

MSSU Central Rolls Out Consulting Team

Two recent appointments have completed the MSSU's professional consultant contingent. Robyn Traynor and Suzanne Kennedy joined the Halifax-based staff in October, rounding out the talent available to SPOR researchers in the three Maritime Provinces. Together with Sarah Visintini and Jonathan Dyer, Robyn and Suzanne will be available to MSSU researchers to help with proposals and projects. An intake form has been created as the first point of engagement with the consulting team – contact any one of them to access it.

Jonathan Dyer
Patient Engagement Coordinator
jonathan.dyer@cdha.nshealth.ca

Jonathan is a consultant and researcher with a background in public health, evaluation, and health policy. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Mount Allison University, a Master of Public Administration from Dalhousie University, and a certification in Public Participation from the International Association of Public Participation. Jonathan works to incorporate the patient perspective and foster patient research partnerships on Maritime Research projects. He is available to consult with research teams on patient engagement plans and methods. Additionally, he builds tools and resources to support research teams and patients to increase the capacity for patient engagement research in the Maritimes.



public health. Robyn is available to consult with research teams on integrated and end-of-grant knowledge translation, and to support teams through planning and implementing their knowledge translation strategies. She also works to build capacity for knowledge translation within the MSSU community through training and access to tools and resources.

Suzanne L. Kennedy
Interprovincial Privacy & Ethics Officer
suzanne.kennedy@cdha.nshealth.ca

Suzanne holds a Masters degree in Law from Dalhousie University. She has experience as a registered nurse and is a Certified Information Privacy Professional. Suzanne is responsible for advising on all MSSU activities related to privacy, confidentiality, and security in the three Maritime Provinces. She informs and educates stakeholders, staff and researchers about privacy legislation, policies and best practices, and is available for consultation.

Inside this issue

Message from the PI	2
Provincial Updates	3
Committee Updates	4
MSSU Collaborations	4
– NSCRC	
– Training and Workshops	



The Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU) is a multidisciplinary research and facilitation unit dedicated to supporting patient-oriented health services research and decision-making in the Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Visit <http://www.spor-maritime-srap.ca/> for more information.

Sarah Visintini
Evidence Synthesis Coordinator
sarah.visintini@cdha.nshealth.ca

Originally from Ontario, Sarah completed her undergraduate degree at Mount Allison University, and her Master of Library and Information Studies at Dalhousie. Her research expertise is in biomedical literature searching and evidence synthesis. Sarah supports MSSU stakeholders by providing consultations with research teams on evidence synthesis projects and literature searching, as well as providing evidence synthesis tools, resources and general training.

Robyn Traynor
Knowledge Translation Coordinator
robyn.traynor@cdha.nshealth.ca

Robyn earned a Bachelor of Health Sciences and a Master of Science degree from McMaster University. She has experience in mixed methods research, with a focus on evidence-informed decision making and knowledge translation in

Message from the Principal Investigator



 Adrian Levy

Welcome to the second edition of the MSSU newsletter. The MSSU logged many noteworthy achievements in 2014, the Unit's first full year of operation, including:

- A productive planning meeting of stakeholders that included a keynote address by the NS Minister of Health, the Honorable Leo Glavine.
- A stable, responsive, and inclusive governance structure that has shown considerable maturity, enough to effectively integrate different priorities and cultures.
- The hard work of over 60 volunteers - policy- and decision-makers, researchers, healthcare professionals, and lay and patient representatives - who are involved in the three Expert Advisory Committees (Data and Privacy, Science, and Training).
- The hiring of trained staff to offer Maritime-wide consultation services in patient engagement, evidence synthesis, knowledge translation, and privacy and ethics. This complements consultation services in database development, statistics, study design, economic evaluation, and qualitative research available through the Research Methods Unit.
- The first patient-centred outcomes research outputs, including projects on the prevalence/costs of dementia in NS and geographic variations in health services/costs for chronic diseases.
- Major strides in improving access to health data. In NB, the Institute for Research, Data, and Training became a data custodian and is now working with administrative health data. In NS, the Health Data Nova Scotia platform was modernized and started the process of including other types of health data. In PEI, planning began for a health data repository.

