

# Look who's Talking

2017 Speech-Language Pathology  
University of Toronto Alumni Association Newsletter

## The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI)

By Talia Wolkin, 1T3

Many clinicians working with patients with dysphagia are plagued each day with the same questions: Is this liquid thick enough? Does my patient's liquid consistency look the same at the facility I will be referring my patient to? How can I guarantee that my patient's family will mix the safest consistency for my patient once they are discharged?

**IN 2015, THE INTERNATIONAL DYSPHAGIA DIET STANDARDISATION INITIATIVE (IDDSI) WAS BORN TO TRY TO HELP US ANSWER ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS.**

IDDSI was developed as a volunteer task force of like-minded researchers and clinicians who came together in 2012 to discuss both the terminology that we use to label texture modified foods and liquids for people with dysphagia, and methods to measure foods and drinks in the kitchen or at the point of serving. It was intended to enable clinicians and caregivers to be more certain that food or liquid is appropriate for a patient.

We had the chance to sit down with IDDSI board member and U of T Speech-Language Pathology alumna Professor Catriona Steele to ask her a few questions about this groundbreaking initiative.

As a clinician, Catriona was always interested in the use of thickened liquids as an intervention for dysphagia. She recalls becoming "frustrated in [her] clinical practice that despite careful evaluation of swallowing, we essentially seemed to have a generic default intervention, which was to prescribe pureed foods and thickened liquids. [She] was also bothered by obvious variations in the thickness of liquids that were served to patients based on things like the amount of thickener added, how it was mixed, and how long a drink was left standing". She was inspired to begin studying



variations in swallowing physiology across liquid consistency in her doctoral research (and beyond). Along the way, Professor Steele met colleagues who were bothered by the same issues – most notably Dr. Julie Cichero from Brisbane, Australia – and they began discussing the challenges they were encountering. They dreamt about a future where they could be more confident that patients would receive the correct thickness of a liquid or the correct consistency of food to effectively address their swallowing difficulties.

The idea of IDDSI began developing through discussions over dinner or drinks at conferences where Professor Steele's colleagues, now IDDSI board members, realized that they were frustrated by similar issues. Professor Steele notes, "A strength of the IDDSI task force is that it is interdisciplinary – our merry group of 12 includes people with training and experience in medicine, speech-language pathology, food science, clinical nutrition, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, fluid mechanics and food service/catering. And we are international – our task force members come from Canada, USA, Australia, United Kingdom, China, Brazil, South Africa, Germany and Japan".



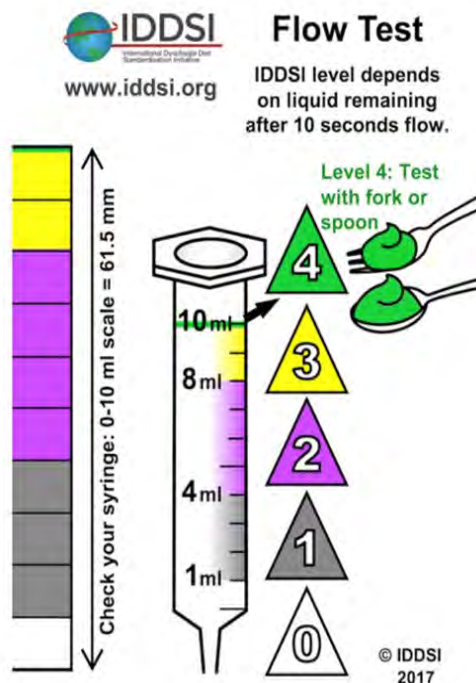
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In Canada, we have used such terms as “nectar-thick” or “honey-thick” – but there has been no easy way to ensure that clinicians, patients, caregivers or kitchen staff all have the same understanding of what those terms mean. An early step in the IDDSI project was to survey people around the world to find out what terms they were using. It was discovered that there were 27 different English terms in use for approximately 5 different levels of liquid thickness and 54 terms for about 5 different levels of food consistency, and no standard way to measure products to confirm their category. The IDDSI Framework includes 8 different levels food and drink consistency, with descriptive names. Perhaps more importantly, simple testing methods are included that empower clinicians, caregivers and food service professionals to check an item and be more confident about its consistency.

