

# **NLCAHR STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **2007-2011**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research was established in September 1999 as a joint venture of the Department of Health and Community Services, the Health Care Corporation of St. John's and Memorial University. Since its inception, the Centre has provided a supportive and facilitating role for applied health research in the province through its grant and awards programs, knowledge transfer and capacity development activities.

A new communications strategy, developed in 2005, helped build the profile of the Centre and its affiliated researchers. Since the launch of the previous Strategic Plan (2004-2006), the Centre has introduced several new capacity enhancement activities, including the Applied Health Researcher support program and Grant-writing workshops, and has taken steps to increase the ability of Newfoundland and Labrador-based researchers to secure research funding in an increasingly competitive federal funding climate.

The Centre has worked to build relationships among researchers through activities such as our new Affinity Group series and knowledge transfer and exchange programs such as symposia and workshops. The Centre has also invested in building relationships between researchers and research users by organizing seminars on health research and policy with the Department of Health and Community Services, and has facilitated various research initiatives by bringing together community stakeholders, decision makers and researchers.

Challenges for the period of this plan include: addressing the disadvantages faced by NL-based researchers in national grant competitions; recruiting and retaining skilled researchers and graduate students at Memorial University; optimizing use of available health data and data platforms; reinforcing collaboration among research organizations and teams; and continuing to enhance relationships among researchers, decision-makers and the public.

### **VISION**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research will be recognized both within this province and across the country as an effective and innovative organization in the field of applied health research and as significant contributor to evidence-informed health decision making.

### **MISSION**

The Centre contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of the health and community service system of Newfoundland and Labrador and to the physical, social, and psychological health and wellbeing of the province's population by supporting the development and the use of applied health research in this province. It works with an inclusive and flexible conception of the term 'applied health research' (see our working definition below) in a spirit of openness to the widest possible range of disciplinary and methodological approaches, and it seeks to collaborate fully with other local, provincial, regional and national organizations that have similar objectives.

## **WHAT WE MEAN BY 'APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCH'**

Applied health research as defined for purposes of funding support by NLCAHR, is work on human individual and population health issues that is intended to have an impact on:

- the health of individuals
- the health of populations and communities
- decisions about government health policy
- health system organization
- healthcare delivery

Applied health research includes work on:

- health and community services and policies
- health systems organization
- population health
- public health
- community health
- epidemiology
- health technology assessment
- knowledge translation
- clinical practices

Projects that consist primarily of biomedical research or clinical drug trials are not considered to be applied health research.

Applied health research involves work in a wide range of disciplines and can be multi-disciplinary and collaborative. It can employ quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodologies. It is designed, unlike local quality assurance studies, to produce findings that can be generalized beyond the specific case or sample being studied.

## **PRIORITY RESEARCH THEMES**

The Centre gives priority to research on themes that are relevant to the needs of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These themes are reviewed at the mid-point of every planning cycle, with input from stakeholders.

The current priority research themes are:

- Population health and health services challenges of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Health promotion and wellness
- Efficiency and effectiveness of the provincial health system

## **THE CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- Our stakeholders include health researchers from other units in the academic community, each with its own priorities, organizational interests and resource challenges; NLCAHR can operate as an umbrella organization to connect and coordinate all health researchers, encourage and facilitate collaboration, and act as a research clearinghouse.
- There is limited funding at the level of the University and the provincial government for research infrastructure, training, and operations and an increasingly competitive federal funding context; in these circumstances, the availability of some targeted funding for applied health research is an important asset.

- Our provincial health system is confronting difficult and costly challenges with limited resources; but it has articulated a clearly-defined and consensually-based set of priorities in the province's strategic health planning documents and these can help guide the Centre to focus its work;
- Decision makers in the province's health system recognize the importance of research-based evidence to inform the decision-making process and the public is also increasingly aware of the need for health research; the challenge is to find better ways to organize ongoing exchange of knowledge between the health system and the research community and between researchers and the public.
- Growing provincial and national administrative databases offer important opportunities for researchers, health care organizations and governments to work together effectively on relevant and significant applied health research.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Centre's work revolves around three principal goals:

1. to help build human capacity and organizational resources for undertaking and supporting high-quality applied health research in the province;
2. to increase the amount and impact of high-quality applied health research undertaken on the priority research themes of Newfoundland and Labrador; and
3. to help increase the effective and efficient use of research evidence in the province's health and community services system.

Each of these goals involves of a set of objectives, as follows:

### **Goal 1: Build the province's human capacity and research resources**

Objective 1.1: support undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate training that will add to the human resources available in the province for applied health research

Objective 1.2: increase the number of professional researchers working on health issues in the province's academic institutions and health organizations

Objective 1.3: help to attract increased levels of funding from both inside and outside the province for applied health researchers and research teams

Objective 1.4: develop networks that link the province's health researchers and that make possible enhanced collaboration between researchers and the potential users of research (health care providers, decision makers and policy makers) in the provincial health and community services system

Objective 1.5: advocate for enhancement of data sources, facilities and other infrastructure and resources that enable researchers to produce high-quality and relevant research

Objective 1.6: build public support for, and understanding of, applied health researchers and their work throughout the province

Objective 1.7: ensure adequate staffing, funding and infrastructure for the Centre to enable it to provide ongoing effective support to the research community

### **Goal 2: Increase the output and impact of applied health research on priority themes**

Objective 2.1: develop an evolving consensus on priority research themes

Objective 2.2: channel research funding to high-quality researchers and research teams working on priority issues

Objective 2.3: foster collaboration between local researchers and those located elsewhere in Canada

Objective 2.4: track the output and impact of applied health research on NLCAHR's priority themes on a regular basis

### **Goal 3: Encourage effective and efficient use of research evidence**

Objective 3.1: help build a culture of evidence-informed decision making by contributing to the ability of researchers, health care providers, health-system decision makers/policy makers and others in the community to collaborate in formulating research questions, undertaking research, interpreting research findings and putting them into practice

Objective 3.2: increase the ability of the province's health care providers, decision makers and policy makers to use the best available research evidence by producing contextualized research syntheses that identify and address factors unique to this province

Objective 3.3: provide up-to-date, readily accessible information for all stakeholders concerning NLCAHR activities and funding, external funding and opportunities for collaboration

Objective 3.4: disseminate results of research relevant to Newfoundland and Labrador, including research funded by NLCAHR