The Justice Emmett Hall Memorial Foundation

2023 Jack Boan Student Essay Competition

Award Winners

Undergraduate category

Name: Rebecca Chau, Independent Studies, Trinity College, University of Toronto
Essay Title: "That's the Thing about Trust": An Alternate Explanation for Vaccine Hesitation

Abstract:
As evidenced by the recent events of the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination and herd immunity are a crucial element of public health. However, an increasing number of Canadians are reluctant or refuse to be vaccinated. This sentiment is typically narrativized as a "war against science", attributing this rising vaccine hesitancy to scientific illiteracy and stubbornness to change in the face of scientific reason.

Rather than continuing to perpetuate this sensationalist idea, it is imperative that we take a step back and acknowledge the true root cause of most modern-day vaccine hesitancy — a longstanding mistrust in scientific and government institutions, substantiated by historical controversies, misinformation, and recent hyper-politicization of the act of vaccination. Through changes in practice and reframing of the Canada Health Act and its principles to prioritize prevention-based population health such as that provided by vaccines in addition to the current orientation around individual and treatment health, we can move towards a restoration of public trust and relationships at every level — a true resolution to this problem of reluctance and the associated threat to the health of all Canadians.

Master's category

Name: Camila Goldstein-Fridman, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Western University
Essay Title: Social Determinants of Infant Hearing Healthcare in Canada

Abstract:
Unidentified permanent childhood hearing loss can negatively impact language and cognitive development, education, social relationships, well-being, quality of life, and employment if supports are not in place. Its consequences can extend to the family and generate significant costs to society. Early diagnosis and support can mitigate these consequences. Unfortunately, infant hearing healthcare is often neglected in primary healthcare and public policy initiatives. Early hearing detection and intervention (EHDI) programs have the goal of offering universal newborn hearing screening leading to early diagnosis and necessary support. However, according to the Canadian Infant Hearing Task Force, in Canada, these programs vary significantly across provinces and territories. The reasons and impacts of these differences require further investigation. Research indicates that infant hearing health can be influenced by the social determinants of health (SDoH). The SDoH framework acknowledges the impact of social, economic, and environmental factors on individual and population health outcomes and recognizes the need for addressing these determinants to promote health equity and reduce health disparities. This essay aims to examine the impact of SDoH on infant hearing healthcare in Canada. Understanding how the SDoH impact EHDI programs in Canada is crucial to fulfilling the accessibility

principle of the Canada Health Act (CHA).

Doctoral category

Name: Nisha Ravichandiran, Family Medicine, Western University
Essay Title: A Policy Analysis of After Hours Access to Primary Care

Abstract:
After-hours access to primary care pertains directly to the principle of accessibility outlined by Justice Emmett Hall in the 1964 Royal Commission on Health Services Report (Hall, 1964), as well as the Canada Health Act (Government of Canada, 1985). This essay examines the roles of government and regulatory bodies as distinct institutions involved in the issue of after-hours access to primary care, as well as the potentially opposing interests of patients and providers. The idea of the patient medical home, and the interaction between access to primary care and emergency department use are discussed. Two distinct policy goals are identified: (1) Increasing after-hours access to primary care and (2) Decreasing emergency department use. The effectiveness of present governing instruments in achieving these policy goals is mixed, and policies targeted towards increasing after-hours access to primary care with the goal of decreasing emergency department use may not have the intended effect. Additional research is required to determine the most effective means of achieving the policy goals of increasing after-hours access to primary care and decreasing emergency department use, in order to guide effective policy.