

Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU)



SUPPORT UNIT Facts

Total Budget: \$8.6M CIHR + \$8.6M Partner

Project Partners: Horizon Health Network, New Brunswick (NB) Department of Health*, NB Health Research Foundation*, Patient Voices Network, Réseau de Santé Vitalité, UNB Capital District Health Authority*, Dalhousie University, IWK and other NS Health Authorities, Nova Scotia (NS) Department of Health & Wellness*, NS Health Research Foundation*, Saint Mary's University Health Prince Edward Island (PEI), PEI Department of Health & Wellness*, UPEI

Supporting Partners: NB Institute for Research, Data and Training; Health Data NS, NS Cochrane Resource Centre, Research Methods Unit

Future Partners: Pedagogic institutions involved in patient-centred outcomes and health services research

Priorities:

- **Data Platforms & Services:** make better use of existing administrative health data sets and patient registries to develop applicable knowledge that, in turn, improves the delivery of health services
- **Health Systems, Knowledge Translation, & Implementation:** build closer collaborations between policy-and decision-makers, health care professionals, citizens, and researchers
- **Career Development:** increase the number of highly qualified patient-centred outcomes and health researchers

Nominated Principal Investigator: Adrian Levy (NS—Dalhousie University/Capital Health)

Principal Investigators: Ted McDonald (UNB), Juergen Krause (UPEI)

**Funding partners*

Methods Support & Development: \$2.4 M

The MSSU supplies consultation services and methodological support to local investigators writing funding applications for patient-centred outcomes and health services research:

- methodological support for projects proposing to use administrative health databases
- developing secure data linkage protocols
- evidence synthesis support services in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Cochrane Resource Centre.
- methodological support for patient engagement, knowledge translation, data access and privacy, and evidence synthesis

Health Systems, Knowledge Translation & Implementation: 5.2 M

- The MSSU operates through a deliberative-dialogue process. The dialogue is structured as a cycle in which the research agenda is aligned with policy questions through meetings of all stakeholders, including governmental and health authority decision -and policy-makers, researchers, and lay citizens and patients. The structure allows individual provinces to pursue priority questions while also allowing knowledge generation and implementation to be addressed collectively throughout the Maritimes.
- The MSSU's KT theory-based approach to the design and evaluation of complex interventions for practice and policy change offers a framework that can apply across different settings and individuals. This approach delineates between intervention process and outcomes and implementation process and outcomes, and is critical for interpreting the findings of projects and contributing to successful broad-scale application.

Patient Engagement Strategy

The Maritimes SUPPORT Unit creates a research platform which involves programs and tools to support and facilitate patient-provider communications. It includes four key components:

- consultation services, tools, and training, provided to research teams as to how to best and appropriately incorporate patient engagement into patient-centred outcomes and health services research.
- patient/Public representation included in all aspects of MSSU
- research program eliciting public input on research priorities.
- network of patients for members of the public to directly sit on various research planning teams.

Consultation & Research Services: \$0.4 M

The MSSU provides consultation services to support the use of health administrative data holdings in each of the three Maritime provinces. MSSU support personnel to be made available by the MSSU include:

- Patient Engagement Coordinator – provides methods support for identifying and engaging patients and/or the public and creating a patient engagement strategy
- Knowledge Translation Coordinator – provides support for KT activities and develops and implements a KT strategy for the MSSU
- Evidence Synthesis Coordinator – provides evidence synthesis support for stakeholders and coordinates an evidence synthesis strategy for the MSSU
- Interprovincial Privacy and Ethics Officer - advises on activities with privacy, confidentiality, and security implications, as well as monitors MSSU services and systems to ensure compliance with personal health privacy and government policies and practices in the Maritime Provinces

The MSSU provides support services in the form of a data documentation specialist, a database administrator, and a data analyst/coordinator who will serve as a “data navigator” to support external researchers using the administrative health databases.

In addition, the MSSU facilitates access to the Research Methods Unit. Core consultative services include: epidemiology, biostatistics, qualitative methods, research data collection and management, economic evaluation, and geographic information systems.

