

DECEMBER ABSPORU UPDATE

Jan. 3, 2018

AbSPORU Graduate Studentships: Recipient uses POR project to develop real-world skills

On December 19 we announced the results of our October 2017 [Alberta SPOR Graduate Studentship competition](#). Ten Alberta SPOR Graduate Studentships were awarded, seven to the University of Calgary and three to the University of Alberta. You can view the full list of successful applicants [here](#). The AbSPORU Graduate Studentships provides opportunities to individuals enrolled in a thesis-based Master's or PhD program at an Alberta university to undertake health-related research with a patient-oriented approach.



Danielle Whittier (University of Calgary) 2016

AbSPORU Graduate Studentship recipient

In early 2017, [Danielle Whittier](#) was awarded one such studentship. Danielle finished an engineering degree and wanted to find a career that aligned with her personal interests. She joined the Bone Imaging Laboratory at the University of Calgary to pursue her Master's in Biomedical Engineering. She strives to bring a patient-oriented approach to her research and the laboratory setting. She is investigating the correlation between hip fractures and bone microstructure in hopes of developing better screening technique for osteoporosis for her thesis project. Danielle maintains, "the AbSPORU Graduate Studentship allowed me to think about health research from a new perspective, specifically from the end user's, or patient's, point of view. This mindset extended beyond the lab for me and makes an even broader impact in how we do research. It helped me in developing and co-founding [Innovation 4 Health](#), a student-led initiative, which pairs teams of research trainees with real-world health care problems, and supports these teams to work alongside clinicians and patients to design working solutions in a very short period of time."

The Pragmatic Clinical Trials Certificate Program – focus on a participant: Olesja Hazenbiller

When [Olesja Hazenbiller](#) learned of the [Pragmatic Clinical Trials Certificate Program](#), the timing was ideal. She is a student working as a clinical research coordinator on multiple trials for bone and sarcoma cancers. “We are developing a patient orientated review project and wanted to know how to better achieve meaningful engagement through clinical trial with a patient focus,” says Olesja. As one of the first cohorts and one of the 20 learners who participated in the Program, Olesja took away a better understanding of her role as a research coordinator and the importance of patient orientated research. “If I were to hire someone I would have them enroll in the Program because it’s the best way to learn about it and get an understanding of the full scope of patient orientated research,” says Olesja. Armed with new information, Olesja also worked with her PI to apply for support in their project design through the Alberta SPOR SUPPORT unit’s [Patient Engagement Platform](#). The program targets clinical trials staff and covers federal and provincial regulations, good clinical practice, research ethics, and trial management, with a focus on Alberta-based processes.

AbSPORU: Advancing the strategy for patient-oriented research in 2017

Over the past year, the Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit has seen a lot of accomplishments that have benefited Alberta’s research community and have furthered the goals of Canada’s [Strategy](#) for Patient-Oriented research. Here are just a few highlights from 2017:

- Wait time for data has been reduced to three-four days for the majority of data requests. This is a reduction from months (even years), while boosting our access to 51 databases (up from 37 a year ago).
- Demand for AbSPORU services has increased two-fold as more and more Albertans get to know about AbSPORU and the variety of programs, services, and training & supports we offer.
- More than 55 experts have been recruited across seven platforms to help researchers do patient oriented research and make it happen faster. Ten AbSPORU graduate studentships were also awarded in December.

We couldn’t have made this happen without our strong academic partners at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge and Athabasca University and our health system partners at Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services. More work needs to be done but we’re in an excellent position to continue to build on our success in the future as we continue our work and grow in 2018.