

Summary Report

2018 McGill Summer Institute in Innovative Methodologies

Summary of institute outcomes

Dr. Belinda Nicolau headed a team of 12 investigators (senior, mid-career and junior) and trainees that organized and taught the 2018 McGill Summer Institute in Innovative Methodologies. Held in July 2018 at the McGill University Faculty of Dentistry, the event combined four courses that addressed specific methodological needs to tackle complex research problems.

These one-week courses, two well-established and two newly developed, were designed and taught by researchers recognized nationally and internationally in these fields. Using a solid and previously established infrastructure, the Summer Institute introduced junior and mid-career oral health researchers to mixed methods, life course epidemiology, meta-analysis of clinical and basic science research, and qualitative health research with children and youth. This diverse offering of practical methodological courses capitalized on our teaching and administrative expertise, research databases and experience in the organization of events, which made the experience enjoyable for attendees. With NCOHR funding, we offered 23 NCOHR members from across Canada free registrations for 31 courses and travel support. We also provided all 34 participants (taking 42 courses) with course materials (textbooks, software licenses, online workspaces), certificates, on-site breakfast, lunch and snacks, and a restaurant dinner.

The event brought together professors and students from across Canada and other countries (Brazil, Bangladesh, Portugal, Puerto Rico). We employed several learning tools to accommodate a variety of learning styles. The main Summer Institute teaching philosophy is that trainees learn well by solving problems, by having opportunities to reflect on their own practice, and through work with peers. As part of this participatory approach, attendees often collaborated in teams that reported their results to the group for comparison and feedback. Practical examples from the instructors' clinical and research experience made the complex subject matter more readily understandable and relevant to participants and allowed them to address concrete problems. Attendees also shared useful experiences and insights.

Finally, each course used innovative and rigorous approaches to assessment to improve future courses. The professors and students participating in these courses highlighted their enthusiasm with regards to the experience, the usefulness of the research approaches taught, and the skills they learned (please see the Summer Institute website for excerpts from participants' evaluations: <https://www.mcgill.ca/dentistry/summer-institute/mixed-methods-health-research/testimonials>).

In addition, because the Summer Institute annually attracts increasing numbers of participants from several countries, they provide all involved with many new international networking opportunities. As with previous editions, the organizing team has already capitalized on new contacts to initiate project collaborations and publications (e.g., Nicolau et al, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2380084417705823>).

Future plans

Building on the success of this ambitious program, Dr. Nicolau and colleagues are now further expanding it to 5 courses which will involve 21 instructors from 5 universities and 3 McGill Faculties/Departments in 2019. The next Summer Institute will be held June 25 - July 06, 2019 at the McGill University Faculty of Dentistry. More information is available at: <https://www.mcgill.ca/dentistry/summer-institute>.