Professor Steele believes that the response to the IDDSI Framework has been overwhelmingly positive; “It really does seem as if the testing methods have addressed a huge challenge that was frustrating to a lot of people.” Further feedback has suggested that the IDDSI tests are easy to perform – and there are official projects underway to transition to the IDDSI framework in more than 20 countries around the world. Recently, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in the USA announced that it would be replacing the former National Dysphagia Diet with the IDDSI Framework. Several manufacturers of thickened liquids or texture modified foods are also developing new labels for their products. There are IDDSI translation projects underway in several languages, including a French Canadian version. The IDDSI board hopes for broad implementation around the world by 2019.

Throughout its development, several U of T alumni have also helped with a huge systematic review project that IDDSI undertook to review evidence from the literature regarding texture modification and its effects on swallowing (<http://bit.ly/1wvZydp>). This included doctoral students Ashwini Namasivayam-MacDonald and Carly Barbon from Catriona’s Swallowing Rehabilitation Research Laboratory, M.H.Sc. graduates Lidia Giosa and Helen Wang, and U of T bachelor’s graduate Chelsea Leigh (now a UBC-trained S-LP). Professor Steele notes that “working on the IDDSI project has really been one of the most rewarding things in my career so far – it is truly a privilege to be part of a group of hard-working people who are united by their passion for promoting diet texture safety for people with dysphagia.”

For more information and video resources on IDDSI, please refer to the IDDSI website ([www.iddsi.org](http://www.iddsi.org)) or the IDDSI app.



## Spring Reunion 2017 S-LP Alumni Mixer

Join us for drinks and hors d’oeuvres to mingle with U of T S-LP Alumni! Afterwards, attend a free panel on pediatric speech sound disorders. The panel is being hosted by the department of S-LP at U of T, in conjunction with OSLA.

The S-LP Alumni Association hosts the above Spring Reunion event annually in May, and invites alumni from all graduating classes to attend and reconnect with former classmates and professors. The S-LP Alumni Association would also be happy to help any graduate class with planning a class reunion event. If interested, please get in touch by sending an email to [slp.alumni@utoronto.ca](mailto:slp.alumni@utoronto.ca).



### Date:

Monday,  
May 29, 2017

### Time:

Mixer from  
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
Panel from  
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

### Location:

10th floor, Rehabilitation Sciences Building  
500 University Avenue,  
Toronto, ON M5G 1V7

Cost: **FREE**

### Register:

<https://springreunion.utoronto.ca/>

**Are you hosting a reunion event?** If you and your fellow alumni host reunions, or would like to arrange a reunion event, we would love to hear from you! The S-LP Alumni Association invites UofT Alumni reunion groups to contact us. We would be interested in working together on future events.

Please contact us at: [slp.alumni@utoronto.ca](mailto:slp.alumni@utoronto.ca), or on our Facebook page, U of T S-LP Alumni at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/295282260212/>.

## The Alumni Association is going green!

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## Retirement Announcement

# Luigi Girolametto, Professor

**IT IS WITH PERSONAL REGRET BUT WARM WISHES** that I announce the retirement of Luigi Girolametto at the end of June 2017. Luigi will receive a status appointment as Professor Emeritus. He joined the department in 1992 when it was located in the Old Church on College Street. Since then, he has had many successes, including several mentorship and teaching awards (Faculty of Medicine, SAC, Centre for Health Promotion, U of T), an Editors' Award from Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in the Schools, and numerous appointments as visiting professor (at the University of British Columbia, LaTrobe University, Melbourne, University of Siena, and the National Research Council, Rome). Over his career, he has been an investigator on 20 research grants from provincial, national, and Australian sources that range in topics, including: parent training, literacy, specific language impairment, early childhood education, and bilingualism. He and his colleagues have published over 75 journal articles and chapters that advance the practice of speech-language pathology with preschoolers. He has been an invited speaker at international conferences in Australia, Italy, the United States, and Canada. At U of T, Luigi has been the past Chair of the Department and served as Vice Dean, Graduate Education for a brief period. Luigi's presence in the Department will be sorely missed by all. He assures me that retirement will be full of adventure and rich in new experiences and we wish him the best in this new phase of life.

