

# Look who's *Talking*

2020 Speech-Language Pathology  
University of Toronto Alumni Association Newsletter

## UofT S-LP Goes International

By Hillary Ganek, 1T7



In 2018, I was invited to Ethiopia for a three-week teaching stint by the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration (TAAAC).

TAAAC is a partnership between faculty at the University of Toronto (UofT) and Addis Ababa University; supporting and training specialist professionals to meet the needs of Ethiopians. TAAAC has facilitated over 20 academic and medical programs in Addis Ababa since 2003. Until recently, speech-language pathology (S-LP) was not amongst them. In fact, there was only one woman providing speech and language services to the entire country. In 2017, Addis Ababa University's Special Needs Department, in the Faculty of Education, partnered with Transforming Faces, a Toronto-based organization supporting cleft lip and palate repairs in low- and middle-income countries, and TAAAC, to train the first 17 speech-language therapists in the country.

Lecturers from UofT and its partner hospitals, including professor emeritus Dr. Alice Eriks-Brophy and alumni, like myself, Carolyn Spavor, Gordon Nicholson, and Vanessa Panes, took over teaching responsibilities. Dr. Kim Bradley, assistant professor (status-appointed) in the Department of S-LP at UofT, ensured that TAAAC was inviting the most qualified clinicians in Toronto to cover all necessary content, while Dr. Tim Bressmann, served as a liaison between TAAAC and Transforming Faces. Dr. Pascal van Lieshout, Chair of the Department of S-LP, supported the initiative as well. The students at Addis Ababa University participated in classwork and



practicum hours in child language, aural rehabilitation, AAC, dysphagia, and adult neurogenic communication disorders, as well as online voice training.

I joined the team to teach aural rehabilitation in the spring of 2018. I was surprised to find that, around campus, it was easy to spot university students who were deaf or blind or in wheelchairs. Students who were able-bodied came quickly to their assistance around campus when necessary, and I would quickly come to learn that many of the speech-language therapy students were good friends with students in other departments at the university who had disabilities. I had not expected to see this level of integration and will admit that I rarely see a student with a visible disability on our own campus, let alone dozens. The prevalence of inclusion that I observed on the Addis Ababa University campus provided an intriguing backdrop for the introduction of S-LP.

Perhaps I should not have been so surprised as researchers have found a clear link between disability and those who are living in low- and middle-income countries, like Ethiopia. There is an urgent need for policy and programs to support people with disabilities in these countries. Not only that, but early communication development, skills like quality parent-child interactions, joint attention, and eye contact, which have been linked to positive linguistic and cognitive outcomes, have also been associated with later economic outcomes specifically in low- and middle-income countries. As S-LPs, we are uniquely qualified to support communication for

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## Distinguished Service Award

# Aravind Namasivayam Ph.D., S-LP(C), Reg. CASLPO

Each year, the Alumni Association sends out a call for nominations for our distinguished service award, which recognizes Alumni of the department who have made outstanding contributions to the fields of communication disorders and swallowing in at least two of the following areas: academic achievement, clinical services and promotion of the profession.

### Dr. Aravind Namasivayam is this year's recipient.

Dr. Namasivayam is a scientist on the research grant from the PROMPT Institute and holds an adjunct faculty status at the Department of S-LP here at UofT as well as an affiliate scientist at Toronto Western Hospital and Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. In addition, Dr. Namasivayam is a visiting senior research fellow at Curtin University of Technology in Australia and the research director of the Speech Research Centre in Toronto. He received his PhD in S-LP with a specialized certification in Neuroscience from UofT in 2008.



Dr. Namasivayam has published 40 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and has presented his work at over 60 international conferences and workshops. He has received awards from ASHA, The Stuttering Foundation of America, Apraxia Kids, and the International Association of Orofacial Myology among others. Just last year, Dr. Namasivayam received the prestigious National Award for Excellence in Applied Research as well as the Mentorship Award from SAC.

