



▶ BUILDING CAPACITY FOR APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH IN THE PROVINCE



▶ ENCOURAGING NETWORKING AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN RESEARCHERS



▶ HELPING INCORPORATE THE USE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

NLCAHR

Annual Report 2006-2007

A REPORT FROM THE NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR CENTRE FOR APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH

Message From The Chair of the Board

This has been another busy and productive year for NLCAHR. From my perspective, this year's calendar of activities featured three especially significant developments. The first was the drafting of a new Strategic Plan, its discussion at the Annual Stakeholder Forum in March, and the adoption of an amended version by the Board after that. The new plan covers five years rather than three as was the case with the Centre's previous plan. The Board felt, and the Stakeholders agreed, that three years was too short a period to use for effective planning, implementation and evaluation for an organization such as NLCAHR.

The second highlight of the year, for me as a specialist in rural health issues, was the research symposium on collaborative health research in Labrador that NLCAHR co-sponsored in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The symposium brought to-

gether an unusual mix of academics, healthcare providers, policy makers and community representatives, including Labrador's aboriginal communities. The presentations and discussions were extremely interesting and will, I hope, lead to the development of research teams and projects on a range of important questions of direct concern to the peoples and community organizations of Labrador.

The final development I would like to highlight has been the success the Centre has experienced with a novel form of collaborative tool—the 'affinity group.' Last year, we created the first such group to bring together researchers and researchers interested in rural, northern and aboriginal health issues. This year, three more affinity groups have emerged: in applied genetics and genomics; in aging, in gender and health; and in quantitative methodology in health research. These



Dr. James Rourke, Chair of the Board

groups meet two or three times a year, and more frequently in some cases, and allow people with similar interests and concerns to get to know one another better, to become better informed about the issues that are being studied, to learn more about ongoing, and planned activities in research and knowledge exchange, and to develop new partnerships.

NLCAHR Annual Stakeholder Forum

NLCAHR's annual Stakeholder Forum was held on March 8 at the Fairmont Hotel in St. John's. A large group comprised of researchers, policy makers, health care providers, graduate students, and others with a vested interest in applied health research reviewed the recent activities of the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research and its affiliated researchers, to learn about the research needs of the province's health care system, and to plan the coming year of research and knowledge exchange. In addition, the recently devised

5-year strategic plan was presented to the group to receive their feedback on the plan before it is implemented.

The day began with a welcome by Dr. James Rourke, Chair of the Board of the Centre and Dean of Medicine, MUN. The remainder of the Forum was divided into four parts: the Director's report and feedback session on the Centre's Strategic Plan; a presentation on Phase One of the Bell Island Community Needs Assessment; a panel presentation and discussion on the research needs of

the health care system; and a series of research "speed meetings," where NLCAHR-funded researchers gave short presentations on their work.

Following the Stakeholders Forum, a web-based survey was distributed to registered attendees, for evaluation and feedback purposes. Response was overall very positive, with 68% of respondents rating the day as "very good."

A complete report from NLCAHR's 2007 Stakeholder Forum and selected presentations from the forum are available on our website.

Capacity Building, Networking, and Exchange

Aside from funding programs, NLCAHR aims to increase capacity, networking and exchange in the field of applied health research. In 2006-2007, there were a number of activities aimed at fulfilling this portion of NLCAHR's Mandate.

One of the most successful initiatives of this past year for NLCAHR has been our Research Affinity Group series, which brings together, on a regular basis, researchers who share a common interest in key areas under the domain of applied health research. Building on our initial research affinity group on Rural, Northern and Aboriginal Health formed in 2005, the Centre formed four additional research affinity groups; Women's Health/Gender and Health, Quantitative Analysis in Applied Health Research, Applied Genetics, and Qualitative Health Research. These groups have produced very positive feedback from participants, and provides valuable networking opportunities.

In November of 2006, NLCAHR coordinated its second 'Grant Writing Workshop,' targeted at those inexperienced in applying for research funding. Attendance for this day and a half workshop was excellent, with over 35 participants. Feedback from this workshop, collected through an online survey, was very positive, with nearly all respondents rating the session as "excellent." NLCAHR will coordinate a third workshop of this kind in the coming year, once again increasing the capacity of researchers and support staff to produce high-quality funding proposals to secure funding.

To provide increased support for new applied health researchers in Newfoundland and Labrador, NLCAHR began the 'Applied Health Researcher Program' in early 2007. As part of this program, researchers are able to obtain access to research advising/mentorship, proposal pre-review, research roundtable luncheons and grantsmanship training activities.

In addition to these activities, we are continually developing the NLCAHR website to act as a 'clearinghouse' of information for interested researchers, providing detailed information on funding opportunities, upcoming conferences, and dissemination of information important to our stakeholders.

Increasing the Capacity of Applied Health Researchers

Supporting excellent research and building local research capacity

NLCAHR's mission is to contribute to the effectiveness of the health and community services system of Newfoundland and Labrador and to the physical, social, and psychological health and well-being of the province's population by supporting the development and the use of applied health research in this province. The Centre's funding activities fulfill this mission both directly through the allocation of research grants and fellowships and indirectly by helping attract funding from external granting agencies.