**Pascal van Lieshout, PhD**  
Professor and Chair



### Most Rewarding Aspects of my Career

For me, one of the most rewarding parts of my job at U of T has been my contact with students, from undergraduate to graduate. I tried to excel in teaching/mentoring by ensuring the most up-to-date content and using teaching methods that were innovative. My perfectionism, inherited from my perfectionistic father, has caused many students to be frustrated by my high expectations. But I see that they all do well after they graduate and that makes me happy. My research has been a source of great pride and international interest. Looking back over the years, I couldn't have predicted that my research would cover so many topics and, more importantly, be cited by so many researchers in their work with preschoolers. It has been a blessing to have worked with

so many research participants – children, families, early childhood educators, from whom I learned that no research participant is like another. And no one person can be reduced to a number.

### Acknowledgements

Many people have had a significant and positive impact on my time at U of T. I can't possibly include everyone by name; suffice it to say that the profession of speech-language pathology is filled with people of goodwill, who have a heart and are always willing to help – with teaching, student placements, committee work, or research recruitment. You know who you are and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues in the department who have been a good team to work with for these past 25 years. In particular, I want to thank Carla Johnson for her informal mentorship during my early years in the department. My long term research partner has been The Hanen Centre and I want to express my gratitude to Elaine Weitzman and Janice Greenberg for their support. Finally, thank you to my past research lab coordinators, research assistants, and research students (MHSc, MSc, PhD, postdoctoral fellows) for your help in advancing our research in early language and literacy development. Your successes were also mine and I am grateful for our work together.

### Future Plans

I will be moving to Rome in May and am planning to live out my retirement in my parents' native country, enjoying the chaos of a city that is too tolerant but full of sunshine, life, and adventure. Recently, my Italian colleagues and I published a six-session parent training program focusing on shared book reading for 3-4 year olds with language delays ("Oltre il Libro", Erickson, Trento). This is an original program adapted for the Italian context and not related to The Hanen Centre. My colleagues and I have scheduled monthly workshops from May 2017 to next Mar 2018 in different cities in Italy, so I will be exploring the country from north to south, while training professionals how to use the parent program. In addition, the publisher, Erickson, has given me a contract for a second book in Italian on promoting language development in preschool settings. So part of my retirement will keep me actively involved in the profession. The rest of the time will be spent exploring Rome, seeing friends, eating great Italian food, meeting new people, dealing with Italian bureaucracy, and living "la dolce vita" for as long as I am able.

### Support the Alumni

If you would like to make a donation to recognize Luigi's contribution to the field, please donate to the Alumni Association, whose work Luigi has supported during his career at U of T.

The Alumni support our students with test materials, workshops, events, bursaries, and scholarships.  
Go to: <https://donate.utoronto.ca/give/show/180>



*"I was trapped in a glass cubicle with a locked door and no key. I looked over at Jessica who was tied up to a dental chair. We heard a maniacal laugh from above. Our hearts were pounding, as we only had 30 minutes to escape".*

Our class decided to celebrate Halloween (the end of Unit 1 midterms) by going to an escape room: a type of game where people are told a background story, are locked in a themed room related to the story and must use elements and objects found in the room to solve a series of puzzles in order to escape within a set time limit.

Escaping the room requires a diverse skill set. Although the environments and tasks found in an escape room differ from those encountered by an S-LP (we hope), there is overlap in the types of skills required to achieve success in both. Here are the top five transferable skills:

### 1) Power of Observation

Escape rooms require attention to detail and looking at situations holistically. While our first impulse was to jump straight in, we were most successful when we took a step back to carefully observe

our surroundings. Similarly, our experiences with case studies illustrated the power of observation during assessment and intervention.

### 2) Taking a Breath

Juggling multiple demands can be daunting, especially when time pressures are present. In an escape room, a countdown clock constantly reminds you to solve complex problems quickly. It's easy to become burnt out and anxious by difficult tasks. The most successful groups were those that knew when and how to take a breath. Although simple advice, in our clinical practice it's important to remind ourselves to do so.

### 3) Being resourceful

Everyday objects end up being the key to solving the puzzles. You must assess your environment and think creatively about what can be used to help you escape.



Similarly, Speechies must learn to be resourceful and creative. They need to evaluate what is available and constantly add to their toolkits to serve a wide range of clients from different backgrounds with different needs.

### 4) The Importance of Teamwork

Team members stepped up for tasks they felt they were strong at. While some tackled word problems, others cracked numerical lock combinations. In the future, we realize not all the teams we will be a part of will be the same. Finding the balance amongst strengths and weaknesses will be key to creating a cohesive, productive interprofessional team.