We are pleased to share an excerpt of Dr. Namasivayam's acceptance speech:

**"THROUGHOUT MY CAREER, my reason to innovate has been driven by my passion for speech-language pathology and the need to address and overcome barriers that my students, S-LP colleagues and clients faced.**

I was driven to establish Hear2Speak.org in 2003 and the more recent Speech Research Centre Inc. in 2008. Both these organizations focus on making evidence-informed practice accessible to front line clinicians and underserved persons with communication disabilities, worldwide.

To close my speech, I asked a good friend in the lab (Ms. Bhairavi) what I should be talking about. She said tell me a random number, and I said 7. To that she replied, give 7 inspirational quotes/life lessons that will be helpful to the students who are just beginning their careers.

So here it is:

1. Whatever you do- you should be the best at it. Not in your class, not in your school, not in your city...but in the whole world.
2. It is not enough?if you are good at something. You must be the ONLY one who can do it! That is how good you should try to become.
3. It is not where you start that matters... it's where you want to go. Dream Big.
4. If you are training someone, train them well and don't hold back on knowledge. Because you never know, they might end up being your therapist one day. You will only want the best treatment right?

### 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/>

5. Go through problems -don't go around them. Problems make us all uncomfortable...but (see point 6)
6. Learning happens outside the comfort zone.
7. Normalize failure. For every scholarship, research grant, published paper or award that I have received, I have applied and failed at least 10 times or more. This is true for every successful person that I have known. So be persistent and resilient, failure is the norm.

A professor (Dr. David Ostry) once told me, "Nothing is more important for a scientist than their peer group." Today, I can say that it is very true. To be praised and given this distinguished service award by peers is probably the highlight of my academic life! I look forward to serving this profession in the years to come with enthusiasm and excitement. Thank you."

### ALUMNI EXECUTIVE 2019-20

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Newsletter layout and design by Steven Janovsky

## Year One Report

### Getting to know the class of 2021



Hi there,

We are the class of 2021! We are a class of 59 students from across the country with various school, work and volunteer backgrounds and experiences. However, we all have the common desire, excitement and passion to join the UofT S-LP community. From many group presentations and fascinating guest lecturers, to integrative learning experiences and interprofessional activities, it has been a rewarding and busy six months. We cannot believe how much we have had the opportunity to learn in such a short period of time! (Nor how much food we have eaten thanks to all of our delicious potlucks!)

We would like to take this opportunity to properly introduce ourselves! Here are some fun facts about our class:

1. When asked for three words to describe our experience so far in the program, our class said: "Rewarding, Challenging, Supportive", "Surreal, Intense, Collaborative", "Like a Little Family (...4 words)"
2. Our class comes from differing educational backgrounds including: Linguistics, Psychology, Neuroscience, Vocal Performance, Music, Early Childhood Education, Professional Writing and much more!
3. Most individuals in our class speak 2 or more languages.
4. One of our class' fondest memories from Unit 1 was our S-LP-themed Halloween dress-up contest. The winning costume was the masked audiogram.

As we write this, we are about to start Unit 3, our first clinical placement in March and April.\* Despite the expected case of the jitters, we are all very enthusiastic about embracing our first hands-on experience in the field. We are sure you remember the feeling! We are looking forward to embracing the challenge and are certain we will have a lot to learn from our Clinical Educators.

We had so much fun honouring the Year 1 tradition of making a class music video. Feel free to check out the Class of 2021's video, "The ABCs of SLP", here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQwbJ9Lz9MU>



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people with disabilities as well as language learning for young children who are at risk for language delay. There is a clear role for us on a global stage.

While Canada may boast some of the best S-LPs in the world, we certainly can all agree that Ethiopians have more knowledge about how Ethiopians communicate than we do! Culture plays an important role in language and it is beneficial when the clinician has a deep understanding of the cultural norms and values of the families with whom they work. While some programs fly speech-language pathologists into low- and middle-income countries to treat patients and leave, TAAAC trains Ethiopian students who graduate and become clinicians so that they can more successfully serve families and more sustainably support the growth of S-LP as a field. I am looking forward to observing how speech-language therapists from a culture of inclusion create and implement new techniques and services.