In the coming year, we can expect the MSSU to strengthen its role as a catalyst for closer integration between patients, provincial policy makers, decision-makers, health care professionals, and researchers. A specific tool that you will see soon is the use of an intake form for requesting MSSU services... stay tuned. A happy and productive new year to you!

Committee Updates

The **Training Advisory Committee** has completed a Bodies of Knowledge document and are embarking on an Environmental Scan project. Both undertakings will provide information upon which future training initiatives will be based. Dr. Krista Ritchie is leading a sub-committee to draft the MSSU's training strategy. The committee will consider developing programs and partnering with local organizations who offer health-related curriculum to implement the strategy. The first draft is expected early in the New Year. Dr. Ritchie has been nominated as co-chair of the Committee.

The **Data & Privacy Advisory Committee** has focused on expanding access to administrative health data in each of the Maritime provinces. In NS, the MSSU has assisted in the creation of a framework to

prioritize the transfer of datasets to Health Data NS. In NB, the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training has added Vital Statistics and the provincial Provider Registry, and work is underway to develop and transfer databases on chronic diseases and long term care use. In PEI, a repository for provincial health data is currently being set up and will be based at UPEI.

The second objective is the harmonization of policies, procedures and documentation across the data platforms of the Maritime Provinces, including data access and ethics review. Harmonized data inventories and codebooks, application roadmaps, glossaries of key terms and concept dictionaries will soon be available through the MSSU website, making it a one-stop shop for researchers interested in using health

administrative data for patient oriented research in the Maritimes. Dr. Ted McDonald and Dr. Jennifer Payne are co-charis of this Committee.

The **Scientific Advisory Committee** has been working on three main areas. In support of patient engagement in the work of MSSU, we have now recruited patient representatives for all significant groups; our work on knowledge translation has supported the development of a proposal to partner with KT Canada on capacity development and needs assessment work; and we have been focusing on how the MSSU research agenda can fully engage with other SPOR and CIHR initiatives. Dr. Paul Peters of the University of NB, has been nominated as co-chair of the Committee.

New Brunswick

With the signing of key Memoranda of Understanding in November, the MSSU in New Brunswick is quickly expanding its research and administrative capabilities through the hiring of key personnel. In Fredericton, an epidemiologist will be starting at UNB in April and will be

joining two new database analysts, a privacy officer, a program administrator and a health economist. In Moncton, negotiations are underway for a research associate and a biostatistician to join the MSSU team at the Université de Moncton. In Saint John, a clinical re-

search assistant will join a recently hired clinical research manager affiliated with the Horizon Health Network. We look forward to all of these individuals joining the NB MSSU team.



Ted McDonald & Tony Reiman

Nova Scotia

The creation of the Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) has facilitated an opportunity for a representation of Nova Scotian health research partners to support the success of the MSSU through collaboration. This group will vet the selection of provincially-requested projects to be performed in collaboration with the MSSU based upon DHW and DHA priorities to ensure that high value work is selected, monitor progress of ongoing projects, identify provincial sources of relevant research and information at the beginning of a project, and review MSSU projects at their

completion to assist in contextualizing study findings and commenting on implications for implementation at the end of a project.

The Committee is co-chaired by a representative of MSSU and NS DHW (David Anderson and Tracey Barbrick) and members include a representative from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (Meredith Campbell), a patient/citizen representative (Linda Verlinden), a representative from District Health Authorities (Pat McGrath), a representative from DHW (Jill Casey), a representative from Nova Scotia Universities

or the Nova Scotia Community College (Leslie MacLaren of St. FX), and the MSSU Principal Investigator (Adrian Levy).

