

ACOTUP Researcher Profile

Name of researcher: Angela Colantonio, University of Toronto

Degrees and professional qualifications (including fellowships):

Fellow(American Congress of Rehab Medicine); Fellow(American College of Epidemiology); PhD (Epidemiology and Public Health); MHS (Health Promotion Specialization), BSc(OT)

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Area of research: Professor at the University of Toronto in the Department of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy with cross appointments in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and the Graduate Department of Rehabilitation Science, and is a Senior Scientist at Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, UHN.

I lead an internationally recognized program of research on acquired/traumatic brain injury (ABI/TBI) that includes examination of ABI in the population targeting injury prevention and post-acute care, including a special focus on vulnerable populations. My research program focuses on the nature and outcomes of neurological conditions such as traumatic brain injury with a major focus on employment outcomes. Other areas of my research program include long term outcomes following traumatic brain injury and exploring the impacts of sex and gender on health outcomes and health service utilization.

Research related awards and honors:

- Guest of Honour in recognition of CIHR Research Chair in Gender, Work & Health, Department of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy Research Symposium, University of Toronto (2013)
- CIHR Research Chair in Gender, Work and Health (2013)
- Featured Scientist, University of Toronto Boundless Campaign (2012)
- Nomination, Lifetime Achievement Award, International Brain Injury Association (2012)
- Elected Fellow, American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (2011)
- Best poster award, Co-authored with Amy Chen, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute (\$250) (2010)
- Research Award, Brain Injury Association of Canada (2010)
- Alumni Achievement Award, Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Alumni Association, University of Toronto (2010)
- Leadership Award, Ontario Rehabilitation Research Advisory Network (03/2010)
- Best paper award, "Women's health outcomes after traumatic brain injury", American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine Annual Meeting, Denver CO (2009)
- Enabling Occupation Research Award, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto (2009)
- Best poster award, Co-authored with Stephanie Brown, Canadian Association on

- Gerontology (\$500) (2006)
- Best poster award, Paper co-authored with Philippa Clarke, Canadian Association on Gerontology Annual Meeting (\$500) (2003)
- Saunderson Family Chair in Acquired Brain Injury Research (five year renewable term starting July 1, 2003), Toronto Rehabilitation Institute (\$1,426,745) (2003)
- Health Policy Award for best paper, Co-authored with graduate student Helen He & Victor Marshall, Statistics and Health Conference, American Statistical Association (2000)
- Post-doctoral Fellowship (Epidemiology of Aging), National Institute on Aging, USA (1990-92)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (\$12,000 per year) (1987-88)
- Doctoral Fellowship, Yale University (approx. \$10,000 US per year to cover tuition) (1987-90)

Grants/funding history (selected):

- Colantonio, A. (2013-18). Gender, work and traumatic brain injury: Addressing the gap in occupational health & safety (OHS) research, policy and practice; Chair: Gender, Work and Health. CIHR-IGH (\$800,000).
- Colantonio A (PI). (2008-12). Acquired Brain Injury Dataset Pilot Project, Phases I-III. Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (\$374,558).
- Colantonio, A. (PI), Yoshida, K., Maclean, H., Cullen, N., Escobar, M., Velikonja, D. (2006-11). Women and traumatic brain injury. CIHR (\$235,064).
- Colantonio, A. (PI), Hwang, S., Coyte, P., LaPorte, A., Christensen, B., Kirsh, B., Levy, C., Chiu, T., Clarke, D., Abramowitz, C. (2004-05). The nature and extent of inappropriate living situations for persons with moderate to severe acquired brain injury. Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (\$150,000).
- Colantonio, A., Ratcliff, G. (co-PIs). (1996-99). Long term follow-up of head injury in adults. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (USA) (\$309,909).

Research collaboration: I am most grateful for the numerous fruitful research collaborations throughout my career and it is difficult to focus on just one. As a researcher, particularly early in my career, it was important to develop partnerships at clinical sites for participant recruitment. Now, our research program is stakeholder focused and as such end users as well as other stakeholders play an important role in our research. This approach is increasingly being recognized as the best way to maximize uptake of findings. Overall, it is important to discuss/negotiate/communicate goals, resources, roles, expectations and opportunities as much as possible at the outset of a project; have a process for ongoing communication; and address issues promptly as they arise. Find ways to promote recognition among all the members of the research team and all relevant supporters.

What is the most important thing in mentoring graduate students? I believe you have to have genuine concern for the well-being and progress of your students and to tailor your approach/support to student needs. Also, be available (have a regular meeting time where possible), model desired professional behaviours and facilitate/create opportunities for your students, including for their future career.

Most significant publications: I had some difficulty selecting three publications but decided to focus only on some of the more recent. We published the results of the first comprehensive study on women and traumatic brain injury, which has led to many other publications and

symposia supporting a sex/gender approach to research on traumatic brain injury among women and girls and an international task force on girls and women with acquired brain injury.

- Colantonio, A., Mar, W., Yoshida, K., Escobar, M., Velikonja, D., Rizoli, S., Cusimano, M., & Cullen, N. (2010). Women's health outcomes after traumatic brain injury. Journal of Women's Health, 19(6), 1109-1116.

Our lab is recognized as having an international leadership role in occupational brain injury research. We have identified the profiles of workers most at risk and the need for workplace accommodations after injury, a most relevant practice area for occupational therapists.

- Colantonio, A., Mrozcek, D., Patel, J., Lewko, J., Fergenbaum, J., & Brison, R. (2010). Examining occupational traumatic brain injury in Ontario. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 101(Suppl. 1), S58-S62.

My earlier research focused on long term outcomes after brain injury using conceptual frameworks relevant to occupational therapy. This research, involving over 500 participants, provided a foundation for the identification of service needs in the long term for this vulnerable population.

- Colantonio, A., Ratcliff, G., Chase, S., Escobar, M., Kelsey, S., & Vernich, L. (2004). Long term outcomes after moderate to severe traumatic brain injury. Disability and Rehabilitation, 26(5), 253-261.

Tips would you give for new investigators: Persistence is key, as well as being strategic with your time/efforts. Always find out who you are writing for and what the evaluation criteria are. Plan to finish your grant a month in advance of deadline so you can benefit from meaningful and extensive internal review. Be prepared to effectively promote the importance of your research among peers, consumers/stakeholders and potential funders. Be positive and try to surround yourself with positive, motivated, and respectful peers. Never lose sight of the people your research is intended to serve. Work hard and do excellent work.

Resources/supports/training programs for new investigators:

- Find mentors who can assist you in different aspects of your career.
- Take advantage of early career workshops/opportunities/networking through professional organizations, and aim for grants that are dedicated to new investigators.
- Look for opportunities within larger team grants that may support pilot funds as well as supporting projects of junior investigators.
- Assess the success of training programs/mentors you are considering in terms of outcomes for trainees, and how well its/their goals/interests fit with your interests/goals.
- Be flexible and consider opportunities to provide expertise in occupational therapy research outside of your discipline.
- Look for emerging areas of research versus saturated fields.
- Negotiate for needed supports as much as possible after doing some research on what may be possible.