As of the fall of 2019, all 17 students have graduated from the program making them the first Ethiopian trained speech-language therapists in the country. To date, all of the graduates are working or volunteering as speech-language therapists in hospitals, private practices, schools for children with neurodevelopmental disorders, like autism spectrum disorders, and hearing aid clinics. Transforming Faces and TAAAC are continuing their partnership with Addis Ababa University who is converting the program from a bachelors to a master's degree this fall.

In addition, Dr. van Lieshout, in his role as Chair of the Department of S-LP at UofT, will sit on the TAAAC Governance Committee to ensure that the S-LP program continues to be supported in the future.

It was an honor assisting the speech-language therapy students at Addis Ababa University to kickstart not just their careers but the entire field. I look forward to watching it grow.

## The Alumni Association is going green!

If you would prefer to receive your annual newsletter electronically, send an email with the subject 'SLP alum e-newsletter' to [address.update@utoronto.ca](mailto:address.update@utoronto.ca). Help us make a difference!

We are very grateful for all of the wonderful opportunities this program has offered us so far, and we are so excited to see what is in store as we finish our first year in the program!

Your Year 1 Alumni Reps,  
Kaylee Miller and Christine Muscat

\*Disclaimer: Please note that this article was written prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in a halt of all clinical placements.

## Year Two Report S-LP class of 2020

By Madison Erb and Clarice MacGillivray



Wow! It's hard to believe it's been a year since we introduced the Class of 2020. It's even harder to believe that we are now in our graduating year! A lot has happened in the last 12 months - we have three full placement terms under our belts and have learned more than anyone could have predicted. It's exciting to learn something new each day, and we can't wait to continue growing into S-LPs.

One thing we have realized is how important it is to have a work-life balance. We can pride ourselves on our ability to work hard in class while still making time for each other. From Blue Jays games to holiday parties, class potlucks to birthday gatherings, choir practice to intramurals - we all make time for one another, even during our busiest days! We believe this attribute is critical moving into our profession. Knowing that being an S-LP is only part of who we are allows us to be the best in all areas of our lives!

"In one word, how do you feel about graduating in less than 6 months?"

We polled our class to ask them what their futures look like and here's what they said:

- 25% of the class wants to work with adults, 25% want to work in paediatrics, 25% want to work with both, and 25% are waiting to decide!
- Almost ¾ of the class would ideally like to work in the GTA, with the rest looking to return to their home province/town.
- A handful of us would like to get into research.
- Over 70% of the class plans to become clinical educators, with a few more undecided.

We can't wait to see what the future has in store for the Class of 2020! For now we will continue to work together, learn from each other and enjoy the last few months of the S-LP program. Watch out for Class of 2020 graduates coming soon to a workplace near you!

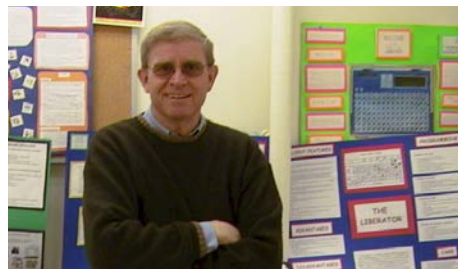
As we approach the end of our time at UofT, we look forward to what is coming next! This comes with mixed emotions, from excited to terrified and everything in between! Check out the speech bubble to see our class response to the question:



## In Memoriam

### REMEMBERING BERN O'KEEFE

by: Luc De Nil and Susan J. Wagner



It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Dr. Bern O'Keefe on Monday, February 3rd. Bern will be remembered by everyone who knew him as a presence larger than life. His optimistic attitude and curiosity about everything made it a joy to be around him. He was a gentleman and a scholar, which made him a great colleague who could always be counted on for support and advice. He loved teaching and sharing his knowledge and experience with students and clinicians. Beyond that, he made sure that we remembered that there is more to life than work, and he modelled and always encouraged one to live a balanced life. His love of sports and knowledge of baseball, in particular, was legendary. When Bern retired, he took up golf with great passion and could always be found on the links in London, Ontario or Florida.