Career Development in Methods & HSR: \$3.2 M

The MSSU facilitates career development and access to patient-centred outcomes and health services research training throughout the Maritimes. This includes:

- establishing navigation tools and an inventory of existing programs within the Maritimes
- developing structures and supporting MSSU training initiatives and grant development

As MSSU evolves, additional training opportunities will be designed for researchers, clinicians, and policy-and decisions-makers who seek to become leaders in patient-centred outcome and health services research.

The MSSU is funding the following:

- NB
 - ◆ 4 summer studentships (2 for medical students)
 - ◆ 4 Masters level trainees
 - ◆ 2 PhD in a health professional or non-medical program
 - ◆ 1 post-doctoral fellow
 - ◆ 1 medical school resident
- NS
 - ◆ 2 post-doctoral fellows
 - ◆ 4 PhD trainees
 - ◆ 17 Masters level trainees
 - ◆ 2 fellowships for health care professionals
- PEI
 - ◆ To be determined

Data Platforms & Services: \$3.6 M

The MSSU creates opportunities for patient-centred outcomes and health services research using routinely collected health data by:

- providing a secure environment in which to link administrative health databases, patient and treatment registries, laboratory information systems, drug information systems, electronic health records, and other data
- developing linkages between health data sources to create standardized analytic data sets
- standardizing data documentation and maintain data and concept dictionaries
- providing a training ground for core competencies in patient-centred outcomes and health services research
- supporting decision making by clinicians, managers, decision-makers, policy-makers
- facilitating the harmonization of data access processes between and among health data agencies and across jurisdictions
- supporting the rationalization of Research Ethics Board processes for multi-site studies with the goal of establishing a harmonized research ethics review process for the Maritimes

Real World Clinical Trials / Intervention Research: \$ 1.2 M

The MSSU supports real world intervention research by:

- supporting comparative intervention studies within and between jurisdictions
- providing guidance on design, execution, analysis, and evaluation of real world intervention studies
- supporting data capture, managing research databases, and overseeing linkages to administrative health databases
- providing resources in the form of methodologists to assist in formalizing research questions and protocol design, as well as economic evaluations.
- providing assistance with grant writing, regulatory and ethical issues as well as study management

Demonstration Project:

Describing the Regionalization of Hospital Services within and Across the Maritime Provinces

