

Bringing Research to LIFE

Upcoming Events

30th Annual Spring Research Symposium

As the **Centre on Aging** celebrates its 30th year at the University of Manitoba, it will also host its 30th Annual Dialogue on Aging.

May 6

8:45 am – 4:00 pm

Frederic Gaspard Theatre
Theatres B and C
Brodie Centre
Bannatyne Campus

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

For more details go to:
umanitoba.ca/centres/aging/events/

Visionary Conversations

Our Education System:

The Good, The Bad and The Solutions

Engage with our experts as they share their perspectives on our education system and the research that shows why things must change.

May 22

Robert B. Schultz Theatre
St. John's College, Fort Garry Campus

Reception in Galleria 6:30 – 7 pm
Panel discussion 7 – 8:30 pm

Featured speakers:

Jocelyn Fournier-Gawryluk (Alumna) –
President, Canadian Association
of Principals

Marni Brownell – Associate Professor,
Community Health Sciences/ Manitoba
Centre for Health Policy,
Faculty of Medicine

Marlene Atleo – Associate Professor,
Educational Administration, Foundations
and Psychology, Faculty of Education

Rodney Clifton - Senior Scholar and
Retired Fellow, St John's College; Senior
Fellow, Frontier Centre for Public Policy

RSVP to:
visionary.conversations@ad.umanitoba.ca

Zeroing in on the risks

Researcher says we need to better intervene to curb youth homicides, what she calls a major public health issue



Photo By Dan Gwozdz

The U of M's Carolyn Snider, assistant professor in emergency medicine and researcher at the Manitoba Institute of Child Health

BY KATIE CHALMERS-BROOKS For The Bulletin

The boy who the paramedics brought into the emergency department during Carolyn Snider's second year of residency had been paralyzed from the waist down by a gun shot. While she treated him on the trauma floor, the teenager, no older than 15, asked her: would he have to miss much school?

In this moment, Snider—now an ER doctor at Health Science Centre and St. Boniface Hospital—began to seriously question what we hear about young people caught up in violence, that they're hardened and a lost cause.

"Youth I meet in the hospital are often very different than the way they are portrayed in the media. This young man really drove that home. He was a likeable, polite, interesting young man interested in his future. There was a big disconnect between what I had been conditioned to think his violent injury represented and the young man in front of me," says Snider, who joined the U of M two years ago as an assistant professor in emergency medicine and who is also a researcher at the Manitoba Institute of Child Health.

"I now understand that many of my patients are faced with choices I fortunately never had to make—that their decisions are often related to much larger issues such as poverty, housing and personal safety."

They tell her they feel safer joining a gang. They feel protected at first yet are actually putting themselves at greater risk of violence. "These are choices that a young person should never have to make," Snider says.

She recently received funding from the Manitoba Medical Service Foundation to find ways to curb the violence. Snider wants to know what puts young people in Manitoba age 12 to 24 most at risk of getting seriously

hurt or killed at the hands of someone else. Again in 2012, Statistics Canada declared Winnipeg the murder capital of the country, with the highest rate per capita of homicide and violent crime. In addition to the emotional toll, serious injuries cost Manitoba more than \$70 million every year, Snider notes.

Her research will provide policymakers with the top risk—and preventative—factors so they can better strategize solutions. Snider will analyze information using the Population Health Research Data Repository, a comprehensive database stored at the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. With this database, she can make links between the healthcare information of individuals (who are kept anonymous) and factors like their socioeconomic class, education, involvement with Manitoba Justice, and even what their neighborhoods are like.

A similar analysis of risk factors for youth violence has been done in the United States but Snider's study is a first in Canada and goes into much greater depth, given Manitoba has one of the most comprehensive data repositories in the world.

At the Health Sciences Centre, 20 per cent of young people injured by violence are back in the ER within a year, Snider's research shows. She wants to do more than meet the physical needs of these young patients. Her research involves developing and evaluating an intervention program that has support workers, people with "lived experience" like former gang members or community workers, connecting with victims of violence in the hospital and continuing to work with them after their discharged. This model, dubbed WrapAround Care, aims to steer youth down a better path and out of harm.

Snider views youth violence as a chronic, preventable condition and a major

public health issue. "Currently we do nothing more than treat their physical injury," she says. "We expend a lot of effort and money trying to prevent future strokes and heart attacks amongst other patients in our emergency departments. There is no reason why we shouldn't be trying to prevent these repeat visits from youth injured by violence. There is a huge, potential, personal and financial savings to be had."

Many of the victims Snider treats are Aboriginal but she anticipates her research will show that neither race nor ethnicity is a factor when you take into account a person's socioeconomic situation. She insists being Aboriginal should be viewed as a solution and not a cause. Her future research will examine the health benefits of a program that helps Indigenous youth reclaim their culture. Snider is also working with the Winnipeg Gain Action Interagency Network, made up of agencies who deal with youth involved in gangs. Together, they are doing a community assessment to come up with a plan to better target Winnipeg's gang problem.

Social issues have always interested Snider even though she didn't have much exposure, growing up in a middle-class Toronto neighbourhood. She began her career marketing laundry detergent for Procter and Gamble before switching gears and heading to med school. Determined to make a real difference, Snider was set to go overseas to help people in developing countries but then realized the need that exists at home.

When she sees Winnipeg news stories reporting on the latest youth homicide victim, it hits home. "I think about their families. I've given bad news to too many families in the emergency department. These victims have a family who loves them," she says. "But mostly I think: this is preventable."