Bern received a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in Speech Pathology from Emerson College in 1964 and 1970, respectively. He worked clinically in New Hampshire and Seattle, Washington and then joined the faculty at UofT as a lecturer in 1971. He was key in the development of the program and the profession as the department moved to an M.H.Sc. from a diploma in 1978. He returned to school to pursue doctoral studies and obtained his PhD from Pennsylvania State University in 1992, where his dissertation focused on The Effects of Communication and Outputs on Attitudes Towards Individuals Who Use Augmentative Communication and on Output Preferences. During the 1995-96 academic year, he served as Acting Chair, and then as Associate Chair from 1996 to 2005, the year of his retirement. Bern felt a very strong commitment to our academic and professional community throughout his career. He served as President of the Ontario Speech and Hearing Association from 1974 to 1975 and of the Canadian Speech and Hearing Association from 1982 to 1983. He was a consultant in augmentative communication for the Ontario Ministry of Health from 1986 to 1987. While a faculty member in the department, he taught courses in many areas including cerebral palsy, medical elective, aural rehabilitation, stuttering and the undergraduate survey course on speech and language disorders, the latter that he particularly enjoyed. However, it is for his expertise in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and his strong focus on quality of life and consumer advocacy, for which he will be remembered most. He supervised two outstanding doctoral students, Dr. Rupal Patel and Dr. Joan Truxler, who both pursued research in AAC.

Bern will be missed greatly by his wife, Maureen, and sons, Sean and Matt, and their families and all who knew him. He was one-of-a-kind and a friend to all.

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The Department of S-LP has also featured this tribute on their website at: <https://slp.utoronto.ca/past-posts/15377/>.

## REMEMBERING ALICE ERIKS-BROPHY

by Vanessa Panes



On September 21, 2019, with great sadness, I learned of my former professor Dr. Alice Eriks-Brophy's passing. Like many other S-LP students at UofT, I was fortunate to learn from Dr. Eriks-Brophy's expertise in Aural Rehabilitation. I will always be grateful for her help during a tough time. I feel that my relationship with Dr. Eriks-Brophy highlights her kind-spirit, dedication to students and tireless advocacy for people with hearing loss.

Prior to the commencement of my speech-language studies at UofT, I was diagnosed with a moderate sensorineural hearing loss. I've heard it said that it takes on average seven years for a person to accept a diagnosis of hearing loss. Learning this news was devastating. Fortunately, Dr. Eriks-Brophy's class in Aural Rehab was a lifeline. In her class, we learned about different types of therapies for clients who are hard-of-hearing and the different amplification devices available.

I remember that on the final day of her class, I wore my hearing aids for the first time outside of my house. I remember Dr. Eriks-Brophy beaming at me. I felt both supported by her and empowered. She had been one of the people who had inspired me to get them. It was a special unforgettable moment. I'm glad Dr. Eriks-Brophy was able to see firsthand the importance of her class and how she personally made a difference in people's lives.

A year after retirement, Dr. Eriks-Brophy began volunteering with the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration (TAAAC). Through TAAAC, Dr. Eriks-Brophy worked with the first cohort of speech-language therapy students and instructed them in Aural Rehabilitation. The year before the program commenced, there was a single Speech Therapist in Ethiopia, serving a population of 105 million. With the help of Dr. Eriks-Brophy and other Toronto S-LPs, this joint project facilitated the graduation of 17 new Speech Therapists.

I am very proud to have known Dr. Eriks-Brophy. She spent her life addressing the health inequities in First Nation communities and overseas as well as training many S-LP students in Aural Rehabilitation.

The Department has also featured a tribute on their website which can be found at: <https://slp.utoronto.ca/past-posts/remembering-alice-eriks-brophy/>.

In honour of the contributions Dr. Alice Eriks-Brophy made to the field of speech-language pathology, we are collecting donations for the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration (TAAAC). In 2018, Dr. Eriks-Brophy worked with TAAAC to provide clinical training to the first class of speech-language pathologists in Ethiopia. Like Dr. Eriks-Brophy, TAAAC strives to provide equitable and accessible service provision to all families.

Please visit <https://donate.utoronto.ca/give/show/131> to donate. Follow the prompts. Under the section "Tribute and Memorial Gifts" indicate that you are donating in Dr. Eriks-Brophy's name.

You can also donate by phone at 416-978-0811.