We are pleased to announce that the Provincial Advisory Committee had its inaugural meeting on November 20, 2014. At that meeting, we welcomed the members and they collectively stated their commitment to supporting this important work as it moves forward.



Tracey Barbrick & David Anderson

Prince Edward Island

SPOR PEI is focused on data platforms and services. Its main goal is to integrate different data sets into a research-friendly environment in order to develop relevant questions and explore answers to pressing policy-related health system challenges or issues. SPOR PEI projects are constantly growing and devel-

oping. One of its more ambitious projects is the development of a Data Repository in PEI that will allow researchers better access to non-identifiable data, improving our healthcare system and health research. SPOR PEI is also working on demonstration projects on PEI's lower breast cancer survival rates, as well as

hip and knee surgery replacement patient outcomes. Committed to improving healthcare systems and outcomes for all Islanders, SPOR PEI is paving the way to a healthier future.



Bill Montelpare & Juergen Krause

Nova Scotia Cochrane Resource Centre

The Nova Scotia Cochrane Resource Centre (NSCRC) is a regional site of the Canadian Cochrane Centre, and aims to build local capacity to support systematic review research as well as to facilitate evidence-informed health care practice and policy. With its shared focus on patient oriented outcomes, knowledge translation and implementation, and career development, it was only natural that the NSCRC align itself with the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit. For more information about the NSCRC, visit: <http://www.dal.ca/sites/cochrane.html>.



Local Evidence Synthesis Research



Want to know how researchers can engage in patient-oriented evidence synthesis projects? Here's an example from a local Cochrane Collaboration team made up of researchers from Dalhousie and St. Francis Xavier University: Janine Olthuis, Margo Watt, Sherry Stewart, Kristen Bailey, and Jill Hayden are in the process of publishing a Cochrane Systematic Review entitled "Therapist-delivered Internet cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety disorders in adults". Their review summarizes current research on internet-based cognitive therapy with therapist support to determine whether it is an effective treatment for reducing anxiety. This is a timely review since face-to-face therapy can be difficult to access because of long waiting lists, transportation issues, and limited numbers of qualified therapists. Internet-based therapy options, if effective as a treatment for reducing anxiety, may help to increase access to care.

Evidence Synthesis Funding Opportunities

CIHR Knowledge Synthesis

This funding opportunity will support teams of researchers and knowledge users conducting knowledge syntheses and scoping reviews that will contribute to the use of synthesized evidence in decision-making and practice. The application deadline is May 15, 2015. For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/CIHRKSGrants>.

Training and Workshops

Upcoming Opportunities

The MSSU will co-present a **Knowledge Translation Seminar Series** with the Integrated Health Research training Partnership (IHRTTP) this spring. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/KTseries>.

Past Opportunities

A workshop was held for research ethics board (REB) managers, chairs and privacy officers from across the Maritimes, in Halifax on November 14, 2014 immediately following the meeting of the Atlantic Chapter of the Canadian Association of REBs. The objectives of the workshop were to: 1) review the REB process, from application through study closure, as it applies to patient-oriented research, and more specifically, secondary use of existing health-related databases; 2) highlight areas for improvement in the REB process; and 3) create a common understanding of REB process in the context of research involving these large health-related databases. The discussion points and potential action items raised at the workshop are being used by the Ethics Working Group to create a workplan for 2015.

Become a Patient Advisor!

For more information, contact Jonathan Dyer (902-473-4546) or visit our website, <http://bit.ly/MSSUpatientadvisor>.

Fare Thee Well, Chris!

MSSU is saying goodbye to its Senior Health Policy and Outcomes Researcher. In early January, Dr. Chris Skedgel is heading across the pond to be the new Senior Lecturer in Applied Health Economics at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, UK. He will divide his time between academic research and teaching (70%) and supervising analysts (30%) at the health economics consulting unit of the Medical School, undertaking evaluation projects for the National Health Service (NHS) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). We wish him every success in this adventure.

