



# The Need to Know...

Funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
(Community Alliances for Health Research)

Director: Patricia Martens

Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP)



Manitoba  
Centre for  
Health  
Policy



CIHR IRSC  
Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
Instituts de Santé de Canada

## Making Good Progress on The *What Works* Deliverable: NTK Meeting #15

The summer meeting of *The Need to Know* Team began with a review of the progress-to-date for the *What Works* deliverable. Team members reviewed and discussed rate and time trend graphs, and maps for the three indicators completed so far—teen pregnancy, breastfeeding initiation and mammography. This meeting was also the first chance for Team members to meet the working group for the *What Works* project.

In keeping with tradition, Team members were given the opportunity to learn more about fundamental population health concepts. This meeting's '101 session' was on the topic of 'population attributable risk' - calculating this can help to determine how beneficial an intervention is for whole communities/populations, and in turn, how much resources, if any, should be invested in the intervention.

The issue of project sustainability was also discussed at the meeting. Efforts are already underway to attempt to sustain *The Need to Know* Project beyond the end of its funding in 2007, but the Team generated additional ideas including 'piggybacking' on other meetings and using Telehealth for meetings.



Dr. Shahin  
Shooshtari

Dr. Shahin Shooshtari presented findings from her research on **dementia and associated risk factors**. She found that a history of heart disease, hypertension, stroke, kidney problems and low levels of education were associated with increased risk of developing dementia. Factors found to be protective against dementia included positive perception of overall health status, satisfaction with life, having a spouse, high level of mental leisure activities and high frequency of social contacts.

'Stories from the region' is becoming a regular part of Team meetings, where Team members have an opportunity to showcase the different ways that NTK research is being used in their RHAs. Some examples include: (i) the review of selected report chapters as a regular part of board meetings (Parkland), (ii) the use of reports as part of medical student education (Central) and staff education (Nor-Man), and

(iii) the use of findings in reports to Manitoba Health (Burntwood) and in presentations to accreditation teams (North Eastman, Assiniboine).



Helen Clark

Information was also presented about two **new educational opportunities**. Helen Clark spoke about the **CHSRF EXTRA Program—Executive Training for Research Application**. This is a new initiative aimed at providing Canadian health system senior managers with the skills needed to make better use of research in their daily work, in an effort to facilitate evidence-based decision-making in the health system. Check out the website for more information [<http://chsrf.ca/extra/>]. Dr. Lawrence Elliott, Associate Department Head of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, presented information about the new **Masters of Public Health** program that will be offered in September 2007. [see p. 2 "New Public Health Degree..." for more information]



Dr. Lawrence  
Elliott

Dr. Sarah Bowen and Project Coordinator Tannis Erickson updated the Team on the progress-to-date for the **From Evidence to Action** project. See the bottom of this page for a project update.

Topics for possible **future deliverables** were also discussed by the Team. Some of the ideas include: (i) an update of selected indicators from the RHA Atlas, Mental Illness Report and Sex Differences Report, (ii) emergency room use, (iii) health of immigrants and refugees, (iv) health of Metis, and (v) outcomes related to clinical practice guidelines.

The meeting came to a close with a presentation by Dr. Kathy MacPherson who updated the team on the progress of **The Need to Know Pilot Project in Nova Scotia**. The purpose of this project is to use The Need to Know methodology to enhance the capacity to develop, interpret and use health indicators as a pilot project in one of Nova Scotia's District Health Authorities.

### - From Evidence to Action - Update



A report on findings from Phase 1 of the *From Evidence to Action* project will be released this fall. This phase explored decision maker/manager perceptions of: 1) the importance of evidence informed decision making (EIDM); 2) "success" of RHAs in research utilization activities; 3) barriers to EIDM within the RHAs; and 4) suggested strategies for assessing organizational progress towards EIDM.

Work on Phase 2 has begun and focuses on development and implementation of decision-making tools and processes

to assist RHAs in their use of evidence in decision making. Tools that are under consideration for development include one page "How To" summaries for decision makers on topics such as using research in priority setting and writing a briefing note. Examples of other items in this "toolkit" include a common language definitions list and a "What is Evidence" document. (Tannis Erickson, FEA Project Coordinator)

\*see *The Need to Know* newsletter Vol. 11, Fall 2005, p.2 for FEA project overview. It is available via *The Need To Know* website: <http://www.rha.cpe.umanitoba.ca/newsletters.shtml>

**The Manitoba Centre  
for Health Policy (MCHP)**

4th Floor, Brodie Centre  
University of Manitoba  
408-727 McDermot Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3E 3P5

**Newsletter contact:**

Elaine Burland  
phone: (204) 789-3875  
email: elaine\_burland@cpe.umanitoba.ca



**MCHP website:**

www.umanitoba.ca/centres/mchp  
(link to *The Need to Know* website from here)

**F.Y.I.**

- NTK Team meeting #16 was held Oct 23, 2006 & the **13th Annual Rural and Northern Health Care Day was held October 24, 2006 at the Caboto Centre**
- Applications for the Masters of Public Health Degree Program in Community Health Sciences at the U of M will be accepted in January 2007 for September 2007 registration

**Evaluating Evaluation Research**



Public health programs are usually quite complex, so the methods for evaluating their effectiveness must be able to assess this complexity. Historically, randomized control trials (RCTs) have been regarded as 'level 1' or the best evidence available for assessing the effects of interventions.