## PROFESSOR MARGARET CHRISTINE RICKARDS

A Tribute by: Jean F. Walker (Ward)



It was with profound sadness that we learned recently of the passing of Professor Margaret Christine Rickards in early February.

Christine was appointed to the Course in Speech Pathology and Audiology, Division of Rehabilitation (later to become the Department of Speech-Language Pathology) in 1972. She was one of three additional faculty members in the discipline to be appointed in that year. Christine held an L.C.S.T. (The College of Speech Therapists), now The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, an M.S. in Speech Sciences (Purdue) and an M.A. in Linguistics (Manchester).

Prior to her appointment to UofT, Christine was a lecturer at the Manchester School of Speech Therapy (now within the University of Manchester), the City of Birmingham Poly-

technic (now the University of Central England in Birmingham) and the University of Manitoba. Christine had extensive professional experience in the development and provision of services for children and adults with disorders of communication in a variety of clinical settings. These included centres in Winnipeg (where she worked for 7 years), Hamilton, and Toronto.

Christine's extensive academic and clinical background, together with her firm commitment to high standards of education in the preparation of students for the speech-language pathology discipline, were strong assets for the development and strengthening of the S-LP program. Her knowledge, philosophy of education, and creativity were of particular value in the early years of her appointment during which time Christine played a pivotal role in the development of the master's degree program, in particular, her participation in the preparation of the (many) briefs required.

In addition to teaching responsibilities in linguistics, phonetics and child language, Christine undertook the position of Coordinator of Continuing Education for several years, a position which reflected her strong commitment to the need for the dissemination of knowledge about communication and its disorders to practicing S-LPs and those in related disciplines. She organized several innovative programs and workshops some of which were presented by renowned international specialists in both S-LP and speech science.

Christine's recognition of the urgent need for the development of services for the treatment of children with disorders of communication prompted her to take a half-time leave for 2 years, in 1981, to become the first Director of Clinical Services of the newly founded Toronto Children's Centre, a centre established by the Ontario Speech Foundation (now The Speech & Stuttering Institute) which Christine had helped to develop. The Centre was a valuable clinical teaching resource for students in the M.H.Sc. program. The success of the innovative programs developed by Christine ensured the continuation of government funding for the Centre. Christine took an early retirement from the University in 1990. The activities she engaged in during this period of her life reflected her interests in teaching English as a second language and accent adjustment for which she had earlier developed a specialised program. She also gained a further degree, a master's in International Law, which she successfully completed a few years ago.

Christine made an outstanding contribution to the education of students in S-LP, to the development of the program, and to the expansion of services for those with disorders of communication. Her legacy is a rich one.

## A Reflection on the 2019 J.F. Walker Lecture

### Screen Time with Kids and Telerehab with Adults



**ON FRIDAY, JUNE 14TH STUDENTS AND ALUMNI gathered to attend the biennial J.F. Walker lecture hosted by the Alumni Association. The day, filled with four engaging lectures, covered a topic increasingly more relevant to today's healthcare system – technology.**

With the quick and ever-evolving trajectory of technology, clinicians of all ages are left wondering, 'how does this integrate into and impact our clinical practice?' This question was answered from multiple perspectives throughout the day as brilliant lectures were conducted around the themes of screen time and telepractice.

After a delicious breakfast, Jackie Van Lankveld (Clinical Manager, Niagara Children's Centre) kicked off the event with a riveting keynote around the effects of screen time on children under 5. Jackie painted a picture of the current landscape of children's use of screens. She highlighted the risks, such as causing language delays, challenges with learning and self-regulation, as well as vision issues; and highlighted the benefits, including the ability to encourage and compliment physical activity after the age of 3. Overall, she gave us a well-rounded picture of the impact of screen time and the important reminder that screens are here to stay! This reminder set the foundation for her recommendations for dealing with screens, namely the 4 Ms: Minimize, Mitigate, (Be) Mindful and Model!

The lecture was designed to give clinicians an overview of the research and some practical take-aways on how to approach screen time with families. An amazing start to the day!

