

Natalie Scime



Biography

Natalie Scime is a PhD student in Epidemiology at the University of Calgary, studying under the supervision of Dr. Suzanne Tough and Dr. Kathleen Chaput. She is a trainee with the All Our Families pregnancy cohort study and the Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute. Natalie also works as a Consultant with the Maternal Newborn Child & Youth Strategic Clinical Network on knowledge translation projects to improve the quality of prenatal care across Alberta. Natalie previously completed her Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences and Master's degree in Health Promotion at Western University.

Natalie is passionate about maternal and child health, and her research focuses on women and babies with medical complications during the perinatal period. Specifically, her PhD thesis will examine breastfeeding in women with high-risk pregnancies. By merging quantitative data on breastfeeding goals and outcomes with qualitative data on breastfeeding experiences, Natalie aims to provide rich and detailed insight into how we can optimally support this population of mothers. She also plans to engage a stakeholder committee of clinicians, policy-makers, and women with lived experiences throughout her research.

Project Summary

Breastfeeding and medically high-risk pregnancy: A mixed methods approach to examining feeding intentions, experiences, support, and outcomes

Optimal breastfeeding protects women and infants against numerous acute and chronic diseases, yet three quarters of Canadian mothers do not meet the global recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding from birth to six months. In Canada, approximately one in four pregnant women have high-risk medical complications, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or pre-existing conditions. These women are less likely to plan to breastfeed, to begin breastfeeding after birth, and to continue exclusive breastfeeding until six months compared to low-risk pregnant women. This is worrisome

because a high-risk pregnancy often leads to the delivery of a preterm or sick infant, and breastfeeding plays an important role in protecting the survival and health of these newborns. Explanations for suboptimal breastfeeding behaviours among women with high-risk pregnancies are lacking, which makes it impossible to effectively address this problem. This research will examine the breastfeeding goals of women with high-risk pregnancies and the reasons behind these goals. We will track whether mothers begin and continue breastfeeding, as well as explore their breastfeeding experiences and perceptions of support.

Finally, we will identify what factors positively or negatively influence the achievement of breastfeeding goals among mothers, which may include demographic or social characteristics, delivery outcomes, and breastfeeding experiences. We can use these findings to collaborate with health professionals and program planners in developing education and supports that facilitate successful breastfeeding after a high-risk pregnancy. Ultimately, this research will be instrumental in improving the number of high-risk women and their infants who receive the lifelong health benefits of breastfeeding.