillset through on-going training and consultation with our Centre.

Hoarding in the context of social housing presents a number of challenges including increased risk of fire and pest infestation and potentially devastating negative consequences for the resident, such as forced clean-outs or housing displacement. The objectives of this project are to: 1) use client-centred, evidence-based harm reduction practices for hoarding in social housing and 2) design and implement an enhanced hoarding service delivery tracking system. The long-term goal of this project is to develop and disseminate an evidence-based toolkit for addressing hoarding in social housing. We are very excited about this collaboration with Lookout and will be eager to share our learnings from this community partner-engaged research with all of you.

STUDY RECRUITMENT



The Centre is currently wrapping up recruitment for the Delphi survey and is now focused on recruiting service providers for our **Provider Perspectives** study. This study is intended for those who work in community settings and whose work might involve inspecting, assessing, or intervening in hoarding situations. The Provider Perspectives study is for professionals who encounter hoarding in the course of their work but who are not necessarily specialists or experts in hoarding (although experts are welcome to participate).

The study involves an online survey that takes about 30 minutes. The questions focus on service providers' knowledge and perspectives on hoarding and mental illness. Participants receive a \$10 gift card as thanks for their participation, or they can also donate the \$10 to one of the charities on our list.

If you are interested, please visit our website at <https://hoarding.psych.ubc.ca/partners/> and register to take part in the Provider Perspectives study!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Persephone Larkins is starting her second year as a master's student in the UBC Clinical Psychology programme. Her master's thesis focuses on developing measures that reflect a collective understanding of essential assessment of safety and health standards in hoarded homes. The goal of her work is to inform an evidence-based protocol for tackling hoarded homes. Persephone received a highly-competitive CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship to support her studies.

In her free time, Persephone enjoys exploring what BC has to offer, including going for drives to enjoy the scenery and spending time at parks. When it comes to unique interests, Persephone likes to collect old books. When she moved from Ontario to BC for graduate school, she had to let a few books go, but she is looking to rebuild her collection now that she is settled here. She also loves chocolate so much that if she could, she would eat chocolate at every meal.



COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

In this edition of Pathways, Peter Lenkic interviewed Jana Sasaki, Manager of Eastside Oppenheimer building. She manages 4 sites and oversees several different programs, including ARCH. Below is a summary of their interview.



Tell me about your organization & team.

Lookout Housing + Health Society is the official name of the organization. However, **Assisted Reduction in Clutter and Hoarding (ARCH)** is the specific program within Lookout that is focused on tenants with hoarding.

What is Lookout's overall mission?

We respectfully provide caring, non-judgmental, non-sectarian, flexible services. Through advocacy, support, and minimal barriers, we reduce harm to people who have a diversity of challenges. We assist them to regain and maintain stability and achieve a greater quality of life.

How does Lookout work with hoarding?

Over the last few years we developed a team aimed at working with our residents within their comfort-level and on a schedule that works best for them; we take a harm-reduction approach, giving our tenants control and authority over their own homes, while still emphasizing the importance of having safe homes, clear paths, and fire safety.

Why is hoarding something that Lookout cares about?

As an organization focused on social housing, clutter and collecting is something that we often see in our clients' homes. We've discovered that a harm reduction approach to decluttering is less traumatic for our residents in achieving their goals. Additionally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, decluttering has become even more crucial as people are confined within their homes, which can be quite small (especially SROs).

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

Lookout's ARCH program focuses on harm reduction. As such, our approach is to be preventative and proactive – to work on education and harm reduction as opposed to reacting to inspections and violations. For instance, at Lookout we take the focus off of forced clear-outs, eliminating them whenever possible. Many of our tenants may have had a negative experience with a forced clear-out or eviction before, so trying to reduce that trauma is something we're focusing on.

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What is something Lookout prides itself on related to hoarding in the community?

As a whole, Lookout is proud of its non-judgmental and low-barrier support. We are conscious of stigma, and we aim to open up conversations and build trust. If tenants don't feel like they're being judged, then they may be more comfortable opening up about their collecting and other conversations as well.

How is your partnership with the Centre meaningful?

It's been invaluable. Initially Christiana [Bratiotis] came in and met with our team, and she gave an introduction to hoarding and answered questions. More recently, Christiana and Kate [Kysow] have continued to help educate us, give us tips, reaffirm the things we're doing well and suggest things we could do differently, and also build connections and resources. For example, Christiana introduced us to the **International OCD Foundation (IOCDF)** conference. The web-based hoarding conference in the past two years has particularly handy and allowed our team to participate.

RESOURCES



In each edition of Pathways, we draw your attention to some resources – books, websites, or articles – on hoarding that we hope will be of relevance and value to you.

1. [Hidden Treasures](#) Is an E-learning module by the Wellington Guelph Hoarding Network that takes you through the stories of 3 people with lived experience of hoarding. The module is thoughtfully designed to decrease stigma and makes clear the importance of harm reduction as a response to hoarding behaviour.
2. [Initial Benchmarks](#) by the Philadelphia Hoarding Task Force provides 8 simple and easy initial benchmarks to help reduce risk and improve safety.
3. [10 Steps](#) by the Wellington Guelph Hoarding Network consists of 10 steps designed to make homes safer. These steps range from clear hallways to pet care.

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.

Harm reduction for hoarding is a set of strategies that aim to keep people safe and promote well-being by focusing on:

- 1) moving objects (such as newspaper) from high risk areas (such as the oven).
- 2) setting up systems to maintain organization in the home.
- 3) providing on-going support, including visits to the home.

Harm reduction for hoarding is accomplished through mutual respect and understanding, allowing the person with lived experience of hoarding to make their own decisions and to collaborative set realistic goals. When using the harm reduction approach in a hoarded home, remember that the goal is *House Functional*, not *House Beautiful*.



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. Our research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and The University of British Columbia.

Director: Sheila Woody, PhD, RPsych

Associate Director: Christiana Bratiotis, PhD, MSW



Contact Us

Tel. 604 822 8025

Email hoarding_centre@ubc.ca

*Pathways Newsletter Contributors & Editors:
Peter Lenkic, May Luu, Madison Holowatuk, Simon Shepherd*

We fondly say farewell to our colleague and friend Patricia Jiang, who has served an integral role as senior Research Assistant for the Centre during the past six years. We thank Patricia for her valuable and wide-ranging contributions and wish her all the best in her new endeavours.