The day continued with three lectures designed to provide an introduction to telepractice and its many potential implementations. Carol Toenjes, the Telehealth program coordinator at UHN, kicked off the series by presenting an overview of the Telehealth system at UHN, explaining what telehealth is, why we use it, and how it is incorporated into practice at UHN. She provided an excellent overview complete with video examples, a live walkthrough of the OTN system and clinical scenarios. Marla Fogelman, an S-LP at UHN continued the theme by discussing how telepractice has been used at UHN to provide patients with timely access to outpatient rehab. She walked us through the implementation of telerehab within the Stroke Program, providing a practical example of how clinicians can use telehealth to better provide service to our patients. Finally, Sucheta Heble, another S-LP at UHN rounded the day off by underscoring an underutilized area of

*By Nicole Bazzocchi, T20*

telepractice – mindfulness and mental health. She began by reflecting on what mindfulness is and proceeded to outline the success of an ABI mindfulness group. Summarizing the realization and impact of this group ended the day on both a reflective and inspiring note. All in all, the lecture series on telehealth gave the students and clinicians a strong foundation about telepractice, leaving attendees asking, what's next?



Overall, the J.F. Walker lecture marked a great day, fostering discussion around an emerging area of clinical practice. The S-LP Alumni Association thanks Professor Jean Walker and all in attendance for making the event a success. Stay tuned for details of our next J.F. Walker Lecture Event. See you there!



Speech-Language Pathology  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

**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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21 King's College Circle  
Toronto, ON M5S 3J3

**1-800-463-6048 1-416-978-0811**

or visit

<http://donate.utoronto.ca/slp>

## Travelling Abroad

# Our Month in India: Exploring Speech-Language Pathology Abroad



By Sydney Acker, T20 and  
Jessica Tomarchio, T20

Now having completed an additional clinical placement in our community, we have gained an even greater appreciation for the skills we developed at ASSA, whether it's our ability to work with translators, learn from our clients/families as the experts of their care, or adapt to resources in our community. Our desire to do everything possible to best meet clients' unique and individual needs has been transformed. We are now able to learn from the ground up with each of our clients in order to better understand their values, supports, culture, and linguistic background.

Things we learned and would love to share:

**AMAR SEVA SANGAM (ASSA) IS A CAMPUS NUZZLED IN THE SMALL TOWN OF AYIKUDI, IN THE SOUTHERNMOST STATE OF INDIA, TAMIL NADU. It is hard to define ASSA as just one "thing". It's not just a community-based, outpatient, or inpatient rehabilitation centre; an early intervention provider; a vocational training centre; or an inclusive and accessible place to live.**

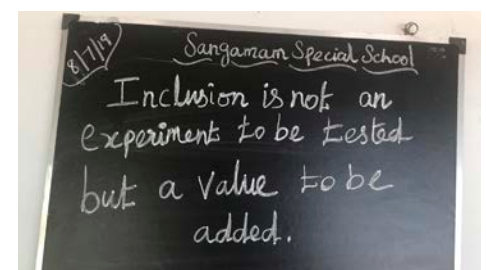
The best way to define it is as a place where inclusion, acceptance and support govern the work being done on a daily basis. The staff and organization's approach to disability is nothing short of astonishing and is illustrated best through their own words: "Disability is a matter of perception. They [individuals with disabilities] are a vital Human Resource that cannot be neglected for the nation's development."

Our time at ASSA was spent providing educational workshops to community-based speech trainers and special educators on topics relating to developmental speech and language. We also had the opportunity to observe their village-based rehabilitation programs and provide consultation to special educators working at their schools. Additionally, we were able to hold a hearing screening clinic for the children at the Special School with donated audiology equipment. We went with the intention of learning from, working with and educating the community we were immersed in. What we didn't realize was the magnitude of learning experiences and opportunities for

growth we would have. Looking back on our time at ASSA, one of the factors that allowed us to grow was the support that we received before embarking on our travels.

Before heading to India, we participated in interprofessional education workshops on Global Health. These sessions helped frame our purpose and intentions before travelling, ensuring that our role in international practice was well-established. We travelled to India not only hoping to share our own knowledge but to learn from the people, the culture and the system within which we were working. In order to implement sustainable, culturally sensitive programs, we needed to learn from the ground up. The staff and patient population at ASSA were generous with their knowledge. We learned about family roles, public healthcare services and parent-child interactions, how to care with limited resources and the significance of community. While conversing with a staff member regarding the limited access to resources, he humbly explained that at ASSA, "without anything, we do everything."