However, RCTs are not usually feasible for evaluating public health programs. There are many useful alternate designs, such as quasi-experiments, but guides for their appraisal are lacking.

Rychetnick et al (2002) compiled existing approaches for evaluating different kinds of interventions and evaluations (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, economic, process). However, they point out that there are important characteristics of public health interventions that are not assessed by the existing criteria.

When an intervention is not successful, it is critical to determine *why* it failed—in other words, was it because the intervention did not actually have an effect, or be-

cause there was a significant effect that was not detected by the evaluation, the intervention was not delivered properly, or the most suitable intervention was not used?

Thus, considering only level 1 evidence may not be prudent when making public health decisions—it is not necessarily the best suited to assessment of public health interventions and potentially ignores important information deemed below level 1.

The above is a summary of an article by Rychetnick et. al. (2002) *Criteria for evaluating evidence on public health interventions*.

**Spreading *The Need to Know* Word**



Several members of *The Need to Know* Team (Pat Martens, Tannis Erickson, Randy Fransoo, Elaine Burland, Heather Prior and Jen Magoon) were in Prince George in mid October, armed with project-related presentations and posters for the 7th National Conference of the Canadian Rural Health Research Society (CRHRS): 'Rural & Remote Health: Taking Action Together'.

*The Need to Know* Project Director, Dr. Patricia Martens, has also been busy spreading the word about the project and its findings. In June, she spoke to the Provincial Mental Health Management Advisory Committee on The Manitoba Mental Illness Report, and in August, to the Provincial Deputy Ministers/ Secretaries to Treasury Boards, 2006 Budget Conference on enhancing performance reporting via the interaction of research and policy.



**New Public Health Degree in 2007**

Applications will be accepted in January 2007 for a new degree program in Community Health Sciences—Masters of Public Health. This degree will complement the Department's current thesis-based graduate degree, by focusing on applied training and practice in public health. The goal is to provide knowledge and skills in community/public health practice, including community health assessment, program planning and evaluation, prevention and population health promotion and health policy development.

Check out the following website for more information:  
[http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/chs/graduate/grad\\_intro.html](http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/chs/graduate/grad_intro.html)

**So Long Shahin & Jen**

Dr. Shahin Shooshtari and Jen Magoon will no longer be members of *The Need to Know* Team. Shahin has accepted a position in the Faculty of Human Ecology at the Fort Garry Campus, and Jen has moved back home while she completes her Masters Degree in Community Health Sciences, and then she plans to do some world travel. Congratulations and best of luck to you both!



***The Need to Know* Team Members:**

**RHA MEMBERS:**

- Jody Allan
- Faye White  
Assiniboine
- Bev Cumming
- Nancy McPherson  
Brandon
- Marion Ellis
- Vivian Salmon  
Burntwood
- Shelley Buchan  
Central
- Randy Gesell
- Ken Grant  
Churchill
- Tannis Erickson
- Doreen Fey  
Interlake
- Sue Crockett
- Catherine Hynes  
Nor-Man
- Bonnie Frith
- Suzanne Dick  
North Eastman
- Maggie Campbell  
Parkland
- Patti Fries  
South Eastman
- Janet Bjornson  
WRHA Liaison

**MANITOBA HEALTH MEMBERS:**

- Deborah Malazdrewicz  
Health Information Management
- Lorraine Dacombe  
Dewar
- Community Health Assessment
- Eilish Cleary  
Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
- Heather Sparling  
Community Health Assessment
- Rachel McPherson  
Health Information Management
- Bob Li  
Epidemiologist
- Melissa Monasterski  
Community Health Assessment



**RESEARCHERS & MCHP PROJECT MEMBERS:**

- Pat Martens  
Director
- Randy Fransoo  
Researcher
- Sarah Bowen  
Evaluation Researcher
- Elaine Burland  
Research Coordinator
- Charles Burchill  
Systems Analyst
- Heather Prior  
Main Programmer
- Linda Kostiuik  
Finance Coordinator
- Wendy Guenette  
Planning Coordinator
- Carole Ouelette  
Research Support
- Janine Harasymchuk  
Website & Software
- Linda Romph  
Research Coordinator