

Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity

Using Implementation Science to Address the Global Mental and Behavioral Health Treatment Gap Among Adolescents and Young Adults

Faculty Mentor: Faith Summersett Williams, Research Assistant Professor, Pediatrics, Feinberg School of Medicine (Chicago Campus)

Project Synopsis: Mental and behavioral health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance use) are the second largest contributor to the global burden of disease among youth and young adults. More specifically, alcohol and other drug (AOD) use is a major problem among youth in sub-Saharan Africa and disproportionately impacts lower income Black communities. Countries like South Africa, transitioning from apartheid to a democracy where the legacies of anti-black violence and striking disparities in mental and behavioral health treatment are ongoing, have an estimated 41% of adolescents using at least one substance in their lifetime. While many promising evidence-based AOD use interventions have been implemented in low- and middle-income countries, their reach and sustainability are often limited. Applying an implementation science approach to global addictions research and practice has the potential to better address the significant gaps in mental and behavioral health service access in sub-Saharan Africa by designing for implementation and sustainment earlier in the process. This project sets out to explore how implementation science processes and approaches can be applied to improve the adoption, reach and sustainment of evidence-based mental and behavioral health interventions among vulnerable populations of youth residing in South Africa. The goal is to ameliorate and undo the effects of historical oppression and trauma by studying the implementation process of accessible AOD use interventions in this context.

To address the problem of limited access to AOD use behavioral health interventions for youth in South Africa, the proposed project centers around three research aims: 1) focus groups with community members in Johannesburg, South Africa, to understand the community's perspectives on AOD use among adolescents, access to behavioral health treatment, and peer-delivered interventions; 2) human- and equity-centered design approaches to adapt Teen Intervene for delivery by peer-clinicians (ages 19 – 22) in school clinics; and 3) pilot randomized control trial to explore the feasibility and acceptability of the adapted Teen Intervene program for adolescents in two community school clinics in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Project Term: Summer + academic year, 2 quarters for 12.5 hours weekly (with 10 weeks in a quarter)

Project Location: Hybrid - One day WFH and the other day in-person in the office (on Thursdays at the Chicago campus) for full team lab meetings

Ideal Applicant: The main duties of this position will be to support the principal investigator (PI) and staff with critical research-related tasks.

Technical

Participate in the planning & conducting of research studies.

- Create recruitment materials (e.g., Canva or other design tools)
- Distribute recruitment materials
- Manage IRB submissions and documents
- Manage standard operation of procedures

Administration

- Work with the PI to execute and organize purchasing needs for the stud
- Assist in study organization responsibilities
- Setup and manages study databases which may include ensuring that data is collected, entered, and coded correctly (familiar with RedCap or other data management tools)
- Co-lead journal article discussion

Communication, Outreach & Recruitment

- Assist with email and telephone communication with clinical and community partners
- Engage in outreach/field relations serving a number of goals, including recruitment, participation, relationship building, etc. to support continued program/project development & improvement.
- Draft emails on behalf of the PI

Additional duties may be assigned on an as needed basis.

Completes all activities by strictly following Good Clinical Practices (GCP) & all relevant current local, state, & federal laws, regulations, guidance, policy & procedure developed by the Lurie Children's Hospital Institutional Review Board (IRB), Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute's Scientific Review Committee.

Number of Available Positions: Two

