PROJECT FACT SHEET

Training the Next Generation of Health Informatics Research Experts

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Health informatics is the study of how health data is captured and flows through health system, how this data is transformed into information and this information into knowledge. Inherent in this are the ways that information about health is collected, the way it is transmitted, and how it is applied in the development of health policies. The ultimate goal of health informatics is to improve health outcomes by improving the way that health information is collected, analyzed, and transmitted.

Training is critical: Expert researchers mean better-quality research and an improved understanding of health issues. To help achieve that, Canadian health informatics researchers established the CIHR Health Informatics PhD/Postdoc Strategic Training Program (CHPSTP), which is based at the University of Victoria but has eight partner universities across Canada, including Dalhousie. The widespread nature of this training program makes it central in the education of Canada's future health informatics specialists.

"The overall aim of the program is to increase our capacity to perform health informatics research at advanced levels and to make sure that the research being conducted is pertinent and properly conducted," says Dr. Michael Shepherd, a member of the faculty of Computer Science at Dalhousie University, who recently received a matching grant from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation to help support students through the CHPSTP program.

The Dalhousie students who participated in the program produced 33 research publications contributing to the field of health informatics. They will now go on to apply the knowledge they received in the program throughout their careers – careers that may be based here in Nova Scotia.

"This next generation of health informatics experts will no doubt make significant contributions to the field of health informatics rsearch, which will impact on health policy," notes Dr. Shepherd.

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