

ACOTUP Researcher Profile

Name of researcher: Deirdre R. Dawson, University of Toronto

Degrees and professional qualifications (including fellowships):

Doctor of Philosophy, University of Toronto Psychology (Brain and Behaviour), 1999; Masters of Science, University of Toronto, Epidemiology 1993; Bachelor of Rehabilitation Science, University of British Columbia Rehabilitation Science (Physical and Occupational Therapy), 1979

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Area of research:

My research draws on my training in rehabilitation science, epidemiology and neuropsychology in order to best understand how cognitive processes in healthy aging, stroke and other acquired brain disorders impact on people's abilities to be autonomous in community living and to develop effective interventions that promote optimal participation in every-day life.

Research related awards and honors:

- American Congress of Rehabilitation, Medicine Mitchell Rosenthal Mid-Career Award, (10/2015)
- University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine Graduate Teaching Award for Continuing Excellence in Graduate Teaching and Mentorship (02/2015)
- Baycrest Outstanding Research Teaching Award (05/2014)
- American Occupational Therapy Foundation, Academy of Research Inductee (04/2014)
- Baycrest Excellence through Teamwork Annual Award (group award) (03/2014)

Grants/funding history:

- Principal Investigators: Deirdre Dawson & Carolina Bottari
ABI Research Program: ONF-REPAR Phase III
Funding Sources: Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF) & Réseau provincial de recherche en adaptation-readaptation (REPAR) Partnership Team Grant (2015/10- 2016/11)
- Principal Investigator: Dawson, Deirdre
Tele-Rehabilitation For Cognitive Disability Post-Stroke: Enhancing Function In The Face Of Geographical Disparities
Funding Sources: Heart & Stroke Foundation, Collaborative Catalyst Grant (2015/7 - 2016/12)
- Principal Applicant: Deirdre Dawson
Maintaining independence in everyday life among seniors with subjective cognitive complaints.
Funding Sources: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Bridge Funding, Open Operating Grant (2015/7 - 2016/6)
- Principal Investigators: Deirdre Dawson & Takako Fuijoka
Impact of music-supported rehabilitation on behavioural and cortical functions in stroke recovery
Funding Sources: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Open Operating Grant (2012/4 - 2015/3)
- Principal Investigator: Deirdre Dawson
Managing the Dysexecutive Syndrome following traumatic brain injury: An ecologically valid rehabilitation approach.
Funding Sources: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Open Operating Grant (2011/4 - 2014/3)

Research collaboration:

Collaboration is critical for doing research that can ultimately make a difference in the lives of people. I am fortunate to have a wide network of collaborators that represent a wide variety of interests, expertise, disciplines and experiences.

What is the most important thing in mentoring graduate students

Early in my academic career, my father gave me the best advice related to mentoring, "you have to want your students to do well". Such a simple statement yet it embodies so much -not just wanting my students to do well on a specific presentation or grant application but wanting them to do well in their learning and most importantly wanting them to do well in their life and that means something different for every student. I have the privilege of getting to know my students and I feel that it is a great gift to be able to accompany them on part of their journey.

Most significant publications:

- Dawson, D. R., Anderson, N., Binns, M., *Bottari, C., Damianakis, T., *Hunt, A., Polatajko, H., Zwarenstein, M. (09/2013). Managing executive dysfunction following acquired brain injury and stroke using an ecologically valid rehabilitation approach: A study protocol for a randomized, controlled trial. *Trials*, 14(1), 306. This paper exemplifies my program of research related to adapting the Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance approach (originally developed by Polatajko & Mandich for use with children with developmental coordination disorder) for adults and older adults with executive dysfunction arising from acquired brain injury, stroke and aging. This paper is the protocol for a randomized controlled trial funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research comparing the CO-OP approach to conventional occupational therapy. Preliminary results from this trial will be presented at the CAOT conference in April 2016.
- Dawson, D.R., Anderson, N., Burgess, P., Cooper, E., *Krupan, K., & Stuss, D. T. (2009). Further development of The Multiple Errands Test: Standardized scoring, reliability and ecological validity for the Baycrest Version. *Archives of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*, 90 (11 Suppl 1), S41-51. This paper reports the original psychometric work that we did on the Multiple Errands Test, a test characterizing the impact of executive dysfunction in everyday life activities such as shopping. Two additional papers on the Multiple Errands Test have subsequently been published from my lab (Nalder et al., 2015; Clark et al., 2015; both in *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation*). A manual, *Developing, scoring and interpreting site-specific versions of the Multiple Errands Test*, is currently being prepared for publication.
- Dawson, D.R., & Chipman, M. (1995). The disablement experienced by traumatic brain-injured adults living in the community. *Brain Injury*, 9(4), 339-353. This paper presents the results of my masters' research. The data presented in this paper are from a Canadian survey and highlight the overwhelming prevalence of long-standing restrictions in occupational performance in adults with acquired brain injury. My desire to changing this situation was the primary reason I embarked on a research career.

Tips would you give for new investigators:

Ask for help – a lot – the last grant I submitted was reviewed by eight individuals. Stay focused - it is easy to get drawn in many different directions – all interesting and worthwhile but to build a research program, a certain amount of single-mindedness is necessary. Read grant and paper reviews with a glass of wine at hand.

Resources/supports/training programs for new investigators:

Check with your university and research institute offices – they can ensure you are getting alerts about grant opportunities and training workshops.