

## Elaine Collins, Interim Senior Project Manager



Elaine Collins

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I join the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit team. The MSSU Advisory Committee Workshop on March 23rd and 24th provided me with the opportunity to meet many of the MSSU team and several of our partners. The degree of camaraderie and cooperation that I witnessed throughout the two-day event was impressive and could be considered a model for collaboration. I look forward to meeting the remainder of our partners over the next several weeks and encourage members of the MSSU network to reach out to me with any questions, concerns or comments.

As Interim Senior Project Manager, my primary focus is to assemble the MSSU accomplishments and generate formal annual reports for our funding partners – Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), New Brunswick Department of Health, New Brunswick Health Research Foundation, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, and the Prince Edward Island Department of Health and Wellness.

My first few weeks with MSSU have been

spent reviewing the long list of accomplishments and the ongoing efforts of the many committees and working groups who strive to bring the project goals to fruition.

This is an exciting project operating in a dynamic and complex environment. Even in my short time with the MSSU there has been significant change with the district health authorities in Nova Scotia transitioning from nine separate authorities into one – the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the continued growth of the MSSU team (see employee news section for details).

The tasks are many and the goals are significant but with the ongoing support of our host, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, encouragement from our partners, and the dedication of all our volunteers and committee members, we will succeed.

I would like to thank those of you who have extended words of welcome to me over the last couple of weeks. I look forward to working with all of you and am committed to doing my part to ensure the MSSU reaches its fullest potential.

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### Inside this issue

Message from the PI .....	2
Committee Updates .....	2
Provincial Updates .....	3
National SPOR Updates ....	3
MSSU Collaborations .....	4



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 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Visit <http://www.mssu.ca/> for more information.

### Welcome to the MSSU team!

The MSSU welcomes Laura Dowling to the central Nova Scotia team as Project Manager. Laura comes to the MSSU with several years of research experience, most recently as a member of a CIHR Partnership for Health System Improvement project at the IWK Health Centre in Strategy and Organizational Performance. She holds a B.Sc. from McMaster University and an LL.B from Dalhousie University. She is a former fellow in the CIHR Training Program in Health Law, Ethics and Policy, and a current candidate for a Masters in Health Law. Laura has previously collaborated with the MSSU as a Research Policy Associate and has contributed to the development of MSSU operational policies and ongoing research projects. The MSSU looks forward to ongoing work with Laura!



Laura Dowling

## Message from the Principal Investigator



Adrian Levy

I am very pleased to welcome you to this third issue of the MSSU newsletter. Since December, the MSSU has made excellent progress in its mission to lead the development and application of patient-centred outcomes research in the Maritimes. First, I would like to offer a hearty welcome to Ms. Elaine Collins. Elaine joins us from both the private and public sectors and has already shown herself to provide superior leadership for the MSSU staff and other stakeholders. Second, on March 23, many intrepid adventurers from across the Maritimes braved the Cobequid Pass to participate in the second annual MSSU Advisory Committees workshop. At the workshop, work and implementation plans were refined with an eye to completing the deliverables listed in the MSSU business case as well as the MSSU's mission and vision. Third, we continue to round out the staff complement for the MSSU with the imminent hire of a Communications Officer, as well as several data experts. In the coming months, the MSSU Demonstration Project will be presented publicly. We are also actively working on a number of other peer-reviewed publications.

Through this newsletter, you will see the excellent work being undertaken by the MSSU. Please bring us new ideas and remember that the MSSU coordinators are immediately accessible to support new patient centered outcomes research projects through the MSSU website: <http://www.mssu.ca>.

## Committee Updates

Highlights of the **Data & Privacy Advisory Committee's** (DPAC) activity include two key initiatives. The first is the preparation of a Best-Practice Guideline to support Maritime researchers and research ethics boards (REBs) in the application and review process for research projects employing administrative data. Topics include project feasibility, personal identifiers, data transfer, data linkage, and consent waivers. The document will be disseminated to Maritime REBs and posted on the MSSU website in late Spring. The second initiative is a day-long workshop on access processes for research involving administrative data in Nova Scotia. The workshop will bring several Nova Scotia Data Access Committees together to create streamlined processes for applications falling under multiple Committee jurisdictions.

