

NSHRF Priority Setting Monthly Update for October 2009

This document provides a summary of documents and background material produced as well as the consultations held in September 2009. For more details on the documents and background materials please refer to the NSHRF website: www.nshrf.ca.

Background Documents and Other Materials

As part of the priority setting process a number of background documents are being prepared. These documents are considered "living documents" and are posted on the NSHRF website as they are completed for your information, feedback, input and suggestions. If readers feel that information is missing, incorrect or misrepresented from any of the background documents, or the process, they are asked to submit that information to the NSHRF up to and including **November 2, 2009** for consideration as priorities are established. Please email any comments or additional information to Linda Waterhouse (Linda.Waterhouse@gov.ns.ca).

Major Health Issues in Nova Scotia: An Environmental Scan

This scan considered high level morbidity and mortality data in order to identify six major health issues for the province of Nova Scotia. For full details and a listing of systematic reviews and other research reviews related to the major health issues please see the full report at:

<http://www.nshrf.ca/AbsPage.aspx?ID=1356&siteid=1&lang=1>

- ***Reducing health disparities.*** Health disparities are significant health challenges that differ among populations based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. This may include things like food insecurity, lack of access to culturally appropriate health services, or poor health literacy.
- ***Integrated disease and injury prevention.*** This includes reducing the risk of disease and injury through mechanisms such as increasing physical activity, promoting healthy eating and wearing helmets for riding bicycles
- ***Chronic disease management.*** This includes the management of diseases over a long period of time that are rarely cured completely. This includes conditions such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, cancer, asthma, etc.

- **Re-orienting the health system to emphasize primary health care.** Primary health care services are often the first point of contact with the health system and are provided to promote health, prevent illness and treat people when they are ill.
- **Implementing sustainable continuing care models.** Continuing care is longer-term in nature and is provided to people in a variety of settings including hospitals, long-term care facilities (nursing home) or in their own home.
- **Implementing best practices in recruitment, retention, role sharing and change among health human resources.** Health human resources are those human resources required to staff the health system

Omnibus Survey

An omnibus survey was conducted on behalf of the NSHRF to gauge public opinion on health research in Nova Scotia. The purpose of the survey was to determine areas of concern to the public regarding health system issues, health behaviour issues and diseases that affect Nova Scotians. Not surprisingly, the public's major areas of concern mirror what was found in the scan mentioned above. Some of the major issues identified by the public are:

- Wait times
- Doctor/nursing shortage
- Bed shortages, senior care, long-term care
- Cancer, heart disease, diabetes
- Physical inactivity, poor eating habits and smoking

Consultations

In **September 2009**, consultation sessions were held with the following groups/organizations:

- Acadia University
- Advisory Council of CEOs, NS Department of Health
- Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia, Board of Directors
- Cape Breton University
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia, Board of Directors
- Faculty of Health Professions, Dalhousie University, Research Advisory Committee
- Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University, Research Advisory Committee
- NSHRF Research Advisory Committee
- NSHRF Staff

In **October 2009**, consultations are planned with the following groups/organizations:

- Annapolis Valley District Health Authority
- Capital District Health Authority

- Cumberland District Health Authority
- Graduate Studies, Dalhousie University
- Greater Halifax Partnership
- Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority
- In-house Consultation Sessions (two sessions with invited stakeholders)
- NS Department of Education
- NS Department of Health
- NS Department of Health Promotion and Protection
- Saint Francis Xavier University
- Saint Mary's University

In **November 2009**, consultations are planned with the following groups/organizations:

- Canadian Cancer Society, Nova Scotia Division
- NS Department of Community Services

Feedback from Consultations to Date

Listed below are major themes (in bold font), and key points related to the themes, that have been raised in discussion during consultation sessions.

Challenges for the health research community

- Declining funding, increased competition
- Limited infrastructure to support health research
 - Physical
 - Human resources
- Data availability and access
- Fragility of research programs
 - Dependent on only one or two key individuals
 - Sustainability challenges
 - Competition nationally for the “best and the brightest”
- The research continuum, quality improvement, evaluation and research are not currently linked
- Recruitment and retention are challenging

Challenges for the health system

- Access to current and relevant research
- Limited infrastructure to access and appraise research evidence
- Challenges in the application of research results
- Provincial data repository, quality, and quantity of information is variable which makes decision making complicated.
- The research continuum, quality improvement, evaluation and research are linked, but not in the current systems
- Practitioners and government are unsure if research supports their work on population health

- There is a concern amongst practitioners and government around how to conduct the best evaluations and whether research can or should help with this
- Changing demographics and potential impacts on the system including HHR
- There is a need to create a culture of research use and for leadership in creating this culture

Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (KT/E)

- KT/E support is required to :
 - Address gaps in practice (what we know versus what we do)
 - Support applying research where it exists (i.e. quality improvement)
 - Addressing economic challenges of health care under current models raises question of knowledge generation versus mobilization debate
- Need for KT/E strategies to support government/DHA initiatives
- Need for KT/E strategies to support continuing education of health professionals

Program support for priorities

- Could incentives be provided to NSHRF funded researchers who explore savings to the health system?
- Limited NSHRF dollars might be better spent on leveraging national/international opportunities
- Researchers located in smaller institutions, in less funded faculties of larger institutions and staff of DHAs and community organizations might be well served by support for relief from teaching, work or practice duties

Support for the health research community

- NSHRF programs are well received and provide appropriate support even though resources are limited
- The initial capacity building priority was important, but this “priority” is part of the organization’s philosophy and is now entrenched in program design and policy

Priority setting approach

- Process is reasonable and appropriate
- NSHRF should be strategic as it identifies priorities
- Focus on a particular disease not appropriate as a priority (although may cut across themes)
- Concerns raised over the possibility of being too focused and losing site of the need for a solid base of health research activity to sustain:
 - Emerging world class research
 - Faculty recruitment and retention
 - Health care practitioner recruitment and retention
 - Ability to capitalize on opportunistic national funding programs

General Comments

- Not enough attention paid to research focused on the prevention of disease (population health, health promotion)
- Economic impact of health system costs saved through disease prevention and improvements in practice
- Mental Health issues are important at a population level and in terms of the impact on the health system
- There is a need for support for collaborative and interdisciplinary research

Please Participate

Also available is an electronic survey. Please complete one of the surveys:

For members of the **health research or health system community** please go to:

<https://surveys.gov.ns.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n23K782>

For members of the **public** please go to:

<https://surveys.gov.ns.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n23K982>