

Student Spotlight

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What up-and-coming student researchers are exploring

Nick Doukas

Nick Doukas is currently in the second year of the Doctoral Program at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto (U of T). He received his graduate degree in social work from U of T.

For fourteen years, Nick has been working as an addictions therapist in the Concurrent Assessment Inpatient Treatment Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). During his time at CAMH, he has also worked with the Addiction Medicine Services and Drug Treatment Court.

Nick has had several articles published in the area of substance users in recovery who work in the addiction field, substance use recovery and identity, and older adults prescribed methadone.

Project Title: Understanding the bio-psychosocial factors of older adults in methadone maintenance treatment from a life course perspective

Project Supervisors:

Dr. Lynn McDonald, University of Toronto

Dr. Michael Saini, University of Toronto

Dr. Bruna Brands, University of Toronto



Nick Doukas

What Is Nick's Research About?

Why did they start using opiates? And why did they decide to enter and remain in a Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT) Program? These are the questions Nick wants to ask people 50 years of age and older in an MMT program at CAMH.

"These qualitative questions are important because they are major turning points in an individual's life, which speak to the start, development, departure or retiring of their career as illicit opiate addicts,"

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explains Nick. “The questions will also complement the quantitative data being collected.”

The data for this research will be retrieved from the charts of adults 50 or older in MMT at CAMH. Much of it will be obtained from clinical notes and psychometric scales used by nurses, physicians, and social workers who work with this population. Nick anticipates that the data will provide a historical perspective on the participant’s life.

Part of the study, however, looks at the individual’s current stage in life as an older adult prescribed methadone. Nick is especially interested in the variety of coping strategies that the older adult has developed throughout their life. This is important to understand because it raises awareness of how the various relations and links support and/or create barriers in managing the ageing process of a person in MMT.

How can Nick’s findings be used?

Nick’s research is timely because MMT programs in the U.S. and Canada are currently treating a large number of clients who are presenting in their 50s, 60s and 70s. The rising number of older adults in methadone treatment requires that we understand the interconnectedness of medical,

psychological, and social factors in people’s lives. This will enable service providers to offer appropriate care to a unique population.

What’s next for Nick?

In the future, Nick is planning to provide training for clinicians, social workers, nurses, and physicians. The goal is to give them a better understanding of best practices when dealing with older adults. He hopes to develop a training manual, as well. The information gathered from his study will also provide guidance for future research, help inform policy changes, and have implications for program change. Ultimately, Nick wants this population to receive the best possible service.

For more information about Nick’s research, please contact him at nick.doukas@camh.ca.

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