The **Scientific Advisory Committee** (SAC) is co-chaired by Dr. Paul Peters (New Brunswick) and Dr. Frank Atherton

(Nova Scotia). The committee met in person at the recent MSSU Advisory Committees Workshop and agreed the following actions for 2015/16:

- The Patient Engagement Working Group will evolve into a Patient Engagement Forum, which will continue to provide expert patient input to structures but will also start to generate ideas for future patient-oriented research;
- The Knowledge Translation Working Group will continue to partner with KT Canada on the development and implementation of a needs assessment;
- A Research Working Group will be established to coordinate priorities across stakeholders;
- Terms of Reference for the SAC will be reviewed and refreshed in light of a planned governance review of MSSU;
- The SAC will look at developing ways to broaden understanding and increase involvement of the wider research communities in the three Maritime provinces in

patient-oriented research;

- A program of seminars/symposia will be developed; and
- There will be joint work with the DPAC on the establishment of clear policy for access to MSSU support services and databases.

The **Training Advisory Committee** (TAC) is excited to welcome Colin Davis, patient advisor to the TAC. Members of the TAC were delighted to engage in rich discussion with Mr. Davis at the MSSU Advisory Committee Workshop, and look forward to collaborating on capacity development work with him moving forward. Dr. Bill Montelpare and Dr. Krista Ritchie attended a CIHR co-building workshop to identify important content and modalities for a patient preparation curriculum. The results from this workshop are informing the work of a CIHR reference group who are tasked with building a national curriculum. Dr. Ritchie is a member of this reference group.

## New Brunswick

*Ted McDonald  
& Tony Reiman*

In winter 2015, members of the Provincial Advisory Committee formally presented to the Executive Leadership Teams of Horizon Health Network and Réseau de Santé Vitalité, as well as to the assistant deputy ministers and deputy minister of the Department of Health. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss how the NB-MSSU can best support each body in finding solutions to some of the challenges seen in the healthcare system. With commitment from all three leadership teams, staff now work with delegates from each to refine initial priorities and understand where alignment may exist between the different groups. It is hoped that this work can be completed within the next two months, in order to begin proposing research projects.

NB-MSSU also continues its close working relationship with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) at the University of New Brunswick; administrative health data sets continue to be migrated from the Department of Health, with an eye to expanded collaboration this year with the Departments of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, and Social Development.

With this in mind, and with most of the NB-MSSU staffing complement in place, staff are also working on further increasing awareness about MSSU within the New Brunswick healthcare research community, and on evolving intraprovincial collaboration between the different MSSU sites in New Brunswick.

## Nova Scotia

*Tracey Barbrick  
& David Anderson*

The Provincial Advisory Committee in Nova Scotia met last month to review completed and ongoing MSSU projects, and to discuss opportunities for further collaboration. Lynn Lethbridge presented the recently completed Dementia Project, which outlined the epidemiology of dementia in Nova Scotia, along with the health care expenditures required to manage patients with dementia.

Dr. Janet Curran and Robyn Traynor presented the planned collaboration between the MSSU and KT Canada. This collaboration offers

the promise to increase capacity of individuals performing KT initiatives, as well as performing a needs assessment for KT work in the Maritime Provinces.

The Committee had an excellent discussion about strategies to increase engagement of the Department of health and Wellness and District Health Authorities on MSSU projects. This will be an area of ongoing attention of the Committee and upcoming meetings.

