

MEDIA RELEASE

May 26, 2021



The MMSF Congratulates Dr. Jennifer Hensel as the Recipient of the 2021 MMSF Shaun Lamoureux and Kerry Bittner Clinical Research Professorship in Population Health Award



The Manitoba Medical Service Foundation (MMSF) is pleased to announce that the 2021-2024 MMSF Shaun Lamoureux and Kerry Bittner Clinical Research Professorship in Population Health Award has been awarded to Dr. Jennifer Hensel.

The award was created to promote clinical research in population health at

the University of Manitoba. It provides \$55,000 annually for three years and up to \$20,000 is also available toward a grant-in-aid during the first year of the appointment, for a total value of \$185,000.

Dr. Jennifer Hensel, Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and the Medical Director of Adult Telemental Health Services at the University of Manitoba, was awarded for her project, "Virtual Psychiatric Emergency Response (ViPER): Evaluation of Usage, Patient Experience and Population Impact."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the adoption of virtual care across the health care system accelerated due to the public health requirements to keep people at home as much as possible. Prior to this unprecedented rapid change in care delivery, mental health was at the forefront of virtual care innovation. In 2017, the Urgent Telepsychiatry Program was created out of the Crisis Response Centre in Winnipeg to provide psychiatric assessment to urgent care and

emergency centres across the city that did not have full access to a psychiatrist on site.

Having these services in place allowed for a more fluid transition to the virtual transformation required during the pandemic. Most of the crisis services were quickly virtualized and new programs were developed, including a Virtual Mental Health Crisis Ward, which offers intensive treatment to individuals in their homes.

The proposed study will evaluate the Urgent Telepsychiatry Program and the Virtual Mental Health Crisis Ward. The study will examine the usage of the programs, characteristics of the patients and their outcomes, and the impact on important population metrics such as access to specialists, waiting times and reduction in avoidable hospitalizations. These results will help us to understand more about the use of virtual care in mental health crisis and emergency settings and inform the expansion of these models to reach the rest of Manitoba. Virtual care will have a place in the future, so we need to know more about how to do it safely and effectively in crisis settings to meet the needs of this important population.

This is a rapidly expanding area of research with great promise and immediate practical applications.

For further details on MMSF awards, please refer to the Award Recipients pages at mmsf.ca.

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