

# PATHWAYS

A Hoarding Research Partnership Publication

2022  
Summer/Fall

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER



I'm so grateful for our research team and our diverse community partners, who have been working together to develop a new measure of severity of environmental risks in hoarded homes.

Since our last newsletter, we have started to test the new tool at three sites in Ontario. In addition, UBC student Persephone Larkin surveyed hoarding service providers, who expressed very strong support for the clarity of the tool and its feasibility and relevance for assessing health and safety in hoarded homes. We also had an enormously helpful consultation with our Lived Experience Advisors, who helped us to modify some of the language on the tool. We are now preparing for the next steps in testing the tool to make sure it is useful for the full range of service providers who work with hoarding. If all goes according to plan, we will launch this next phase of our field trials this fall.

**Sheila Woody, PhD, RPsych**  
**Director**

## RESEARCH UPDATES



People who hoard often explain that the large amount of stuff crowding their homes did not happen instantly. Instead, stuff just seemed to build up over years of time, and the journey to this situation was far from simple. Hoarding is a complex problem and the clinical conceptualization and treatments for this behaviour are equally complicated. In the fall of 2021, members of the Centre, along with a colleague based in the USA, published an article in *Clinical Synthesis* that provides an overview of hoarding as a disorder<sup>1</sup>. This paper discusses different theoretical models for hoarding, describes commonly-used assessment tools, and outlines distinct intervention approaches and how well they work.

Although research on clinical interventions for hoarding is still in the early stages, a specialized cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) approach for hoarding shows promise in improving hoarding symptoms. Specialized populations such as older adults, children, and people who do not voluntarily seek treatment need additional attention and consideration when planning interventions.

<sup>1</sup>Bratiotis, C., Muroff, J. & Lin, N.X.Y. (2021). Hoarding disorder: Developments in conceptualization, intervention, and evaluation. *FOCUS: The Journal of Lifelong Learning in Psychiatry*, 19(4), 392-404



UBC Centre for Collaborative  
Research on Hoarding

## RECENT CENTRE PROJECTS



In the Summer/Fall 2021 issue of Pathways, we highlighted the Centre's development of a new assessment tool to identify vital health and safety risks in homes with hoarding. Since then, we have

completed extensive consultations with hoarding service providers from varied disciplines, and we constructed the Home Environment Assessment Tool for Hoarding (HEATH). The Centre's Lived Experience Advisors assisted us with crafting more sensitive language in some areas of the HEATH, and their recommendations for how the HEATH can be used in a collaborative, client-centred manner have guided the training materials we are developing.

The Centre has now begun the exciting work of testing the HEATH in field trials. This phase of our research involves partnering with service providers to implement the HEATH in their day-to-day work on a hoarding response team. Our partners will use the HEATH to conduct initial assessments of health and safety concerns in clients' homes, track progress over time, and communicate intervention outcomes to important stakeholders. As many of our partners currently use existing hoarding measurement tools as part of their usual assessment procedures, we also have the opportunity to compare the HEATH's findings to that of established measures, such as the [CIR](#).

Furthermore, by partnering with agencies that use a service model involving more than one provider assessing each client's home, we can study the findings of these independent assessments to ensure that the HEATH provides consistent results across different raters.

The field trials are an important step in determining the feasibility, utility, reliability, and validity of the HEATH. Our partners' experiences will inform our further refinement of the HEATH to prepare it for wider release.

## CENTRE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*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 x̱m̱əθ̱ḵʷəj̱əm (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.*

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Raymond Li is an undergraduate student at UBC, majoring in psychology and minoring in statistics. As a student, Raymond sought out community service opportunities with marginalized populations, including those affected by hoarding. During his community work, Raymond became involved with helping a specific person struggling with hoarding, who inspired him to focus his studies and pursue research opportunities in the field of hoarding. Currently, he is working on a joint project with one of the Centre's community partners, *Lookout Housing and Health Society*. Raymond has substantially contributed to program evaluation for Lookout's specialized team of support workers dedicated to addressing hoarding issues. This work has created a great foundation for collecting quality research data, provided a streamlined process to generate in-house reports, and offered Lookout important information about key characteristics of their program that can be used to facilitate future development. In terms of Raymond's more personal interests, he is very involved in sports, including volleyball, basketball, and martial arts. Fun fact: Raymond has lived with an astonishing number of roommates - 65 housemates over a 5-year period! (Not all at once!)



## COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

In this edition of Pathways, Simon Sheppard interviewed Mark Snelgrove and Stacey Murphy from East Champlain's Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Below is a summary of their interview.



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Champlain East  
*Mental health for all*

### Tell me a bit about your team.

**Stacey:** Well... this is us! In relation to the hoarding program, there are two of us that work primarily in our area. We cover three different counties in our little community: Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Akwesasne.

**Mark:** We've been lucky that the CMHA management team has been on board with that, and have been willing to invest in our program.

### What is the East Champlain Canadian Mental Health Association's overall mission?

**Mark:** Our mission is to promote and improve mental health in our community by delivering community-based programs and services. The agency provides intensive case management services to folks with severe and persistent mental health concerns. From there we specialize in a plethora of programs from peer-support, employment opportunities, hoarding treatment, all the way to our supportive housing program that provides subsidies for people to ensure that they stay adequately housed.

The city of Cornwall is the largest municipality in the region, and they support our program. They have an

agreement with CMHA-Champlain East to help prevent homelessness – with a special focus on hoarding situations.

### Why is hoarding something that CMHA cares about?

**Mark:** Unfortunately, a while back Cornwall had a couple of high-profile fires where people lost their lives. They found that hoarding was often the source of the fires. This led to the formation of a hoarding response coalition to keep our population safer, and CMHA was well placed to be a lead agency with that because of our deep experience addressing struggles with homelessness and mental health concerns.

### Tell me about an innovative aspect of East Champlain CMHA's approach to helping clients with hoarding.

**Stacey:** We have modeled our program after a lot of leaders and researchers in the field. One of the main things we really prioritize is the client-directed care and clients' ability to make decisions and engage in supports that feel right to them. We promote autonomy and self-determination, and that drives the work we do. Whether it be one-on-one work, in [Buried in Treasures](#) groups or even

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working with professional organizers, it's all very client-driven and client-focused.

### Tell me about your role in the HEATH pilot and field trials

**Stacey:** We have a unique one, in the sense that there are two of us [that go into homes] and we hear that is not typical with other programs across the country. That allows us to provide some additional data from a two-person perspective to consider and review.

**Mark:** And the fact that we are able to go back and see the people we've worked with. That way the HEATH can be administered multiple times across different people – it's a great spot to be in in that way. To leave our own little mark on the project and help out agencies that are doing great work - that's such a thrill for us professionally.



## 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.*

This month, we highlight **'Hoarding Disorder: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide,'** a new book written by Drs. Carolyn Rodriguez and Randy O. Frost. This new book references both the latest research and the authors' own clinical experiences to provide readers with the most thorough and up-to-date information about hoarding disorder.

**Dr. Carolyn Rodriguez** received her MD from Harvard Medical School-M.I.T. and her PhD in Neuroscience and Genetics from Harvard Medical School. As the Director of the Translational Therapeutics Lab and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, Dr. Rodriguez leads studies investigating the brain functioning and treatment of severe mental disorders, including and hoarding disorder.

**Dr. Randy O. Frost** received his PhD from the University of Kansas and recently retired from Smith College in Massachusetts. He has published numerous scientific articles on hoarding, and his work has been funded by the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health.

## LEARN THE LINGO



*This month we are highlighting important words you might encounter when assessing safety in a hoarded home.*

### **Egress**

Egress refers to entrances and exits from the home. Egress is related to the clear pathways through the home; blocked egress is a major concern in hoarding due to the safety risks associated with being unable to get out quickly in case of emergency.

### **Combustible**

Combustible is an adjective that refers to things that are, "able to catch fire and burn easily." While the word flammable is often used interchangeably with combustible, combustible is a broader term referring to materials that are able to burn in air. Flammable materials, on the other hand, catch fire easily in ambient temperatures. When assessing a home for hoarding, it is important to be aware not only of flammable materials, like rubbing alcohol and cooking oil, but also of combustible materials that will burn when exposed to high heat, such as books, clothing, newspapers, magazines, and wood.



## 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 Department of Psychology 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 and The University of British Columbia.*

*Director:* Sheila Woody, PhD, RPsych

*Associate Director:* Christiana Bratitiotis, PhD, MSW



Contact Us

Tel. 604 822 8025

Email [hoarding.centre@ubc.ca](mailto:hoarding.centre@ubc.ca)

*Pathways Newsletter Contributors & Editors:  
May Luu, Nancy Lin, Chloe Sernasie, Simon Sheppard*