## Prince Edward Island

*Bill Montelpare  
& Juergen Krause*

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 explore relevant questions and develop answers to pressing policy-related health system challenges or issues. In January, three new patient advocates have been recruited to represent PEI on several MSSU committees. One of SPOR PEI's more ambitious projects is the development of a Secure Data Repository at UPEI, which will allow researchers easier and better access to non-identifiable health data, supporting research aimed at improving our healthcare delivery and policies. UPEI recently received funding from ACOA to support the construction of the physical

space and the equipment for the Secure Island Data Repository (SIDR) on the UPEI campus. The overall data sharing agreement between Health PEI and UPEI is currently in its final stages and is anticipated to be in place by the end of May. Furthermore, SPOR PEI is working with the other two Maritime provinces on a demonstration project to investigate regional differences in the frequency of hip and knee surgery replacement surgeries. A Maritime-wide report on the outcomes of this project is currently being compiled. Committed to improving healthcare systems and outcomes for all Islanders, SPOR PEI is paving the way to a healthier future.

## National SPOR Updates

### Patient Engagement

Jonathan Dyer has been named co-chair of the national SPOR SUPPORT Unit Patient Engagement Working Group. The working group met in Ottawa to plan a coordinated effort across all SPOR SUPPORT Units as it relates to the practice of patient engagement. In cooperation with CIHR staff, the national patient engagement working group will share best practices and facilitate co-learning opportunities for researchers across the country. In 2015, CIHR will deliver a number of resources for patient engagement and the national working group will compliment this work with a specific focus on evaluation and capacity development.

### Knowledge Translation

Robyn Traynor has been named co-chair of the national SPOR SUPPORT Unit Knowledge Translation (KT) Working Group. The working group provides an opportunity for information sharing and collaboration related to KT among SPOR SUPPORT Units. The group will specifically focus on sharing KT best practices, tools and lessons learned and promoting, supporting and increasing the practice of KT among SPOR SUPPORT Units and other elements of SPOR.





The **Nova Scotia Cochrane Resource Centre (NSCRC)** is a regional site of the Canadian Cochrane Centre. 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>.



The MSSU has formalized a collaborative partnership with **Knowledge Translation (KT) Canada**, a leading national network and training initiative in knowledge translation practice and research. Through this partnership, the MSSU will gain access to KT Canada's established infrastructure of resources, experts and training, helping to build the MSSU community's capacity for knowledge translation and providing opportunities for networking, collaboration and resource-sharing. For more information about KT Canada, visit: <http://ktclearinghouse.ca/ktcanada>.

## Local Evidence Synthesis Research

Want to know how researchers can engage in patient-oriented evidence synthesis projects? A local research team including Jill Hayden, Kirk Magee, Jenny Cartwright and Jordan Edwards is collaborating with the MSSU to investigate management of low back pain in the emergency department through a scoping review. This scoping review is serving as a platform for further research on the subject in the Nova Scotian emergency department context by Dalhousie Research in Medicine students. Since low back pain is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, has high socioeconomic impact, and is also a frequent reason for emergency department presentation, this is an important area of research for improving patient navigation through the health care system.

## MSSU Practicum Student



Leah Boulos

The MSSU would like to welcome Leah Boulos, our MLIS Practicum Student. Leah is a student in the Master of Library and Information Studies program at Dalhousie University. During her time at the MSSU, she will be working closely with **Sarah Visintini**, Evidence Synthesis Coordinator, on a variety of projects. Born and raised in the Halifax area, Leah completed her Bachelor of Music in piano at Mount Allison University. Although new to the health sciences field, she is quickly developing a keen interest in systematic searching and research support. Following her practicum, she will embark on a year-long internship at the W.K. Kellogg Health Sciences Library, where she will continue to expand her knowledge of health sciences librarianship.

## Training and Workshops

### Upcoming Opportunities

The MSSU will present the second webinar in its Seminar Series on May 28, 2015 at 11 am. This webinar will focus on **Incorporating Patient Engagement in Health Research**. For more information, visit: <http://www.spor-maritime-srap.ca/news/all>.

### Past Opportunities

The MSSU presented the first of a series of webinars during National Health Ethics Week (March 2 - 6). The webinar, **Research Using Health Administrative Data: What's All The Fuss About Privacy?**, is available on our website: <http://www.spor-maritime-srap.ca/training>. The MSSU also co-presented a **Knowledge Translation Seminar Series** with the Integrated Health Research Training Partnership (IHRTTP) in March and April.

## Become a Patient Advisor!

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