

## Kara Irwin



### Biography

Kara is a Registered Psychologist with a specialization in trauma and working with clients with complex physical and psychological health co-morbidities. She has experience as a Psychologist in private practice, not for profit, and government sectors.

Kara attended the University of Calgary as an undergraduate completing a BA honors degree in psychology and a BA with distinction in international development studies. Her master's education in Clinical Psychology was also completed at the University of Calgary. Her work with complex patients at the East Calgary Family Care Clinic prompted her return to school in 2017 to complete a PhD in Health Services Research, which is currently in progress. She is working in collaboration with the University of Calgary and the East Calgary Family Care Clinic to develop and implement chronic disease management that is effective and appropriate for clients with diabetes and a history of psychological trauma.

Kara's goal is for her current research to support clients with psychological trauma and diabetes, act as a launching pad for a model of health care delivery that is trauma informed. She is passionate about meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, supporting health care providers in maximizing skill, and prompting the health care system to strive for best practices for its population.

### Project Summary

#### *Diabetes Management for Patients with a History of Psychological Trauma*

Background: Data from the Government of Canada indicates that in 2013/14, 8.1% of Canadians were living with diagnosed diabetes (Public Health Agency, 2017, Diabetes in Canada: Highlights from the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System) and that prevalence of diabetes increased 70% from 1998/99 to 2008/09 (Public Health Agency, 2011, Diabetes in Canada: Facts and figures from a public health perspective). These statistics and the implications for poor health, poor quality

of life, and mortality are concerning given that there are many modifiable risk factors and management approaches for diabetes; indicating that current understanding of prevention and management of diabetes may be missing an important component.

**Purpose:** Identify health systems interventions that acknowledge and address psychological trauma, resulting in improved outcomes for patients with diabetes.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional association study will be completed with psychological trauma as the exposure variable and diabetes control as the disease variable. A systematic literature review will be completed to identify interventions proposed for diabetes management in the setting of comorbid psychological trauma. A weighted criteria matrix will be applied to the articles from the literature review to prioritize recommendations important for developing the intervention. The themes determined from the literature review will be amplified by engaging clients and healthcare providers in designing interventions through human-centered co-design.

**Outcomes:** The foundation of knowledge from the cross-sectional association study, literature review, focus groups, and interviews will then be used to design an intervention program to address both the mental health and physical health needs of ECFCC clients who have comorbid psychological trauma and diabetes.