

Encouraging Student Research

In 2015, the *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences (JMIRS)* published its *first annual student edition* featuring the research of students and recent graduates in all disciplines from around the globe. The Guest Editor for this issue, Professor Peter Hogg from the UK, selected the top three articles—the first was “Food For Thought: Are Radiation Therapists Able To Recognize Patients Who Would Benefit From Dietary Counseling?” by Annette Erlich, BSc, RTT et al, from The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, Toronto. We talked to Annette about conducting research as a recent graduate, and her experience from data collection through to publication.

Congratulations on being selected as the top article in our recent student edition! How did you get the idea for this paper?

Thank you! I was very excited to hear that my paper was selected as the top article in the student edition of the JMIRS! The idea was something that my supervisor, Lisa Di Prospero, and I discussed prior to my 3rd year of my program – my clinical placement year. I was interested in nutrition and care of the patients undergoing radiation therapy. Together we discussed some ideas. After finding a paper by an Australian team looking at radiation therapists’ perspective and how knowledgeable/confident they were in their practice, we decided this may be something interesting to see about Canadian therapists. We received great support when we collected preliminary data. It was then that we decided to expand the study nation-wide.

Did you have any experience with research or writing prior to undertaking this project? Did you find your studies at Michener prepared you for the process?

I had exposure to research prior to this project when I worked as an administrative assistant for research scientists at Mount Sinai Hospital’s research institute (LTRI). I assisted in their manuscript and grant writings/submissions; however, I did not specifically write or work in the projects in their wet labs. It was a combination of that experience mixed with some courses at Michener, and the assistance of my supervisor that prepared me for the process.

Can you tell us about the initial stages of data collection? What was it like to design a survey and collect responses? What were the challenges involved?

The data collection wasn’t very difficult for me.

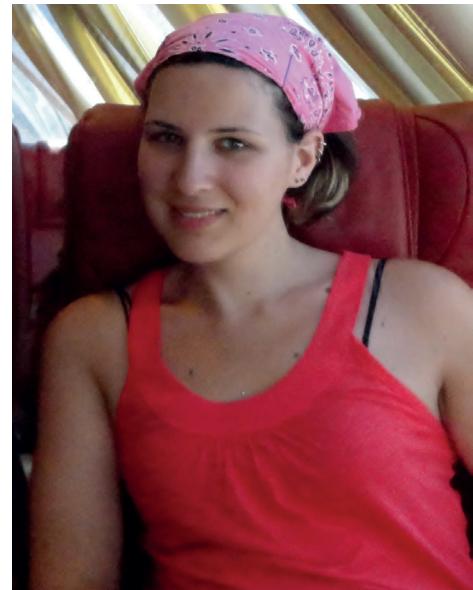
For this study, we contacted and received permission to modify the survey used in the Australian study by Dempsey et al (2011). We added some questions for demographic purposes, and left the responses for most questions open-ended. The biggest challenge that we faced was tallying up the number of responses with the rankings from dieticians. Using survey-monkey was an easy way to collect responses from therapists across Canada, but the tally and putting rankings to each response was done individually, by hand. It wasn’t difficult to do this; however, it was time consuming and tedious.

Once you had all the information you needed, what was it like to write a first draft? Do you have any suggestions for those who may be writing their first manuscript?

The first draft of the manuscript was written as part of the ongoing course material. I had assignments to complete that were used as a backbone to the final manuscript. Once the course was completed, I was able to go back and modify my introduction, results and discussion to make them more appropriate for a manuscript submission than just a lone class assignment. For those who may be writing their first manuscript, I recommend reading through some examples of manuscripts that are published for ideas on how to present the data and organize your ideas. It also helps to read lots of papers that have a similar topic to the work that you researched – it will help identify areas where there are gaps and where your research could potentially go in the future. Work with your supervisor to assist you in finding different ways to present your data and trust your instincts!

Have you seen any changes in practice at your centre in response to this study, and do you have any plans to follow up on this topic with further studies?

Unfortunately, I am not currently working as a radiation therapist so I haven’t been able to see any changes in the practice at the centre where I conducted my clinical placement, or at any other centre across the nation. I would love to follow up on this topic with future studies once I’m actively working in the field!



CAMRT RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM

Fostering research and publication through education and funding is a key activity in support of the CAMRT’s commitment to promotion of professionalism. The CAMRT annually awards a research grant of up to \$5,000 for original research related to the medical radiation sciences. The deadline for applications for the 2016 grant is **April 1, 2016**. See <http://www.camrt.ca/mrt-profession/professional-resources/research-support/> for more information and a fillable PDF application.

JMIRS CALL FOR PAPERS FOR 2016

The topic for our next special issue is **The Patient Experience**—we will be targeting articles from multi-disciplinary perspectives from all over the globe. Examples of relevant subjects for this issue include: supportive care/services; psychosocial; person-centered care, patients as partners; education curriculum inclusive of the patient experience; families, etc. Final papers will be due by **May 1, 2016**, to be submitted through the [journal’s online system](#).

THANK YOU TO OUR PEER REVIEWERS IN 2015!

Please visit [the journal website](#) to see the list of those who critically evaluated over 100 manuscript submissions in 2015, assisting the editorial board in making publication decisions. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and expertise!