

Focus on Faculty #39

Annett Körner



Dr. Annett Körner is an Associate Professor in McGill's Counselling Psychology Program and Associate Member of the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology. She holds appointments as Research Associate at the Lady Davis Institute, the Segal Cancer Centre, and the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC).

Dr. Körner completed her training in clinical and health psychology at the University of Leipzig, Germany, and the Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital (JGH). The latter was only possible because the unthinkable happened: THE GERMAN WALL CAME DOWN! Now, she could go backpacking across Canada and study psychology at Germany's 2nd oldest university – founded in 1409. Dr. Körner used North-American research methods in her dissertation on operationalizing the psychoanalytic concept of transference and this brought her to the psychotherapy research unit at the JGH. Here she was also trained in assessing defense mechanism, rating wishes and fears according to Erikson's stages of psychosocial development and evaluating psychotherapeutic interventions.

Before moving permanently to Quebec, Dr. Körner practiced as a licensed psychologist in the departments of psychosomatic medicine at the universities of Leipzig and Freiburg, Germany. At the Medical Centre of the University Freiburg, Dr. Körner specialized in psycho-dermatological services providing crisis-intervention, counselling and psychotherapy to patients with skin conditions, especially melanoma.

In Canada, Dr. Körner provided expert advice to the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC), a national agency focusing on cancer prevention, enhancing patients' quality of life, and decreasing cancer mortality. As a member of CPAC's Cancer Journey Action Group, instituted in 2008, Dr. Körner was involved in the development of a national strategy for cancer patients' access to information and supportive care services throughout the illness trajectory.

At McGill University, Dr. Körner established a program of research examining psychosocial aspects of melanoma follow-up care, which includes secondary prevention through early detection

via skin self-examination. Her research seeks to better understand barriers and facilitators of health-protective behaviours, inherent self-regulation processes and interpersonal factors, such as physician and partner support, in order to develop more effective prevention strategies that facilitate the sustained practice of skin self-exams in individuals at high risk for melanoma. In collaboration with Dr. Alan Geller from the Harvard School of Public Health, her team is currently deciphering potential differences in preventive health behaviours related to the early detection of nodular versus superficial spreading melanoma.

Together with her colleagues from the MUHC and the JGH, Dr. Körner is working on self-help coping interventions as a low-cost treatment component within a stepped care model of supportive cancer care services that promote empowerment and psychological well-being in the face of life-threatening and chronic illness. This is in line with her interest in clinical practice guidelines in psycho-oncology: their quality, accessibility, and use by health care professionals.

Last but not least, Dr. Körner is a passionate teacher and supervisor of her masters and doctoral students and has mentored numerous undergraduate research volunteers.

In her spare time, Dr. Körner loves making German bread and even brought her grain mill when moving to Canada. Admittedly, not much rye has been ground in the past 10 years. Instead she enjoyed spending time with her children, skiing with her husband, going dancing with friends, and always waiting impatiently for the next novel by John Irving.

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

Körner, A., Roberts, N., Steele, R. J., Brosseau, D. C., & Rosberger, Z. (2018). A randomized controlled trial assessing the efficacy of a self-administered psycho-educational intervention for patients with cancer. *Manuscript submitted for publication.*

Czajkowska, Z., Hall, N. C., Sewitch, M., Wang, B., & **Körner, A.** (2017). The role of patient education and physician support in self-efficacy for skin self-examination among patients with melanoma. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 100(8), 1505-1510.

Drapeau, M., & **Körner, A.** (2017). La psychothérapie et les données probantes: quelques enjeux [Evidence-based psychotherapy: Some challenges]. *Le journal des psychologues*, 345(3), 28-32.

Körner, A., Coroiu, A., Copeland, L., Albani, C., Gomez-Garibello, C., Zenger, M., & Brähler, E. (2015). The role of self-compassion in buffering symptoms of depression in the general population. *PLoS ONE*, 10(10), e0136598. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0136598