The Centre's research funding activities support research initiated by investigators residing in Newfoundland and Labrador. We offer three types of research grant: Development Grants, Project Grants and CIHR-sponsored "Partnership for Health System Improvement (PHSI) Grants" that we co-sponsor using funds from the province's Industrial Research and Innovation Fund. This past year's competition yielded 5 successful applications; two development grants, two project grants, and one PHSI grant.

2006 DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

"Parenting and Outcomes: A proposal for development and evaluation"

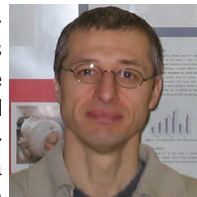
DIANA GUSTAFSON

"Effects of intermittent normobaric hypoxia on weight loss in young, moderately obese people"

FABIAN BASSETT

NLCAHR Development Grants of up to \$10,000 serve as a springboard to develop larger research proposals and to help make previous grant proposals more competitive in national funding competitions.

One of this past year's Development Grant recipients was Dr. Fabian Bassett of the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation. His research examines the effects of hypoxia (lower than normal oxygen concentration in breathing air) on weight loss in young, moderately obese people. Dr. Bassett is testing the hypothesis that this form of intervention/therapy could improve activity levels, metabolic rate, and lipid metabolism, possibly leading to a new treatment for obesity.



Fabian Bassett

Project Grants of up to \$40,000 are designed to support small research projects of high scientific quality that may not be eligible for funding from

external sources and that are of direct relevance to the mandate and priorities of the Centre.



Andria Jones

Dr. Andria Jones of the Division of Community Health and Humanities in the Faculty of Medicine received one of two Project Grants offered by NLCAHR in 2006-2007. Her research is on the public's perception of drinking water from private water supplies. Dr. Jones hopes her work will address the current deficiency in knowledge relating to drinking water in the province and facilitate evidence-based decision making in the public sector while potentially helping to increase testing of private water supplies and alleviate residents' concerns. Despite the frequency of boil-water orders and water-borne epidemics, research in the area is limited., Dr. Jones was hired by MUN in 1995 and thus awarding her a grant fits with NLCAHR's mandated focus on 'new' researchers.

2006 PROJECT GRANTS

"The Public Perception of Drinking Water from Private Water Supplies in Newfoundland and Labrador"

ANDRIA JONES

"Does treadmill exercise enhance performance of cognitive and upper extremity tasks in patients with chronic stroke?"

MICHELLE PLOUGHMAN

NLCAHR also committed to co-funding a PHSI grant application in 2006-2007. Dr. Maria Mathews, of the Division of Community Health and Humanities in the Faculty of Medicine, submitted a successful PHSI grant application in 2006, entitled "Retention of Locally Trained Medical Graduates in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador." NLCAHR will co-fund this project for three years, committing a total of \$17,554 to this project.

2006 PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT GRANT

"Retention of Locally Trained Medical Graduates in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador"

MARIA MATHEWS

Copies of reports on the research projects funded by NLCAHR as posted on the Centre's website, along with regularly updated descriptions of funding and professional development opportunities and a complete list of NLCAHR-funded researchers.

Fellowships Support Upcoming Applied Health Researchers

NLCAHR's mandate includes providing support to Newfoundland and Labrador-based graduate students through the allocation of fellowships

NLCAHR's fellowship funding helps keep the brightest young researchers in the province and encourages them to work on health issues of importance to this province's population. NLCAHR provides three types of fellowship: Master's, Doctoral, and Post-Doctoral. In 2006, NLCAHR awarded two Master's and three Doctoral Fellowships; this represents a substantial investment in this province's future researchers. Since 2001, NLCAHR has funded 26 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.



Roxana Vernescu

Roxana Vernescu, a doctoral candidate in the department of Psychology at Memorial University, was one of the successful Doctoral Fellowship applicants in our 2006-2007 competition. Her NLCAHR doctoral fellowship is supporting an inter-

vention study for young children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), both within the St. John's area, and in a coastal Labrador community. The project studies the use of a cognitive-based intervention strategy for attention process training, and represents an innovative contribution to an area of inquiry in which there

2006 DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

"Factors influencing risk perception and safety behaviours in the fibreglass boat-building industry in rural Newfoundland and Labrador"

STACEY WAREHAM

"Attention process training in young children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder"

ROXANA VERNESCU

"Injury prevention: what parents know and what they teach their children"

KELLY WARREN

has been relatively little work to date. Ms. Vernescu is completing her work on this project and is currently considering several possibilities for Post-Doctoral work that will allow her to develop cognitive-based interventions more fully and to examine the effects of self-regulation and overall executive functioning skills training for the FASD population.



Duyen Nguyen

Duyen Nguyen is examining peer victimization of children and adolescents with cleft lip and/or palate as part of her Master's research. Ms. Nguyen, one of two successful Master's Fellowship applicants in 2006-2007, notes that individuals with cleft lip and/or palate are an under-studied population in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her study will examine the well-being and peer victimization of students with cleft lip and/or palate through analyzing facial disfigurement, speech impairment, and social competence. Ms. Nguyen hopes that the results of this study will help inform the intervention process for people with cleft lip and/or palate.

