

York University's 4th Meighen Wright Learning Institute

Event Overview

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On 2nd November 2017, the fourth Meighen Wright Learning Institute was held at York University, Toronto. The Learning Institute highlights latest research, practices and scholarships in maternal and child health. The one-day event was organized by the Women's Health Research Chair in Mental Health and Meighen Wright Academic Lead, Dr. Nazilla Khanlou. This year the focus was on two research themes 1) International Context of Disabilities in Maternal-Child Health, and 2) Parenting. Invited speakers included local, provincial and international researchers and practitioners dedicated to maternal-child health and wellbeing. The full day event included keynote presentations, student posters presentations, and interactive discussions on a range of disciplines and topics related to this year's themes.

After the welcome and introductions by Dr. Nazilla Khanlou, keynote speakers from research Focus 1 presented their talks. The first speaker Dr. John Stone, Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science, University of Buffalo presented his work on "Provision of Competent Cultural Services to Persons with Disabilities." While recounting unique anecdotes from his personal exposure to cross-cultural issues in India and Brazil, Dr. Stone highlighted the unmet health needs of people with disabilities who are often excluded from physical activities, cancer screening, sexual and reproductive health at three levels of health—promotion, prevention and intervention. Dr. Marina Heifetz from Boomerang Health spoke on "Mothers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Challenges and Resilience", and recommended strength based approaches, and autonomy building sources to support the mental health challenges of mothers with intellectual disabilities.

After breaking up for lunch, view student poster presentations and networking opportunities, attendees and speakers re-assembled for Focus 2 presentations. Keynote speaker Dr. Yvonne Bohr, Associate Professor of Clinical Developmental Psychology, York University emphasized the importance of responsivity of caregiver to infant cues and distress in the development and regulation of key behavioural and social areas. Dr. Bohr is studying the influence/interference of the tremendously increased use of hand-held digital technology with caregiver attention. Keynote speaker Dr. Julie Cinamon presented on parents support and beliefs on disclosure, and symptoms of post traumatic stress related to trauma in children, recommended allowing space for positive change. The last speaker for the event Julia Chan, PhD (c) in Clinical Developmental Psychology under supervision of Dr. Jonathan Weiss, spoke about her study on the predictors of parents scaffolding for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She found that both parent (such as emotional regulation and depression) and child factors (such as age, IQ and ASD severity) were related to parent scaffolding.

The event was successfully wrapped up with an open discussion for the attendees and participants' feedback.