

Focus on Faculty #11

Melissa Henry



[Dr. Melissa Henry](#) is a FRQS Clinician-Scientist at the Lady-Davis Institute for Medical Research and a clinician at the Segal Cancer Centre and Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery of the Jewish General Hospital. She is an Assistant Professor at McGill University in the Departments of Oncology and Psychology, as well as an Associate Member in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery.

Dr. Henry pursued her postdoctoral studies under the mentorship of Dr. S. Robin Cohen, a Professor in the Departments of Oncology and Medicine. Based on her postdoctoral work, Dr. Henry received funding from CIHR (along with co-PI Dr. Cohen) both for a pilot (2012-2013) and then a full randomized controlled trial (2015-2020) of the Meaning-Making intervention (MMi; Lee 2004) to help people re-adjust to a newly diagnosed advanced cancer.

Dr. Henry's research program focuses on developing, implementing, and evaluating psychosocial interventions designed to improve quality of life in patients with advanced cancer, more particularly in the field of head and neck oncology. She is mainly interested in preventing long-term psychological distress trajectories and promoting health through thoughtfully planned early interventions, based on sound modeling including translational research combining the fields of psychology, oncology, and most recently genetics.

Her FRQS study entitled *Building a solid knowledge foundation: A research program to innovate psychosocial care and reduce health care costs for head and neck cancer patients* builds on her previous studies underlining the need for interventions to address the overwhelming presence of unmet psychological needs in head and neck cancer (HNC) patients. This research program aims at identifying trajectories of psychological compromise, including gene-environment interactions as predictors, and an investigation of depression and anxiety disorders, health behaviour change, body image concerns, suicidality, and quality of life. Given the paucity of literature on determinants of HNC patients' psychological quality of life, it becomes necessary to investigate them as a first step in identifying the main ingredients to include in interventions geared towards

improving quality of life and reducing health care costs in this population.

As part of her research program, Dr. Henry, her co-PI Dr. Ana Maria Rodriguez and the McGill ENT Department have developed, based on FDA Guidelines and in collaboration with international experts in the field, the McGill Body Image Concern Scale (MBICS) for use in head and neck oncology.

Dr. Henry is also PI of a study funded by Genzyme, entitled *Developing, implementing, and evaluating a novel interdisciplinary team-based approach (ITCA-ThyCa) for newly diagnosed thyroid cancer patients*. Through this study, she has led the implementation of an interdisciplinary team for thyroid cancer patients at the Jewish General Hospital. This program has contributed to increasing quality of life and of care for thyroid cancer patients, a population previously treated using a strictly medical model involving the disciplines of ENT, endocrinology, and nuclear medicine.

Apart from her endeavours in oncology, Dr. Henry is passionate about her family and friends, playing the violin, training, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, and the arts. She is always in search of new challenges and pursuits.

We asked Dr. Henry to list a few of her articles whose work she is particularly proud of or enjoyed the most. This is what she provided:

Henry, M., Habib, L.A., Morrison, M., Yang, J.W., Xuejiao, J.L., Liu, S., Hier, M., Mlynarek, A., Payne, R.J., MacDonald, C., Kost, K., Zeitouni, A. & Black, M. (2014). Head and neck cancer patients want us to support them psychologically in the post-treatment period: Survey results. *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 12(6), 481-493.

Henry, M., Ho, A., Lambert, S., Carnevale, F., Greenfield, B., MacDonald, C., Mlynarek, A., Zeitouni, A., Rosberger, Z., Hier, M., Black, M., Kost, K. & Frenkiel, S. (2014). Looking beyond disfigurement: The experience of patients with head and neck cancer. *Journal of Palliative Care*, 30(1), 5-15.

Henry, M., Cohen, R., Lee, V., Sauthier, P., Provencher, D., Drouin, P., Gauthier, P., Gotlieb, W., Lau, S., Drummond, N., Gilbert, L., Stanimir, G., Sturgeon, J., Chasen, M., Mitchell, J., Huang, L.N., Ferland, M.-K. & Mayo, N. (2010). The Meaning-Making intervention (MMi) appears to increase meaning in life in advanced ovarian cancer: A randomized controlled pilot study. *Psycho-Oncology*, 19(12), 1340-1347.