2006 MASTER'S FELLOWSHIPS

"Consumer opinions of municipal drinking water in Newfoundland and Labrador"

KELLY BUTT

"Peer victimization experiences of children and adolescents with cleft lip and/or palate"

DUYEN NGUYEN

For a complete list of fellowship recipients from 2001 to 2006, please see our website: www.nlcahr.mun.ca

Decision-Making and Health Technology Assessment

In 2005, Memorial University and The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research (NLCAHR) received a Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Capacity-building Grant from CCOHTA, recently renamed as the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH).

The funding received from CADTH was used to develop and launch a two-step approach to enhancing the understanding and application of HTA among health decision makers in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The first step in this approach involves two educational programs to support capacity building in HTA: An HTA Executive Training Seminar and a Master's level course in HTA offered through the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University.

The second step to enhance the local application of HTA in health decision making is a one-year pilot program entitled 'The Contextualized HTA Synthesis Program.' In partnership with key health decision makers in the province, HTA topics of relevance to the health care system were identified and prioritized. Three high priority topics have been chosen for the first year of the project. Each topic is formulated as a research question, and then a team of experts finds the best HTA reviews on the question, synthesizes their findings, and contextualizes the results and recommendations so that they are attuned to the characteristics and capacities of the local populations and health organizations. A research team has been constituted for the first synthesis project on the provision of dialysis services in rural and remote populations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The overall goal of these programs is to fill the gaps in the capacity of the province to develop and use HTA as part of the decision-making process in health and community services.

Special events encourage networking

In 2006, NLCAHR participated and funded two important events linking researchers, policy makers and community members. The first of these events saw NLCAHR partnering with the Atlantic Aboriginal Health Research Program (AAHRP) at Dalhousie University to coordinate a three-day workshop entitled "Community Health Research in Labrador: Listening, Learning and Working Together," held in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in May. The purpose and goal of this workshop was to explore and develop

community-university based partnerships for research on the health and wellness of the people of Labrador.

In October, NLCAHR organized a research forum, "Innovations in Genomics Research: Implications for Health Services and Policy," in St. John's. This forum provided an opportunity for local genetics and genomics researchers to profile their research alongside some of Canada's leading researchers in the field. This forum attracted over 100 registrants. The forum

also provided an opportunity for visiting researchers to meet with graduate students with interest in genetics and genomics, as well as to conduct medical ground rounds with Memorial University's School of Medicine.

Both events provided opportunities for dissemination and collaboration not only between researchers, but also with policy makers, community members and graduate students. Reports from both of these events are available on the NLCAHR website.

Message from the Director



Dr. Stephen Bornstein
Director, NLCAHR

In the coming year, NLCAHR will work to begin implementing its new five-year strategic plan as amended following suggestions made at the Stakeholder Forum in March. We will seek to enhance our presence 'beyond the overpass' by increasing the frequency and the quality of our collaboration with the regional health authorities managing services outside the immediate St. John's region. We will concentrate on our 'contextualized research synthesis' programs, both in health technology assessment and in health services and health policy matters, as the best approach for getting the most impact out of our limited resources. We will also continue to emphasize collaborative activities with other research organizations such as the Harris Centre and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, and we will continue to cultivate our relationships at the Atlantic and the national levels as a way of sharing best practices with organizations outside the province and of building linkages that can be used by our stakeholders both in the research community and in the world of policy makers. We will also continue to develop and support 'affinity groups' on new subjects of significance to this province as a way of multiplying synergies among researchers and research users and of supporting the development and the utilization of research in the province's health system.

In addition, during the coming months, the Centre will be developing a new set of activities related to what has been called out "umbrella function," that is, our role to facilitate and coordinate research and knowledge exchange activities in applied health research across the university and the province. At its first meeting following the Stakeholder Forum, the Centre's Board responded to a request from the Deputy Minister of Health and Community Services that the Centre expand its umbrella activities. This will involve three tasks:

- Implementing an inventory, to be updated on a regular basis, of the applied health research being done in Newfoundland and Labrador by individual researchers, teams and centres;
- Monitoring and managing requests for partnerships and funding of research proposals made to the Department of Health and Community Services by Researchers at Memorial; and
- Coordinating the Department's requests for external research work on applied health issues.

Over the summer of 2007, the Centre will be consulting with stakeholders and with leaders of other research centres about the design and implementation of these new activities.

NLCAHR Board

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Dr. Penny Moody-Corbett, Assistant Dean, Research & Graduate Studies (Research Advisory Council Delegate)
Mr. Mike Barron, CEO, Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information
Mr. John Peddle, Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association
Mr. George Tilley, CEO, Eastern Health
Dr. Stephen Bornstein (member ex officio), Director, NLCAHR

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Annette McGrath, Operations and Events Coordinator
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Luke Power, Research Assistant
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