

# Dr Jane Murphy, Herman Schaalma Awardee: A snapshot of my research journey so far!

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I was honoured to receive the Herman Schaalma Award for best PhD in terms of originality, significance and, rigour at the 37th Annual Conference of the EHPS in Bremen, 2023. I have attended the conference every year since starting my PhD in 2017 including as a member of the CREATE executive committee. In this article I will provide a brief overview of my research journey to date, including a recent career move from academia to health policy research.

My research journey that led to this achievement started at the University of Galway where I completed my undergraduate degree, and MSc and PhD in Health Psychology. My PhD thesis focused on digital health interventions to support medication adherence in young adults living with asthma, which I finished in 2021. I was also fortunate to receive the Psychological Society of Ireland Division of Health Psychology Ruth Curtis Excellence in Research Award for this work in 2021. My supervisory team were excellent, and a huge contributing factor to any acknowledgements of my PhD work and my research career so far.

My key interests from my PhD experience were health behaviour, intervention development, and evidence synthesis. I initially decided to pursue a career in academia and began my first postdoctoral role on the SEURO project in Trinity College Dublin. SEURO is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project which aims to scale up a digital health platform for delivery across Europe. The digital health platform aims to support older adults living with multimorbidity to self-manage their health. My specific role within the project involved leading a

behavioural science work package which focused on developing a checklist of the key steps to consider when developing and evaluating a digital health behaviour change intervention. I was invested in this work as I understood from my PhD how challenging developing and evaluating these interventions can be. However, I also wanted to gain skills in the real-world implementation of health interventions, beyond their development and evaluation.

This interest led me to a new postdoctoral role on the CUSTOMISE study at University College Cork. In this role I led a mixed methods evaluation of tailoring approaches to enhance the implementation of an education programme for people living with type 1 diabetes with healthcare providers in 12 hospitals across Ireland. In addition, I worked on two evidence synthesis reviews in this role. Firstly, I led a scoping review to characterise the processes and outcomes of tailoring the implementation of evidence-based interventions into healthcare. Secondly, I contributed to an update of a Cochrane systematic review on tailored interventions to address determinants of healthcare professional practice. My experience working in this role highlighted two of my main research interests that were pivotal in my research career: completing evidence syntheses and supporting the formal implementation of evidence-based research into policy and practice to improve healthcare and health services.

Collectively, these interests brought me to my current post as a research officer in health policy in the Health Research Board (HRB) Evidence Centre in Ireland. The HRB is a State Agency under the Department of Health in Ireland, who support

and fund health and social care research and provide evidence to inform policy and practice. The Evidence Centre within the HRB conducts evidence syntheses commissioned by the Department of Health to inform health policy. These products include systematic reviews and evidence briefs on a range of policy relevant topics such as the efficacy and safety of medicinal cannabis, performance indicators in palliative care, safety and effectiveness of remote hospital digital triage, and the orthodontic policies and services in other countries. I'm currently leading an evidence and gap map review of interventions targeting women's health outcomes in high income countries. The aim of this review is to identify the available evidence and evidence gaps in this area of women's health – watch this space!

My current role requires me to learn and apply a range of synthesis skills to the health topic at hand, along with communicating and working with policy makers to identify exactly why they want a specific evidence product and what the findings will be used for (e.g. to inform health services, identify research areas in need of funding). I'm finding working in a health policy setting stimulating given the breadth of skills and knowledge it requires and extremely rewarding to see the value of evidence-based research and its translation into policy and practice. Having a health psychology background is extremely conducive to this role, in relation to both research skills and methodology, and understanding health interventions and services.

I plan to continue attending and presenting findings from my work in the HRB at the annual EHPS conferences and would be happy to share any further insights on moving from academia to policy that may be of interest to others.



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