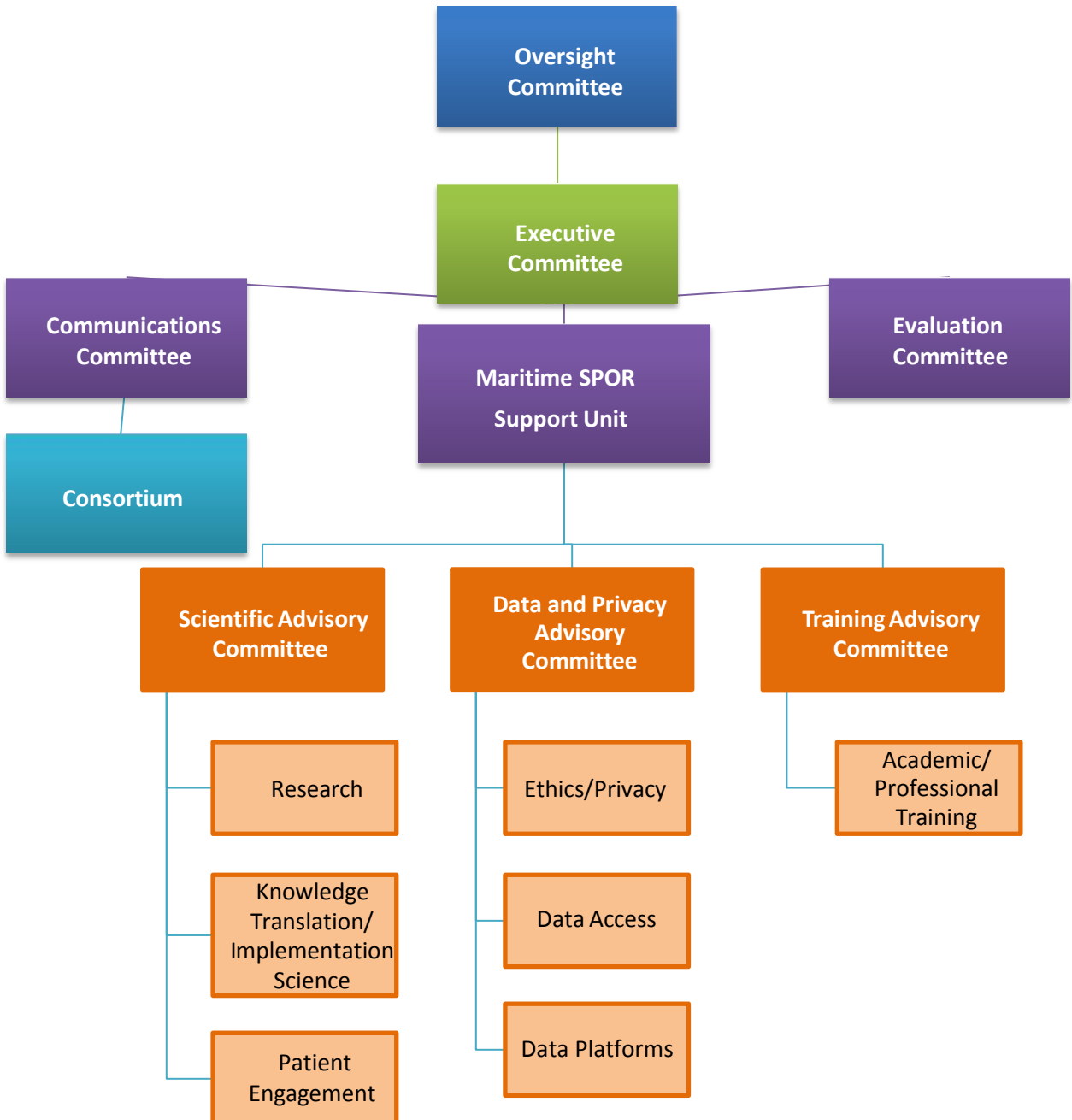
While there are differing arrangements for the provision of surgical services in the Maritimes, the effect on population health and access has not been rigorously evaluated. For this project, health utilization data from the three Maritime provinces will be utilized to examine rates of hip and knee replacement as well as cardiac artery bypass grafting (CABG) surgery. This project has four objectives:

- 1) Compare the distribution and organization of treatment for hip and knee arthroplasty and CABG procedures across the Maritime provinces and over time.
- 2) Evaluate how the provision of these services varies within and across the provinces.
- 3) Evaluate how patient outcomes vary within and across jurisdictions and as a function of travel times to the hospital.
- 4) Elicit feedback from patients with respect to their surgical experiences and preferences.

Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research

SPOR
Putting Patients First 

MSSU Committee Structure



Scientific Advisory Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Science Committee is to commission and oversee the scientific projects of the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU). This committee is also committed to promoting knowledge translation and patient engagement in every project.

Role and Activities

The science committee provides advice to and takes direction from the Executive Committee regarding the scientific projects of the unit, knowledge issues and patient engagement. The advisory committee contributes to the following:

- Priority setting
- Research agenda setting
- Patient and citizen engagement
- Knowledge Translation and Implementation Science

Data and Privacy Advisory Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Data and Privacy Advisory Committee is to facilitate and oversee the development, implementation and maintenance of the data platforms of the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU). The committee is also committed to managing issues related to privacy legislation and regulation.

Role and Activities

This committee provides advice to and takes direction from the Executive Committee regarding the data platforms and issues of privacy and data sharing. The committee contributes to the following:

- Developing a framework for linking health data
- Development of a data repository
- Data sharing

Training Advisory Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Training Advisory Committee is to brainstorm and provide advice on the various training initiatives of the Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit (MSSU).

Role and Activities

This committee provides advice on methods support and development as well as career development in methods and health services research components of the MSSU. When considering the various activities outlined in the MSSU logic model the Training Advisory Committee advises on the following:

- Best structures for providing grant/project support
- Best structures for assistance in grant development
- Training of highly qualified personnel
 - Professional development for Health Authority and government personnel