

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Alberta Researcher Wins National Award for Work on FASD Diagnosis**

(March 8, 2023) Danielle Johnston from the University of Alberta has been given the Dr. Sterling Clarren FASD Research Award for her work on identifying motor impairments in children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

#### ***About the award recipient***

Johnston is an Occupational Therapist. She currently works on a team to assess and diagnose individuals for FASD. This research is part of her PhD at the University of Alberta. It is currently unpublished.

#### ***FASD diagnosis and assessment***

Exposure to alcohol before birth has numerous impacts on the brain and body, including impairments in visual motor skills. Diagnosing FASD is complex, involving testing for impairment in several different domains, including motor function.

Johnston's research specifically explored the tests that clinicians use to assess motor function during the FASD diagnostic process. She and her team found that one of the commonly used tests may not be sensitive enough to accurately diagnose FASD and provide appropriate supports in every case. Her research has major implications for FASD diagnosis both nationally and internationally. This research is currently unpublished.

#### ***Dr. Sterling Clarren FASD Research Award***

Awarded annually by the Canada FASD Research Network, the Dr. Sterling Clarren FASD Research Award recognizes researchers that make a significant contribution to the field of FASD. This national prize honors Dr. Sterling Clarren, a pioneer in the field. Its goal is to celebrate and encourage students and early career researchers who are contributing to the future of FASD research. This is the ninth year of the FASD Research Award.

#### **Quotes:**

*“As a clinical Occupational Therapist working on an FASD diagnostic team, I participated in diagnostic training provided by the University of Washington. During that training, I was*

*privileged to meet Dr. Clarren. I continue to be inspired by his dedication as a leader in the field of FASD diagnostics.”*

**Danielle Johnston, Dr. Sterling Clarren FASD Award 2023 Recipient**

**About CanFASD:**

*CanFASD is Canada’s first national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. CanFASD works collaboratively with researchers and partners across the nation to address complexities of FASD. Our mission is to produce and maintain national, collaborative research for all Canadians, leading to prevention strategies and improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.*

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