

Annual Network Scientific Meeting Series 2021 - Research Day

Summary by Cindy Hutchison

On October 5th, 2021, investigators presented research and innovation in Indigenous primary health care and policy. Addressing delivery of care, assessment, and Indigenous determinants of health, it was also a morning of dialogue, knowledge sharing, and musical interludes by Dr. Lindsay Crowshoe. A summary of the day's presentations follows.

Research can "shift and change Indigenous primary healthcare and policy... (and) ensure our systems are safe and strong for our Indigenous peoples and promote great health outcomes from an act of reconciliation."

Dr. Lindsay Crowshoe

Dr. Rita Henderson

A First Nation-Led COVID-19 Response: Coordinating Integrated Primary Care

In investigating the COVID-19 pandemic response by First Nations and primary care partnerships, ethnographic data from service providers and community members from two Alberta First Nations revealed economic, social, health, political, and environmental factors that constitute barriers and access points for COVID-19 management within Indigenous communities. Preliminary analysis and systems mapping bring forward consideration of the role that family physicians can play in decolonizing public health and health care services.

Ms. Anika Sehgal

Patient complexity assessment tools containing inquiry domains important for Indigenous patient care

Ms. Sehgal's review of existing patient complexity assessment tools (PCATs) to determine relevance to Indigenous patients who present with complexity, which arise from social and contextual factors that affect health and delivery of care, shows that domains assessed by PCATs, including psychological, healthcare access, and healthcare literacy, need to be contextualized to recognize historical trauma and ongoing injustices. As existing PCATs do not account for the "social realities" of Indigenous peoples, study findings will inform future development of a PCAT for Indigenous patients.

Ashley Cornect-Benoit

The Role of Intergenerational Social Connections in Promoting Healthy Brain Aging and Nurturing Wholistic Well-Being Amongst Indigenous Older Adults and Youth

Through oral storytelling pathways and sharing knowledge, Ms. Cornect-Benoit seeks to identify the meaningful intergenerational social engagements within the Anishinaabe community, and explore their perceived impact on preventing dementia in Anishinaabe seniors. In the process, Ms. Cornect-Benoit will identify how traditional Indigenous knowledge systems and community-determined initiatives can affect existing models of care.

Ms. Kate Dunn

Wisdom Seeking on Wholistic Perspectives of Liver Wellness: Influencing Indigenous Hepatitis C Care Pathways and Community Impact Through Co-created Media

Ms. Dunn undertook a process that involved Indigenous knowledge holders and incorporated narrative inquiry, two-eyed seeing, and recognition of relationship, culture, and ceremony. Analysis of data involved thematic co-coding with CCDAP (Collective Consensual Data Analytic Procedure), ceremony and reflection. When findings are applied to a "docustory awareness tool," communication of culturally relevant, instead of disease-focused, awareness messaging for hepatitis C, will be facilitated.

The Alex Community Health Centre

Indigenous Health and Anti-Racism Strategy

The Alex is a non-profit health and social services organization that provides integrated and accessible supports and comprehensive care to Calgarians. Its Community Health Centre cares for many Indigenous peoples. Themes identified in literature and ethnographic research that included Indigenous Elders and community members include the need to: increase Indigenous involvement in policies and practices at The Alex; develop holistic healthcare services suited to the needs of Indigenous patients; and build capacity to be a culturally safe space for Indigenous peoples. These findings will inform next steps for The Alex.

Ms. Daniela Goveas

Exploring the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing in PHC policy development to promote healing for Indigenous communities in Alberta

Daniela Goveas seeks to investigate primary health care policy gaps and priorities for Indigenous peoples through an environmental policy scan of key research and databases, interviews with key experts, and sharing circles with knowledge-holders. Based on these findings, Ms. Goveas will propose a two-page policy brief that highlights key priority areas for PHC policy transformation. This brief can serve as "a resource for Indigenous peoples when connecting with local or national health leaders regarding PHC policies."

Dr. Pearl Yellow Old Woman

Siksikaitsitapi Parenting of Children with Disabilities

An exploration of stories of Siksika parents caring for children with disabilities highlights the central position of the community in the well-being of the Siksika people. Community members describe how members "all contribute to the overall wellness of the community," and how they feel that these "special kids" deserve the same opportunities and resources as those offered off-reserve. Dr. Yellow Old Woman points to the "strength-based parenting approach" of the Siksika, emphasizing that community caring is intrinsic to the culture.

Ms. Lene Jorgensen and Elder Harley Crowshoe

Creating Harmony in Kidney and Diabetes Care with Indigenous Communities

Lene Jorgensen and Elder Harley Crowshoe spoke of embedding Indigenous cultural beliefs and traditions into diabetes care in Alberta. According to Jorgensen and Crowshoe, the 15% incidence of diabetes among First Nations peoples (more than 2x that of non-First Nations peoples), along with associated co-morbidities, prompt the need to bring together evidence-based care with culturally relevant practices. Elder Crowshoe posits that incorporating the Sacred Bundles, the beliefs and practices within the Blackfoot culture into "culturally-relevant care" that is "co-designed," can improve health and wellness outcomes for Indigenous populations.