

Message from the President

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The CAA Clinical Research Grant is an opportunity for clinicians to partake in clinical research with professional and financial support. CAA Science and Education Committee (SaEC) will help coordinate access to the proper resources (e.g., equipment, people, processes) and grant awards are up to \$5000. We have awarded two previous research grants. The first grant was awarded to Marshall Chasin for work investigating amplification requirements for different languages. He presented on this research the following year at the conference, and it has led to some changes in hearing aid programming. The second grant was awarded to a team led by Akram Keymanesh at Baycrest Hospital for work investigating the impact of cognitive test results in audiology clinical decisions. Our 2013 research grant recipient was Sandra Vandenhoff and I had the opportunity to interview her for this edition of our e-journal.

Congratulations on being awarded the CAA Clinical Research Grant at the conference in St. John's this past year Sandra! I understand you're an educational audiologist.

I've practiced audiology in many different settings over 22 years, but my work right now is definitely the high point of my career. As an educational audiologist, my job is fun, but also important, as I work towards ensuring access through technology. I am deaf myself. I received a cochlear implant eight years ago, and my life is infinitely better now that I can communicate with ease.

What is your research all about and what do you hope to accomplish?

We will develop and evaluate a toolkit for parents of Deaf and hard of hearing children, to be distributed by Alberta Hands & Voices. The premise of the toolkit is that educated parents may act as knowledge brokers for other parents, if supported by evidence-informed tools. Parent-to-parent mentoring programs can provide balanced, yet personalized, perspectives to parents.

This toolkit will begin to fill a well-documented need: guiding parents with evidence-informed, unbiased information, as they navigate disparate systems of care for their child(ren).

How was the process supported for you?

For me the process was made easier by my research mentors. Dr. Stella Ng, Dr. Shanon Phelan, and Dr. Jeff Crukley have walked me through each step. I am impressed by their willingness to help. I've needed practical assistance, encouragement, and the wisdom that comes with experience in academia, and they have provided all that and more. I highly recommend approaching researchers whose interests align with your own to discuss collaboration opportunities.

What are some of the pitfalls you are encountering as a researcher?

When I first started the project I envisioned a timeline that would be a good fit with my day job. I get the summers off, for example, but am very busy in June and early fall. However, I quickly

learned that the timeline was beyond my control. I had to do my best and then let go of when it was all going to happen. This is a good lesson to learn in everyday life too.

I've also found that my enthusiasm for the extra workload has its ups and downs. The wait times that are built into the process (such as for ethics approval) actually proved to be beneficial!

The bulk of the work on the toolkit will be conducted by research assistants (RAs). It was a huge blow to lose one of the RAs early on in the project, as she brought a very different perspective to the table. As an audiologist, my approach to hearing loss rehabilitation is focused on technology. However, this is only one way of coming to the table. I am keenly aware that parents deserve a balanced approach. I think the Hands & Voices mission to support all families, regardless of communication choice, is a laudable mission.

I am excited about this project because I think it will be of great benefit to parents. I appreciate the support of the Canadian Academy of Audiology. Thank you for this opportunity.

Thank you for sharing your work and experience Sandra. I wish you all the best with your valuable project and look forward to hearing about the results at a future conference.

If you have been sitting on a puzzling clinical issue and wanting to do some research in your clinical setting, I encourage you to consider applying for the clinical research grant.

Application deadline is August 15.

For more information go to:

<http://www.canadianaudiology.ca/news-and-events/research-grant-for-clinical-investigators.html>