- Like any placement, adjusting to a new environment does not happen overnight. Be patient and the time will come where you feel comfortable and at home.
- A headlamp can be your best friend!
- Take chances and try new things, like eating with your hands. The more you welcome new experiences, the more opportunities for growth you have. You might even get better dexterity while you're at it!
- You can learn so much by simply taking the time to listen to those around you.
- There is never only one way of doing something.
- Be mindful of the environmental and economic impact you have while travelling. Who knew a leaky tap could provide a great source of water to clean the bathroom?
- International practice is an excellent way to learn skills outside of your comfort zone.



## Research Corner

# A Glimpse into S-LP Research at UofT

I had the opportunity to interview two of UofT's Ph.D. students about their research. Here is an extract from those interviews:

By Vanessa Panes, T18



Reeman Marzouqah

### Q: What motivated you to pursue research?

I have always been interested in research. My mother was the first licensed speech-language pathologist (S-LP) to start practicing in Jordan in 1988. Her achievements and passion for the profession have ignited my life-long desire to study speech and language pathology.

Through my clinical work, I became aware of the limited research available regarding many S-LP practices and recommendations. I deeply believe that patient care must be driven by evidence, but the current evidence base is very limited. There is a crucial need in our field for clinicians to engage in research, and I plan to tackle this issue through my graduate studies. My future career goal is to become a leader in the field as a future clinician-scientist.

### Q: What is one piece of advice you have for someone hoping to pursue their Ph.D.?

The advice I give to someone planning on pursuing a Ph.D. is to determine what interests you the most. Engage in research, read articles, visit labs and speak to experts in the field. You are embarking on a decision that will be with you for life, and you want the journey to be intellectually and personally satisfying. Being in graduate school is wonderful because you are surrounded by hard-working and successful people, but it can get overwhelming. I always set aside some time to exercise and go out with friends outside of the lab.

### Q: Can you tell us about your research?

My doctoral research is focused on studying the

effect of oro-pharyngeal exercises on Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) in post-stroke patients. Many researchers evaluated oro-pharyngeal and oro-facial exercises to improve speech, facial expression and swallow function in patients after stroke. To date, no researchers have studied the effect of these exercises on post-stroke patients with Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). We have developed an App to deliver the exercises remotely. Under the supervision of Dr. Yana Yunusova and Dr. Mark Boulos, this project will be the first step to investigate the efficacy of this novel approach in improving breathing outcomes in this population. I hope that my research findings will positively affect individuals who suffer from this deficit.

### Q: What is the most exciting thing about working on your current project?

The most exciting thing about working on this project is being exposed to different disciplines, each showing a unique lens for understanding the same deficit. My project represents a novel multidisciplinary collaboration between neurologists (both sleep and stroke), speech-language pathologists, and a biostatistician. I am learning a lot from this expert team!



Sana Smaoui

### Q: What motivated you to pursue research?

I was always interested in exploring clinically relevant questions during my clinical masters program. My biggest motivator was my passion for dysphagia and the stroke patients that I worked with during my final clinical placement.

### Q: What is one piece of advice you have for someone hoping to pursue their Ph.D. (or advice for clinicians re: EBP?)

Work on a project that excites you! Research is very different from clinical practice, so understanding the research process and surrounding yourself with research mentors can guide you and facilitate the gap between clinical practice and research.

### Q: Tell me three things about your research?

My work is focused on exploring the use of tongue pressure resistance training as an intervention for dysphagia.

1. The population of interest for my work is the stroke population as most of the tongue pressure literature focuses on this group.
2. I hope to tease apart intervention effects from spontaneous recovery in this group.

### Q: In what ways can people support your research?

If you believe that your patients may be interested in this training following their stroke, please contact the swallowing lab ([tri-swallowingstudy@uhn.ca](mailto:tri-swallowingstudy@uhn.ca)) for more information regarding eligibility criteria, and we can arrange to meet with them should they be eligible.



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