### 5) Learning from Reflection

How successful were we? Out of four teams, only one successfully escaped. Discussing what went well and areas for improvement allowed for new perspectives and different strategies for a future outing. S-LP is a complex, fast-paced profession with new challenges every day. We realize the importance of reflection to fine-tune skills, evaluate assumptions, and continually strive to improve clinical skills.

As we embark on a new journey in our Unit 3 clinical placements, we hope to transfer these skills from the escape room and further develop our abilities to work in a fast-paced, complex environment.

# Year Two Report

By Devora Goldberg and Anna Mersov, 1T7

**OVER THIS PAST YEAR,** our Year II class has continued to seek out opportunities to get involved in our field outside of our lectures and textbooks. Our classmates have shown that they can wear many hats: event coordinators, bakers, craftsmen, spokespeople for our profession, and yes, even amateur (but nonetheless promising) musicians and salsa dancers.

After all, what could be a better cause to take down our ego by a few notches than an event promoting the field we all can't wait to work in? A highlight this year was an initiative to support Transforming Faces, a registered charity whose mission is to support multidisciplinary teams in their delivery of free cleft lip and palate services for children and adults in developing countries. It has been an exciting partnership that grounded our textbook knowledge in real world applications. At their May 2016 event, Beautiful Before and After, we were proud to contribute to the event's outstanding success by helping with set-up, registration, background music, and the silent auction. This past September, a group of us also volunteered at Salsa for Smiles; in addition to facilitating the evening's events, some of us took to the floor to participate in a traditional salsa lesson. As a result of being the only group bold enough to rise up to the challenge, our group of



keepers got to know each other quite a bit more intimately than we have before. It is worthy to note that the evening ultimately culminated in the "spice bucket challenge", where we were given five types of salsa to test our "taste buds", and, as was expected, led to the rise and fall of many a promising talent. As one of our classmates said, "It was nice to be involved as a class with an event and organization that raises money for cleft palate care, something that is really relevant to our profession."



Like us on Facebook! The Alumni Association is on Facebook! Find and join us by searching for the "U of T SLP Alumni" group, and clicking "join". It's that easy to stay in touch!



**ON NOVEMBER 9, 2016, Dr. Regina Jokel (9T1) was presented with the Distinguished Service Award at the annual Awards and Recognition Celebration. Dr. Jokel received her Master of Health Science and Ph.D. in Speech-Language Pathology from University of Toronto. For the past 25 years she has been working with patients inflicted with various neurological disorders, with focus on a rare dementia called primary progressive aphasia (PPA). She is an assistant professor at the University of Toronto and a scientist at Rotman Research Institute. The Alumni Association is pleased to share an excerpt of Dr. Jokel's acceptance speech with our readers:**

Coincidentally, this week marks the 25th anniversary of my graduation from the Speech-Language Pathology program. Last Saturday I was sitting at dinner with my former classmates, and, as I listened to their friendly chatter, I realized how fortunate I was to arrive in Canada when I did and enter the S-LP program.

I came as a political refugee with no knowledge of English and no proper documentation to enter university. It was Paula Square, the department chair at that time, and her clairvoyant abilities that got me into the S-LP program. All I had to do was pass an English proficiency test, she said, and... oh, the exam happened to be in two weeks... yes,

**Know someone deserving of a Distinguished Service Award?**

Consider nominating your peers! For more information about this award please visit: <http://www.slp.utoronto.ca/alumni/alumni-association/>

under certain circumstances, one can become proficient in a foreign language in two weeks.

Thanks to another clairvoyant, the late Barbara Meissner-Fishbein (who graciously overlooked my thick accent and my lack of experience with dementia), I was hired as a new grad for the behavioural neurology program at Baycrest Health Sciences.

I have spent my entire S-LP career at Baycrest. About a year after I started working there, Dr. Freedman, who is arguably one of the best behavioural neurologists in the world and has enormous respect for our profession, walked into my office on a Friday afternoon with a middle-aged man and said: "I know it's the end of the day and you are going on vacation in 5 minutes, but I really would like you to assess this unusual patient. His cognition seems to be intact but his language has been declining". This is how I met the very first patient with primary progressive aphasia (PPA) in Canada, and... I was hooked.

