

# 2020 IALH Student Awards

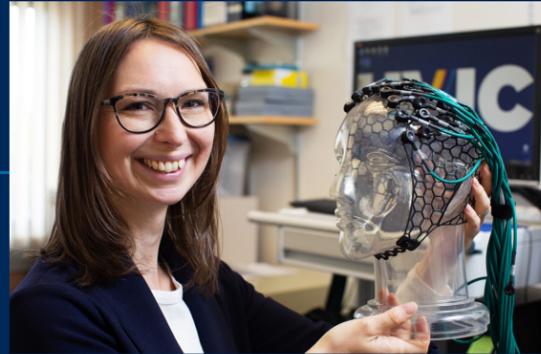


**Matilde Cervantes** (Masters student, Social Dimensions of Health)  
UVic Retirees Association Award - \$1060 - For students whose research is focused on individuals 55 years of age and older

Matty's research interests include aging, intergenerational relationships, and well-being. She is particularly interested in the mental and social health of older adults and their caregivers. As part of her Masters research, Matty has examined the impact participation in an intergenerational choir has had on individuals' psychological and social well-being. In addition to being a Student Affiliate with IALH, Matty is a student member of the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, a student member of the American Psychological Association (APA), and an affiliate with the APA's Division of Adult Development and Aging.

**Jamie Knight** (PhD student, Psychology)  
Ferguson Graduate Research Award in Digital Health - \$9906 - A new award for graduate students whose research is in the area of digital health innovation and application

Olfaction (smell) refers to one's ability to detect airborne volatile chemicals. Olfaction can be used for the early detection of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease as it declines about 10 to 15 years before other symptoms become evident. Jamie will use a new mobile health app (developed by IALH researchers) to investigate a) whether day-to-day monitoring of cognition is sensitive enough to reflect olfactory deficits, and b) whether individuals who had lower baseline (i.e., pre-COVID-19) olfaction are more likely to experience deficits in well-being through COVID-19 (isolation and physical distancing) measures compared to those who had higher baseline olfaction.



**Colleen Lacey** (Masters student, Psychology)  
Alice Lou-Poy Graduate Scholarship - \$750 - For students conducting research on Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia

Colleen's research interests include using neuroimaging and neuropsychological measures to better understand how neurodegenerative processes associated with Alzheimer's disease differ from those seen in healthy aging. The goals of her research include supporting better diagnosis and early intervention and informing strategies to promote health aging. Through her work with community-based older individuals with dementia and their primary caregivers, Colleen has gained insight into some individuals' aging-related challenges as well as factors that may contribute to better aging experiences.

**Nathan Lewis** (PhD student, Psychology)  
Neena Chappell Scholarship - \$1060 - For graduate students conducting research on aging

Nathan's research focuses primarily on understanding factors that promote healthy aging through psychological and cognitive resilience. His research interests cover a wide range of topics from psychological adaptation to significant life events such as retirement or the onset of a serious health condition, to the influence of cardiovascular and immune markers on cognitive functioning and decline. His PhD research, which is supported by the Alzheimer's Society of Canada, is focused on the potential for mental stimulation across the lifespan to promote resilience to cognitive impairment.



**Cindy McDowell** (Masters student, Psychology)  
PBC Health Benefits Society Scholarship in Lifelong Health - \$15,000 - A new award for graduate students whose research is looking at innovations in digital health, well-being and/or cognitive health

In the absence of a cure, lifestyle interventions are urgently needed to complement pharmaceutical treatment and support living well with dementia. The majority of lifestyle intervention studies assess between-group differences, typically assessing performance from a single occasion. Cindy's research project will use a longitudinal, within-person design to explore how a virtual socio-cognitive intervention (i.e., participation in an intergenerational choir) may affect both cognitive function and psycho-social well-being in individuals with dementia.

**Ashleigh Parker** (PhD student, Psychology)  
Dr. David Chuenyan Lai Scholarship - \$790 - For graduate students conducting research on aging whose supervisor is also affiliated with IALH

Individuals with subjective cognitive decline, who self-report changes in cognition but are within the normal range on neuropsychological tests, are thought to be at the earliest point in the continuum between healthy aging and dementia. Although neuropsychological measures are not sensitive to cognitive changes in these individuals, physiologically based measures may be more informative. Ashleigh's research is investigating relationships between and among structural and functional MRI measures, cognitive functioning, and biomarkers (such as amyloid and hormone levels) in individuals with subjective cognitive decline compared to healthy controls.

