Queen's Psychology students earn Vanier scholarships

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Five Queen's University doctoral students have earned Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships designed to help Canadian institutions attract and retain highly qualified doctoral students. The five winners' areas of study include breast and lung cancer, exercise training programs, pre-cancerous cells, emotions, and persistent genital arousal disorder. The scholarships provide each student with $50,000 per year for three years during their doctoral studies.

"These are Canada's most prestigious awards for doctoral students and they will put these young scholars on solid footing for future research success," says Brenda Brouwer, Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies. "Our five new Vanier Scholars have shown their tremendous research potential. They are also role models for other students at Queen's, and will mentor their colleagues and peers. We congratulate them on their success."

This year's recipients include:

Kalee De France - Ms. De France is exploring emotions and how individuals learn to regulate emotions in order to operate in line with social norms and to prevent emotions from impeding social and academic functioning. She is exploring three questions: what are the differences in regulation across adolescence; what external mechanisms are responsible for this change; how do changes in adolescent emotion regulation relate to well-being. Ms. De France is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Robyn Jackowich - The main goal of Ms. Jackowich's study is to improve our understanding of the complex nature of persistent genital arousal disorder by examining psychosocial function, sensory characteristics (including sensitivity to touch and heat), and blood flow processes in a controlled study framed by the biopsychosocial perspective. She is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Taha Azad - Mr. Azad has developed a light emission-based biosensor tool to detect interactions between proteins involved in Hippo signaling. The Hippo signaling pathway is involved in restraining cell proliferation. The tool allows the discovery of regulators, which are capable of promoting cancer cell proliferation and metastasis. Mr. Azad is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Elina Cook - Ms. Cook's work aims to enable earlier surveillance and treatment for blood cancer development in the elderly. For Canada's aging population, this may facilitate a shift toward more targeted, preventative medicine. Additionally, this means that aggressive, often unsuccessful cancer therapies could be avoided in an already frail population, which would improve individuals' quality of life and the healthcare burden overall. Ms. Cook is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Jacob Bonafiglia - Mr. Bonafiglia and his supervisor Brendon Gurd (Kinesiology and Health Studies) are exploring genetic responses to acute exercise, skeletal muscle responses to training, and the use of progressive statistics to characterize individual exercise responses and better understand the potential of non-responders. Mr. Bonafiglia is funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

The Government of Canada awards up to 167 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships each year for highly qualified doctoral students who demonstrate academic excellence, research potential, and leadership. For more information on the awards and this year's winners, visit the federal government's website.

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