Fascinated with this unique type of dementia, I had many questions about it; however, at that time, no one had any answers. So, I conducted research projects and published some papers, but quickly realized that to properly research the subject and make meaningful contributions, I needed to pursue doctoral studies. I was working and had three young children, so I am very grateful to the patient and forgiving Prof. Rochon for her unwavering professional and personal support during my PhD years. Her mentorship contributed to the fact that, as a student, I received the top-ranked candidate award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Ever since I remember, I wanted to do three things: work with patients, teach, and conduct clinical research. I have been fortunate to turn that dream into reality many years ago. I developed the dementia component for the course now known as S-LP 1538, so the students would have at least rudimentary knowledge of dementia when they entered the workforce. I did not have that opportunity.

I continue to derive inspiration from my work with patients. I recently completed a comprehensive 10-week intervention program for patients with PPA and their spouses, the first of its kind in Canada. My clinical research took me literally and figuratively to many different places, from Chile to Kyoto and Sydney, and from intervention for PPA to finding signs of Alzheimer's disease in Agatha Christie's novels. It has been an exhilarating and rewarding journey enriched by meeting some truly remarkable people.



**Yes!** I would like to support the Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association at the University of Toronto.

The Speech-Language Pathology Alumni Association is constantly striving to improve student life at the Graduate Department of Speech-Language Pathology, University of Toronto. Your financial assistance is invaluable in helping us reach our goals.

**If you wish to participate in improving the student experience you can do so by contacting:**

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Toronto, ON M5S 3J3

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I am also grateful to my nominators who are my coworkers and friends. I am incredibly fortunate to be part of a very special group of clinicians and scientists at Baycrest.

I owe my thanks to you, my colleagues from the U of T S-LP department whose work and accomplishments provide inspiration to all of us. I am indebted to my colleagues in the field, my past and current students and, of course, my family. I am grateful to the alumni association for its time and effort in keeping the S-LP community together, and for the award I received.

I owe a large part of my successes to my mom who, sadly, passed away last year. She taught me that regardless of circumstances, I should always be kind, keep an open mind and do my best, because a man (or woman) shows who he is by what he does with what he has.

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
PROUDLY PRESENTS



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*THE J.F. WALKER LECTURE*

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**Getting the Best of Behaviour:  
Practical Skills for Clinicians Managing  
So-Called “Difficult” Behaviours**

— FEATURING —

**Kathy Peters,  
BSc.Bio, BSc.OT, MBA**

Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) Strategic Lead  
Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant (HNHB) Local Health  
Integration Network.

Knowing the person behind the Behaviours: Over-  
coming a Complex Health System for Older Adults  
with Cognitive Impairment.

**Dr. Joseph M. Ducharme,  
Ph.D., C. Psych**

Associate Professor University of Toronto - Ontario Institute  
for Studies in Education, Clinical Child Psychology Program.

The Errorless Approach: A Proactive Model for  
Short- and Long-term Remediation of Child Problem  
Behaviour.

**Date:**

**JUNE 9, 2017**

**8:00am - 12:30pm**

**Location:** **The Great Hall, Hart House,  
University of Toronto**

**7 Hart House Circle,  
Toronto, ON**

**Cost:** **AFTER APRIL 28 - \$150**

**U OF T S-LP STUDENTS – FREE**

**\*DELICIOUS HOT BREAKFAST INCLUDED\***

**Registration:** [my.alumni.utoronto.ca/2017\\_JFWalker](http://my.alumni.utoronto.ca/2017_JFWalker)

**Questions? Contact us: [slp.alumni@utoronto.ca](mailto:slp.alumni@utoronto.ca)**

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# Dr. Monika Molnar

By James Le, 1T6



Later this year, the Department of Speech-Language Pathology welcomes its newest faculty member, Dr. Monika Molnar. We had a chance to ask Dr. Molnar a few questions.

### Q: What is the focus of your research?

I'm interested in the language acquisition of typically and atypically developing young toddlers/infants from monolingual and bilingual families. My experiments are designed to understand whether and how the linguistic knowledge accumulated by monolingual and bilingual novice learners is different. I am also curious about how primary caregivers interact with toddlers who learn only one versus two languages. I'm not only interested in the purely linguistic input of these caregivers but also in the extralinguistic cues they provide to their toddlers during interactions, including gestures. Particularly, my ongoing experiments are designed to understand whether and to what degree the extralinguistic cues provided by the caregivers of bilingual children (or of children who have been diagnosed with language disorders) are useful for children in general to learn language.

