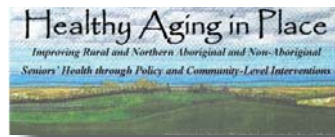


# LEARNING, ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING

## PROJECT ACTIVITY UPDATE

### Healthy Aging in Place: Improving Rural Seniors' Health through Policy and Community Level Interventions

The first project of the current Healthy Aging in Place research program is moving towards completion, with the second of the three projects now under way.



Healthy Aging in Place: Improving Rural Seniors' Health through Policy and Community Level Interventions is funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation and began in 2014. The first project, a three-month exercise program designed to enhance mobility and social interaction, began after *Forever...in motion* program staff from the Saskatoon and Regina Qu'Appelle Health Regions trained local peer leaders. The program was delivered in the communities of Watrous, Wolseley, and Young from February to April with a total of 61 older residents recruited and 44 retained; 17 participants were not able to complete the study, mostly for health reasons.

The second project, Supporting Healthy Aging through Walkable Built Environment, began in July with a community audit of the built environments in Young, Watrous, Wolseley, and Rosetown. The audits involved creating an inventory of features of the built environment such as sidewalks, traffic lights, and pedestrian walk signals. Both the presence and condition of features were noted. For example, while a curb ramp can accommodate a wheelchair, one in poor condition can limit access. The result of the audits will be segmented maps using GPS technology.

As well, there will be town-wide assessments of local recreation facilities, such as parks and pools, using phone interviews and focus groups. This will be supplemented with assessments of local policies and programs. In early 2016 the project will also include walking interviews with participants to collect information on their experiences with the community's built environment.

The third and final project, Addressing Rural Seniors' Access to Information, will look at increasing seniors' access to information and awareness of services and supports in order to help them age in place. Data collection will begin in 2016 and will include interviews, focus groups, and World Café discussion groups.

### Seasonality and Active Saskatoon Kids

The Seasonality and Active Saskatoon Kids (SASK) project is winding down on data collection after working with 31 schools and approximately 600 children.

The obesity intervention research project, led by Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine, is measuring locations of children's activity in Saskatoon and what effect the seasons might have on how active the children are. The ultimate aim is to inform policy interventions that can reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity.

To gather the data, students between grades 5 and 8 wore GPS data loggers and accelerometers for periods at different times of the year, with the last period ending this September. Data collection started in September 2014 and ran through the fall, with the second phase of collection running from January through April 2015. The last phase began in the spring.



With the data collection ending, the project now turns to analysis and eventually knowledge translation activities to share the findings of the study. As well, the students will complete a physical activity questionnaire with a parent or guardian outside of school time.

The SASK study is part of the Smart Cities, Healthy Kids project, also led by Muhajarine. This project started with an examination of how the built environment in Saskatoon influences children's activity levels. It was followed by Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer's research into how the city's food environment affects children's nutrition and eating habits based on their access to healthy food.

#### 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](http://www.spheru.ca).

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### SPHERU adds two U of R researchers to ranks

The Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit has added two University of Regina faculty members, Dr. Gabriela Novotna and Dr. Michelle Stewart. Novotna is an assistant professor in the University of Regina Faculty of Social Work. Stewart is an associate professor in the Department of Justice Studies.

### Engler-Stringer named a 'Food Hero'

SPHERU's Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer was recently chosen as one of seven "Food Heroes" by Slow Food in Canada. In presenting the award, Slow Food in Canada called

her a "dynamic activist" and cited her activities on the Saskatoon Food Council, as well as her research on food systems and health.

### Hackett interviewed for Lancet article

Dr. Paul Hackett was interviewed for the prestigious journal, *The Lancet* (May 2015), regarding SPHERU's historical research into the social determinants of health for Aboriginal people. The article by Angela Pirisi looks at the health disparities for Aboriginal people in Canada and focuses on different work across the country.

## THE LANCET

## MEET OUR RESEARCHERS

*Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer is the Principal investigator on a new, multi-phase study, Nutrition and Inequity in the Inner City: A study of diet and food access in the context of community-based food interventions.*

### How does research from the Good Food Junction project relate to the new study?

When we went door-to-door to all homes within 750 metres of the Good Food Junction, in the core neighbourhoods, we asked about household demographics and food access. We found that about half of the sample lived in a home with an annual household income of less than \$30,000. What we also found out is that people access food in quite complex ways. In addition to the use of grocery stores and other types of food stores, almost three quarters said they used anywhere from one to four different community-based food interventions.



### For the early phase, why is it important to get to know the participants?

We are spending a year collecting data with 30 or so households, asking fairly intimate questions about their day-to-day lives. The data will require effort on their part, not only because we want them to participate in interviews, observation, and possibly photography, but because we are piloting the use of smartphones to collect data. It is important that they trust us and understand this research comes from a place of believing in the rights of everyone to access healthy food.

### What data will the smart phones track?

We will be using a smartphone app and short surveys

on smartphones to collect diet data, food sourcing data, real-time travel data, and more. Specifically the app is designed to collect three-day food records at three time points over six months, to collect all food purchasing for four one-week periods over six months, and to collect some survey data on the social aspects of eating. In addition, we will use phone GPS to examine how and where they travel to access food.

### What role do the funders or partners play?

The funders are the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, and the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada). Partners include CHEP Good Food Inc., the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, Population and Public Health at the Saskatoon Health Region, the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, the Friendship Inn and the Northern Trappers Cooperative Association. Their role will be around directing some data collection choices to ensure we meet their needs to inform programming; their needs will also inform much of our knowledge translation. In addition, they are helping with recruitment and will likely play other roles along the way.

### Finally, what makes this study unique versus other food environment research?

This study is an opportunity to add to our understanding of how people interact with their food environments. Much research to date has made many assumptions about how people use available food sources, but this study does not make those assumptions. Instead, it attempts to uncover them and make them better understood which will hopefully inform future research, but more importantly policy and practice.