CLSA Approved Project

Applicant
Dr. Megan O'Connell, University of Saskatchewan
Trainee: Meghan Flath

E-mail Address
megan.oconnell@usask.ca

Project Title
The Impact of Pet Ownership, Social Support, Social Isolation, and Loneliness on Cognition and Depressive Symptoms in Older Adults

Project Summary
Social isolation and loneliness are prevalent within the aging population and have a prominent, negative impact on individuals' mental health, physical health, and overall well-being. Loneliness and social isolation are associated with depression and decreased cognitive functioning, but it is unclear whether human-animal interaction improves older adults' depressive symptoms and cognitive functioning. This study will use Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) data to explore the relationships between pet ownership and cognition, as well as pet ownership and depression in older adults. We will then investigate whether loneliness and social support serve as mediators, and social isolation as a moderator, in these relationships. The overarching purpose is to explore whether human-animal interaction is an important socialization factor that impacts older adults' depressive symptoms and cognitive functioning.

Keywords
Loneliness, Cognition, Depression, Older adults, Pet ownership