### Q: What can speech-language pathologists learn from your research?

Many S-LPs find themselves working with children from bilingual families and environments. Because bilingual children use the same language differently than their monolingual peers, it is not always easy to evaluate whether they exhibit symptoms of certain disorders or they just represent a typical bilingual child. I hope my research will contribute to our understanding of what is typical to bilingual development. Also, I plan to tackle this issue not only by comparing monolingual and bilingual development, but by assessing the linguistic range that bilingual children exhibit.

### Q: What led you to your current career path? And before coming to U of T, what did you do?

During high school, I became interested in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy about language and the idea that "meaning is use". This fuelled my interest in second language acquisition while I was in college. Our society's growing interest in bilingualism provided me with the opportunities to pursue my research. After completing my PhD at McGill University in Montreal, I was a postdoc and then a Staff Scientist at the Basque Center on Cognition, Brain and Language (BCBL) in San Sebastián, northern Spain. In Montreal, I focused on French-English bilinguals and in Spain, Spanish-Basque bilinguals.

### Q: Where are you from originally?

I was born in Budapest, Hungary. My native language is Hungarian, which, like Finnish and Estonian, is one of the few non-Indo-European languages in Europe; that is, it's a strange language with very long words and very loose rules for word order. Also, Budapest was the place where I first met an S-LP; I was five, in kindergarten, and I had trouble producing the Hungarian rolling "r" sound. I remember feeling disappointed when I learned how to produce the sound properly. I had a really good time with the therapist and felt sad I couldn't see her anymore.

### Q: What are you hoping to do in Toronto and at U of T?

So far, I have been working with relatively homogenous bilingual populations, including French-English or Spanish-Basque children. In Toronto, at U of T, I look forward to working with bilinguals from diverse and heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds. By doing so, I hope to further understand how development interacts with bilingualism per se and not only with exposure to a specific pair of languages.

## Travelling Abroad

# Trinidad – Exploring Speech-Language Pathology in the Caribbean

By Kavita Schaffer, 1T7



**PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR MY FIRST CLINICAL PLACEMENT IN TRINIDAD, I experienced some anxiety. I had some thoughts regarding whether my experiences would be comparable to those of my classmates, or if working in the GTA would provide greater networking than what I could obtain in Trinidad.**

It is likely that regardless of the actual site that you are working in, whether that be in the GTA or in another country, you will likely be faced with diverse environments and populations.

An important benefit of being immersed into another country for a significant period of time is that it gives you a better understanding of the universal development of speech and language, as well as a deeper understanding of the differences and potential cultural barriers that may occur. Trinidad was an integrative learning experience,

providing a myriad of opportunities that continuously developed and shaped my skills each day as a future speech-language pathologist. I believe this clinical placement prepared me to be more aware of recognizing and appreciating the similarities and differences of various backgrounds. These experiences have undeniably transferred over to my subsequent placements and have contributed to broadening my views and awareness when interacting with ESL populations within Canada.

Although Trinidad provided an amazing and unique experience, a great level of independence was required. All international placements require a certain level of independence. However, since Trinidad is provided among the first clinical placement options for speech-language pathology, it was difficult to know that I may not receive the amount of support that may be required to adequately apply my education and skills. Although there may be differing levels of guidance, I still feel like an international placement will provide situations and environments that no other placement can provide. These circumstances lead to an increase in flexibility, which is a characteristic that can become very useful as a clinician.

Furthermore, as a student member of the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR-S), I had also aspired to promote and explore the values and missions of public outreach. My clinical placement abroad allowed further growth as an aspiring speech therapist, as well as a citizen in general. I experienced ICDR initiatives first-hand, and became further involved in the advocacy of change by promoting rehabilitation and education internationally at the University of Toronto.

I would have appreciated the opportunity of any international placement, however this location was particularly enticing to me. My maternal grandfather contributed to the advocacy of change and education in Central Trinidad in the Maha Sabha Hindu schools from the 1950s to the 1980s. I appreciated the opportunity to continue my grandfather's efforts by applying my education and assisting those at Immortelle Children's Centre. I felt that I had a wonderful opportunity to be part of his circle of life. It was both a humble and exciting experience that I will remember for many years to come.