

2007 NLCAHR Stakeholder Forum Report

OVERVIEW

The Forum, held on March 8, 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"

This report summarizes each of these components of the Forum and concludes with a summary of the feedback sessions as well as an analysis of the results of the evaluation questionnaire that many of the participants filled out afterwards.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE NEW DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

The Director's report began with an overview of the Strategic Plan 2004-2006 and a review of the Centre's activities in achieving the Plan's goals of (1) Capacity Building, (2) Research on Priority Themes and (3) Effective Knowledge Exchange. The report described a proposal to shift the time frame of the Strategic Plan from three to five years, and included an explanation of the Strategic Plan development process. Dr. Bornstein reviewed the Centre's research funding activities and the impact of that funding in terms of leveraging additional external funding. He concluded with a preview of the NLCAHR Strategic Plan 2007-2011, focusing on the Plan's objectives, the Priority Research Themes and the proposed Centre programs (slides available [here](#)). Following the report, Ms. Janice Butler chaired a feedback session on the Strategic Plan. During the session, Forum participants were divided into small groups and gave the feedback on a set of questions related to the Strategic Plan:

1. Is the revised 5-year cycle a good idea? What revisions or additions would you suggest for the new strategic plan?
2. Are the current research themes still valid priorities? What applied health research issues/themes should be our research priorities in the next 3-5 years?
3. Which of our activities and programs are the most effective/least effective use of our resources? What changes could be made to our programs to make them more effective? If additional resources became available, what other programs or activities would you like to see?

The results of the feedback session are summarized in the next-to-last section of this document. At an upcoming meeting, the Centre's Board will discuss the feedback received and will consider how these suggestions can be incorporated into a revised Strategic Plan, a revised work plan for the coming year, and changes in programs and activities. These decisions will be summarized in the Centre's electronic newsletter.

REPORT ON THE BELL ISLAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Following the lunch break, Dr. Verlé Harrop, Scientific Directory of the Bell Island Community Health Council, presented the recently completed first phase of an innovative community-based health needs assessment for Bell Island. In her presentation, Dr. Harrop described the methodology used for this project, which was based on the “determinants of health” model and involved the integral participation of community members and groups. Dr. Harrop also presented the results of this baseline study and plans for a second phase of the project that would create a blueprint for the community to move forward on the identified health issues (slides [available here](#)²; report available here).

PANEL DISCUSSION: RESEARCH NEEDS OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The next segment of the program was a panel of decision makers from the Regional Integrated Health Authorities and Provincial Department of Health and Community Services who are potential users of the applied health research funded or coordinated by NLCAHR. Mr. Wayne Miller (Senior Director—Corporate Strategy and Research, Eastern Health) Regional Integrated Health Authority, described the four main “lines of business” his RIHA is involved in: promoting health and well being, providing supportive care, treating illness and injury, and advancing knowledge. Mr. Miller focused on the activities of Eastern Health towards advancing knowledge, including participation in 136 research projects in the past year alone, as well as on the challenges and opportunities for applied health research at the RIHA. Ms. Joy Maddigan (Director - Policy Development and Planning Branch, Department of Health and Community Services) spoke to the emergence of a “research culture” in government. Ms. Maddigan discussed the growing role of research in policy development, the challenges of integrating research into public sector institutions, and anticipated research needs and existing research opportunities (slides [available here](#)³). Last to speak in the panel was Ms. Lisa Hoddinott (VP - Quality Management and Research, Western Health), who reported on the research priorities and activities of the Western Health Regional Integrated Health Authority (slides [available here](#)⁴).

‘SPEED MEETINGS’ WITH APPLIED HEALTH RESEARCHERS

The final component of the day consisted of ten fifteen-minute researcher presentations. Forum participants chose three such “speed meetings” which were delivered concurrently and repeated in three rounds. The presenters were recipients of an NLCAHR research grant or fellowship, or had conducted research in collaboration with the Centre. Presentations reflected the inter-disciplinary nature of applied health research and the broad range of areas of expertise that may be employed in its study. A list of the participants and their presentations is [available here](#)⁵.

THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN: WHAT THE SMALL GROUPS TOLD US

The remainder of this document provides a summary from the morning Feedback session on the proposed Strategic Plan. During the session, three sets of questions that were posed to the Forum participants. Small groups discussed the questions, and a spokesperson presented the results of the discussion to the Forum. Written answers were also solicited, collected and analyzed. The following notes summarize key points presented during the break-outs and the feedback sessions. These notes will be used to draft proposals to the Board of Directors for revised wording in the Strategic Plan, as well as revisions to the Centre’s priorities and activities:

Question 1: Strategic Plan

Is the revised 5-year cycle a good idea?

- Unanimous agreement on switching to a five-year plan. However, participants also generally agreed that a more structured timeline for objectives should be implemented, i.e., incremental goals for 1, 3 and 5 years. Participants also strongly encouraged having outcome measures for both goals and objectives (see below).

What revisions or additions would you suggest for the new strategic plan?

2 http://www.nlcahr.mun.ca/news/documents/conferences/Harrop_Bell_Island.pdf

3 http://www.nlcahr.mun.ca/news/documents/conferences/Evidence_Informed_Decisions_Maddigan.pdf

4 http://www.nlcahr.mun.ca/news/documents/conferences/Applied_Health_Research_Western.pdf

5 <http://www.nlcahr.mun.ca/news/documents/conferences/>

Consensus themes:

- Goals and objectives should be filled out with more explicit descriptions or examples that illustrate what is intended by the Centre. In particular, the objectives should contain language that relates how the objectives will work towards fulfilling the Strategic Plan goals.
- Goals and objectives should incorporate an evaluative framework that can be used to establish outcome measures for future assessment. Evaluation and outcome measures were stressed as being very important to include in the Strategic Plan process. It was also suggested that the Centre develop an explicit evaluation framework for the research it funds in order to allow an assessment of the effectiveness of the funded projects in helping the Centre fulfill its specific goals and objectives.
- Partnerships need to be strengthened, in particular with the RIHA's and with community-based groups involved in health-related activities and research.
- Increase the communication capacity of the Centre on all fronts. The Centre should: increase Knowledge Transfer and Exchange with stakeholders; increase its communication profile with the public at large through the media; increase the emphasis on dissemination strategies as a criteria on for funding; create a database of researchers and front-line workers to foster partnerships (potentially through the Common CV); provide a clearinghouse function for applied health research in the province.
- Increase the research and fellowship funding capacity of the Centre by a large amount (e.g., by a factor of ten, to an amount proportional to that of the NSHRF).

Other comments:

- Objective 1.6 should read: "build public support for, and understanding of, applied health researchers and their work across the province".
- Help organizations identify the core competencies required for its staff.
- Next time, distribute Strategic Plan documents in advance of the Forum to allow more time for reflection and consideration.

Question #2: Priority Research Themes

Are the current research themes still valid priorities?

- There was strong agreement that Health Promotion was a valid Priority Research Theme.
- A major theme from the Feedback session was that the themes are too broad. This posed the risk of diluting the focus of the Centre;
- Many participants indicated that clarification was needed, for example by:
 - including a definition of key terms in the themes, e.g., between, population health, public health and health promotion—how are they different? how are they related?
 - listing sub-themes, e.g., research directed at obesity and overweight as a sub-theme or example of the Health Promotion and Wellness Theme. It was further indicated that stakeholders should have input in defining these sub-themes, through key-informant interviews, focus groups or surveys.
 - resolving ambiguities within the Themes, in particular clarifying how effectiveness and efficiency of care are distinct from quality of care.
 - including examples or descriptors for each Theme in a bulleted list; this could also serve to highlight particular research opportunities.
- The Themes needed to lend themselves to an effective program evaluation. Including a greater degree of description for the Priority Research Themes was cited as an important basis for establishing outcome measures, which in turn would be crucial for an effective evaluative framework. Stakeholders felt strongly that an evaluation component was crucial for future reporting, as well as necessary for demonstrating the impact of research to government and granting agencies.
- Stakeholders suggested trying to match the Priority Research Themes with funding priorities from other agencies in order to maximize leverage.
- Stakeholders also stressed the importance of viewing the Priority Research Themes through the lens of "Applied Health Research", and to consider including a definition or description of "applied health research".

