

LEARNING, ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING

PROJECT ACTIVITY UPDATE

Smart Cities, Healthy Kids team keeping busy with Knowledge Translation activities

The Smart Cities, Healthy Kids team has been busy with its three-year look at Saskatoon's built environment and how it's influencing children's activity levels.

The SPHERU team has been examining how Saskatoon's neighbourhoods have developed over time and what design elements they include – the built environment – that encourage or discourage physical activity among children.



They have surveyed school children about their activity levels and measured actual activity levels, interviewed some of the kids and their parents about how they feel their neighbourhoods influence their activities, and had the kids take

pictures – a process called photovoice – to document what helps or hinders activities.

In addition to a number of reports looking at different aspects of the project, the team has been busy with a number of knowledge translation activities. In the fall of 2011, they invented a board game, Researchopoly, which they used to conduct workshops on project management in Saskatoon and Regina. The game was also featured in the Nov. 18, 2011 issue of *On Campus News* at the University of Saskatchewan.

Other upcoming activities are a Creating Active Communities workshop in May at the University of Saskatchewan, a “bike-

OUR RESEARCH

Researchers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds bring a wide selection of research interests creating a diverse team where various perspectives and expertise are harnessed in a collaboratively driven environment to give SPHERU the ability to undertake critical population health research and promote healthy equity by addressing health disparities. We conduct work in the areas of Northern and Aboriginal Health, Healthy Children, Rural Health, the History of Health Inequities, and Intervention Research.

ability” workshop in June with the Saskatoon Bike Co-op and a series of fact sheets about different aspects of the project.

Smart Cities, Healthy Kids has also generated media attention. For example, Principal Investigator Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine was interviewed on CBC Radio's “The Morning Edition” last fall, while the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* ran a series of op-eds the previous fall.

For an introduction, check out a video on kidSKAN's YouTube channel.

Food environment study, the sister of Smart Cities

The SPHERU Smart Cities team is also conducting a sister study, led by Principal Investigator Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer, which looks at Saskatoon's food environment – how places to obtain food are distributed, the quality and cost of this food, and the subsequent effects on children's eating habits.

SPHERU has collaborated with the health region to map out whether healthy food choices are available in neighbourhood stores and restaurants. For many in the city, it's easier to get to a fast food restaurant than a grocery store.

The first phase of the study involved building on the health region's work to map large grocery stores and fast food restaurants by including convenience stores, specialty food stores and family restaurants. In early 2011, the researchers took an inventory of restaurants and food stores to see what food was available on menus and store shelves.

Currently, the team is collaborating with public and Catholic schools to survey students from grades 5 to 8 and their families about eating habits, as well as their feelings about how where they live influences what they eat. The Smart Cities team will have gathered all the survey data from 43 schools this spring and will begin collecting accelerometry data for the students in the near future.



OUR RESEARCH TEAM

University of Regina

Bonnie Jeffery, Director
Shanthi Johnson, Research Faculty
Tom McIntosh, Research Faculty
James Daschuk, Research Faculty
Mary Hampton, Research Associate
Gloria DeSantis, Research Associate/
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Nazeem Muhajarine, Research Faculty
Sylvia Abonyi, Research Faculty
Paul Hackett, Research Faculty
Diane Martz, Research Faculty
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Nazmi Sari, Research Faculty

WHO WE ARE

SPHERU is an interdisciplinary team of population health researchers from the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan with sites in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Established in 1999 and funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, with additional project specific funding provided by other provincial and national health research funding agencies, SPHERU is the first bi-university research unit of its kind in Saskatchewan.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

McIntosh to take over as interim director in July

Dr. Tom McIntosh has accepted a one-year appointment as Interim Director of SPHERU when Dr. Bonnie Jeffery steps down from the position on June 30, 2012. During this one-year period, Dr. McIntosh will work with the Management Advisory Group and the faculty of SPHERU to ensure that a process is in place to ensure a smooth transition towards appointing a new Director of SPHERU by July 1, 2013.

Dr. Jeffery will continue as Principal Investigator of the SHRF Health Research Group Grant and will, along with Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine as Co-Principal Investigator, provide leadership in completion of the three-year research program.



SPHERU launches its new website

May 2012 marks the launch of the brand-new SPHERU website. We've been working this past year on redesigning our site. We're making it more visually appealing, easier to navigate and adding new material and more feature stories about all the work that our researchers and staff are doing. It's at www.spheru.ca.

DeSantis work takes "snapshot" of Regina's community orgs

Dr. Gloria DeSantis's report, *A Snapshot of Regina's Organizations at Work on the Determinants of Community Well-being*, was the subject of a recent meeting of community groups working with Regina's vulnerable populations.

In early March at the city's United Way, De Santis and co-authors Carla Bolen Anderson and Wendy Stone of the Regina Police Service took participants through the findings and their implications.

PUBLICATIONS

Community-Based Health Research: A Summer Institute

The full report from last June's event at the University of Regina was released in November 2011. The document



includes case studies, presentations, resources and a DVD of keynote speaker, Dr. Charlotte Reading. It's at www.spheru.ca.

The Role of Social Systems in the Health of Seniors Living in Rural Saskatchewan

This 2011 report highlights a pilot project

that examined the relationship between social systems and the health of seniors living in two rural communities, Preeceville and Watrous. Related to this project is a newsletter, *Health Aging in Place*, which provides recent findings, updates and profiles of some of the team involved. Check out www.spheru.ca.



centre4activeliving.ca/), summarizes and promotes research of interest to academics and practitioners in health promotion and physical activity. The work of SPHERU researchers is published biannually in the spring and fall editions.

"Innovations in Knowledge Translation – The SPHERU KT Casebook" (Vol. 19 / No. 1 March 2012) The publication, edited by Juanita Bacsu and Fleur Macqueen Smith, looks at the best in knowledge translation work.



Alberta Centre for Active Living Research Update

Research Update, published by the Alberta Centre for Active Living (www.centre4activeliving.ca/).

MEET OUR PROJECT STAFF



Fleur Macqueen Smith, MA, is the Knowledge Transfer Manager in the Healthy Children research program at SPHERU led by Nazeem Muhajarine, a position she has held since 2004. She works with academics and decision-makers to share research findings and best practices, many of which are posted on kidSKAN, the Saskatchewan Knowledge to Action Network for early childhood development (kidskan.ca).

Fleur has 16 years of experience as a journalist, writer and editor. She holds an English and Business co-op degree from the University of Waterloo, and an interdisciplinary master's from the University of Saskatchewan. In 2011, she received an NCCPH Knowledge Translation graduate award for her master's research on knowledge transfer.

Juanita Bacsu, MA, has been project coordinator for the SPHERU Team Project since 2009. Before this, she was a senior communications manager for the Saskatchewan government and a research associate at the University of Saskatchewan. She is a board member of the Canadian Rural Health Research Society and is completing her PhD in Community Health and Epidemiology at the U of S. Juanita is also working on the Healthy Aging in Place and History of Health Inequities projects. She enjoys writing grant proposals, and her research interests include rural health and geriatrics, knowledge translation and health policy.



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