

LEARNING, ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING

PROJECT ACTIVITY UPDATE

History of Public Health and Health Care in Saskatchewan: The origins and import of health inequities in Saskatchewan 1905-1985

From 2011 to 2014, SPHERU has accomplished many things in terms of looking at the historical roots of many of today's health inequities.



"We can't just look at the present. We've got to look at the root causes," says Dr. Paul Hackett, project lead.

So far, the team has covered a lot of ground, beyond examples like James Daschuk's book, *Clearing The Plains*, which garnered awards and

media coverage. The history team also made presentations to SPHERU's partner communities on the Healthy Aging in Place project, Wolseley and Watrous, which also helps SPHERU segue into its current group grant project. In addition, there has been the historical work on the role of community-based organizations (CBO) that Gloria DeSantis has spearheaded, which resulted in reports and a journal article about the importance of volunteers historically in working on the social determinants of health.

Aiming to get the message out to a wider audience, including students and the public, the history team also launched a Twitter campaign about life in Regina in 1913 and introduced its interactive timeline, which includes many historical markers concerning health in Saskatchewan, as well as photographs and charts. (There is a link to the timeline on the SPHERU homepage.)

While in theory the project is winding down, the work will continue, as the team still has a large amount of data to consider. It is revising a paper for submission that, among other things, highlights the links between current challenges for First Nations and Métis people, and historical factors. There is another history paper in the works, "Years ago: Evoking the Past in First Nations Narratives of Tuberculosis in the Canadian Prairie Provinces," co-authored by Hackett and Sylvia Abonyi and a team from the University of Alberta.

Hackett and Abonyi will again be making a presentation based on historical body mass index data for students in residential schools at the Canadian Association of Physical Anthropology (CAPA) this November in Fredericton, while Hackett is also making a presentation on tuberculosis and residential schools in Toronto the same month.

Seasonality and Active Saskatoon Kids (SASK)

The Smart Cities, Healthy Kids project looks at the ways in which a city's built environment can influence children's health. As a follow-up study, the SCHK team is now working on a new study called Seasonality and Active Saskatoon Kids (SASK). It is an obesity intervention research project that will measure and identify locations where physical activity occurs in Saskatoon, across all seasons, among children aged 10-14 years.

One of the knowledge gaps, when it comes to looking at the links between built environment and physical activity, is data on what role seasonality plays when it comes to determining how active children are, especially in countries prone to weather extremes like Canada. To date, the strongest connections between seasonality and activity have been found in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, at least among the adult population.



This study will examine when children are most and least active throughout the year and through the course of the week. The research team is using some of the same methods as on the SCHK built environment study, such as self-reported activity questionnaires and accelerometers that measure the children's physical activity. Another unique aspect of the study is the use of GPS data loggers to track where children do physical activity. In all, the study has recruited more than 800 students from Grades 5-8 in 31 Saskatoon elementary schools. There is more information of the SCHK website at <http://smartcitieshealthykids.com/>.

WHO WE ARE

SPHERU is an interdisciplinary team of population health researchers at the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan. The bi-university unit conducts policy-relevant research focused on population health interventions and exploring ways to address inequities on the social determinants of health. To find out more about SPHERU, visit our website at www.spheru.ca.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Muhajarine honoured by alma mater

Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine was honoured on Sept. 27 by the University of Massachusetts Amherst School of Public Health and Health Sciences (SPHHS), which chose him for its SPHHS Award for Significant Contributions to the field of public health and the health sciences.

New healthy aging project attracts media

Our current group grant project looking at healthy aging in place received media attention from a number of radio stations, including John Gormley's show on CKOM. The project will involve three intervention studies over three years with seniors in Watrous, Wolseley and Young, along with Rosetown, which will participate in one study.

Johnson wins ICCA Award

Dr. Shanthi Johnson was awarded at the Indo-Canada

Chamber of Commerce 2014 Female Professional of the Year Award in Toronto in June. The award was part of the ICCA's annual Awards and Gala Night at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre recognizing the achievements of Indo-Canadians from across Canada.

Journeys in Community-Based Research launch

SPHERU's Dr. Bonnie Jeffery and Dr. Diane Martz co-edited *Journeys in Community-Based Research* (University of Regina Press), a collaboration between SPHERU and the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR).

Launched earlier this year, it looks at the importance of collaboration between academic researchers and community partners.



MEET OUR RESEARCHERS

As well as the acting SPHERU director, Dr. Sylvia Abonyi is an anthropologist working primarily in the area of Aboriginal health and an associate professor with the University of Saskatchewan's Community Health and Epidemiology Department.

Q. Can you expand on some of your most recent SPHERU research?

My most recent research has been in areas I have been working in for some time: Métis healthy aging, determinants of tuberculosis transmission in the Prairie provinces and research on a school-based Aboriginal youth exercise intervention. The healthy aging research was recently successful in attracting CIHR funding for a five-year project. Working with the Alberta team leads, we have been applying findings from our tuberculosis research to a review of the Health Canada On Reserve Strategy for TB, as well as the design of a multi-jurisdictional intervention. The Aboriginal youth exercise intervention was the subject of a SPHERU evaluation contract with FNIH-Regina, which SPHERU researcher Dr. Sarah Oosman has since developed into a CIHR-IAPH Pathways to Health Equity proposal submission.



Q. How has your area of research evolved during your time with SPHERU?

I joined SPHERU in September 2000 just as I was finishing my PhD. In that time my research has evolved from

contributions to specific SPHERU projects led by my senior colleagues to a fully realized program of research in the area of Aboriginal health I undertook for my two terms as a Canada Research Chair – with lots of support from SPHERU folk.

Q. Where does the work fit with the unit's newest SHRF group grant?

Our research on healthy aging in a Métis community developed out of the healthy aging stream on our last SHRF group grant, and continues to align very well with the intervention-focused program of rural aging in place research in our new SHRF group grant.

Q. Finally, what are your priorities as SPHERU's interim director for the coming year?

I am attempting to fill some pretty big shoes! Both U of S and U of R are undergoing periods of change and priority setting. It will be important that SPHERU remains on the radar at both institutions. The SHRF Group Grant program will no longer be offered, so a major priority in the coming months is to identify and position us for other funding opportunities. Finally, we also are in transition from a model that included some core funding to purely project-based support. This will present challenges for engaging in the interdisciplinary and broader level conceptual and practical dialogue that takes place outside project-specific conversations. It is important to me that we find ways for these big conversations to continue.