Clinical Psychology PhD student Mike Best captures first place in Queen’s University’s 3 Minute Thesis Final

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Best wins with his presentation: Neurophysiological Biases Towards People with Schizophrenia

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Clinical Psychology PhD student Mike Best won first place in Queen’s University’s 3 Minute Thesis Final with his presentation: Neurophysiological Biases Towards People with Schizophrenia. Mike competed against 10 other graduate students in the finals of the competition that required participants to clearly explain their research in three minutes or less and using only one slide.

“The skills required to succinctly present research to a non-specialist audience are extremely valuable in the academic community and this was a great opportunity to work on developing those skills.” Mike said. “The competition provides a great platform to disseminate your research to a broader audience at the university, and I would highly recommend the competition to anyone considering it in the future.”

Mike’s M.Sc. thesis used EEG techniques to examine neurophysiological responses to atypical speech as a function of whether the listener believed the speaker currently, or previously, had a diagnosis of schizophrenia. His findings suggested that people have an automatic bias to disengage from processing speech, as early as 400ms after hearing it, when they believe the speaker has ever had a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

“The social exclusion of people with schizophrenia can make it difficult for people to make friends and find employment, and can be a major barrier to recovery.” Mike explained. “Stigmatizing attitudes are commonly cited as a factor that can lead to individuals with schizophrenia being excluded, but my thesis showed that people also have more automatic biases towards those with schizophrenia which may represent a distinct pathway leading to exclusion. Understanding these automatic biases using objective measurement tools, such as the neurophysiological processing of speech, is an important step to understanding why people with schizophrenia are socially excluded. The next step for this line of research is to develop strategies to reduce these automatic biases in order to reduce the exclusion that people with schizophrenia face.”

Mike will compete in the Ontario 3 Minute Thesis Competition on April 24th at McMaster University.

If you missed the Queen’s competition the videos of all finalists will be posted on the Queen’s 3MT website after the Ontario competition, and you can check out Mike’s interview on CKWS Live @ 5.