What applied health research issues/themes should be our research priorities in the next 3-5 years?

Consensus themes:

- Ageing population and workforce
- Food security, nutrition

- Health human resources
- Research on Knowledge Translation and Exchange
- Outcome evaluation in health care and health promotion
- Pandemic readiness.

Other Suggestionss:

- Access to health care, in particular in rural and remote areas of the Province
- Anthropometric database development
- Chronic disease management
- Environmental/ecosystem health
- Human factors/ergonomics
- Impact of health policy on population health and health care services
- Wounded military personnel
- Post-hoc evaluation of health policy decisions in light of the best research-based evidence
- Seamless care and patient safety.
- Wait times and the impact of waiting.

Question #3: Programs and Activities

Which of our activities and programs are the most effective/least effective use of our resources?

Most effective:

- Affinity groups
- Grant writing workshops
- Mentoring program
- Research funding
- Visiting Lecturer program

Least effective:

- Communication of research results, especially through the media
- Definition of health not broad enough and should better include health promotion
- Raising the profile of the Centre in the Province
- Visiting Lecturer program (for lack of utilization, otherwise considered an effective use of resources)

What changes could be made to our programs to make them more effective?

- A more effective evaluation of research activities in terms of the goals and objectives of Strategic Plan, including building evaluation components into funded research plans.
- Annual research reports summarizing the work of funded researchers.
- Developing methodologies to deliver health research results to research users that are attuned to the latter's timeframes.
- Developing methodologies to measure impact of research and other Centre activities.
- Greater level of promotion of Centre's programs and activities.
- Increase utilization of existing health databases.
- Stronger connections to RIHA's, community groups, front-line practitioners and other stakeholders, e.g. to enhance both the development of research questions and the dissemination/uptake of research results.

If additional resources became available, what other programs or activities would you like to see?

- A conference, at the regional or provincial level, to bring researchers and health practitioners together
- A continuing education program for health research
- An annual student conference
- Core journalist program for health-related reporting
- Development of human factors/ergonomics research opportunities and dissemination channels.
- Greater role as a broker between research, government and industry
- Increased dissemination of research and other Centre activities
- Knowledge exchange between research users (e.g. clinicians, decision makers) researchers, including faculty, non-faculty and student researchers.
- Knowledge translation, e.g. public health service provider dissemination

- Research clearinghouse, including a searchable database that can match researchers and research users
- Research opportunities for non-academic-based researchers
- Research synthesis and health technology assessment

EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDER FORUM

Following our 2007 Stakeholder Forum, a brief web-based survey was done for the purposes of evaluation. Stakeholders who attended the forum were sent a link to the survey, which was created using the “my.mun.ca” survey tool, via email. We asked stakeholders to rate various components of the forum and also gave respondents the chance to add their own comments on several of the questions. We received 22 responses which represents about one quarter of the registered participants of the Forum. The overall reaction was very positive, with 23% of the respondents rating the day as “excellent” and 68% of respondents as “very good.”

Two specific goals that the Board set for the stakeholder forum were:

- (1) to obtain feedback from stakeholders on NLCAHR’s strategic plan, programs and priority research themes; and
- (2) to provide networking opportunities for researchers and research users.

When asked if the Forum provided ample opportunities to provide feedback, 73% of respondents answered “yes.” In terms of providing researchers and research users with the opportunity to share research ideas and results, there was near-unanimous (91%) agreement that this goal had been met. One respondent suggested that our annual stakeholder forum should include even more time for networking, specifically for presentations by researchers.

Our respondents felt that it NLCAHR should continue to hold annual Stakeholder Forums (73%), but a few (9%) felt it was more appropriate for us to convene these Forums on a bi-annual basis.