

Creating a Community of Practice of Public Health Researchers During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Session #3

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
O'Brien Institute for Public Health

Creating a Community of Practice – Session 3

- Brief Re-cap and rationale for COP sessions
- Community, Collaboration, Coordination
- Slack Channel
- <https://ucalgary-covid-collab.slack.com/signup>
- VPR COVID collaboration page
- <https://research.ucalgary.ca/covid-19/collaboration>

Webinar on COVID-19 clinical research

- **When:** April 17, 10 to 11am;
- **Where:** <https://ucalgary.zoom.us/j/96447746887>)
- **Hosts:** Dr. Kirsten Fiest (Vice Chair Research, Dept of Critical Care Medicine), Dr. Sofia Ahmed (Vice Chair Research, Dept of Medicine), Jenna Slobozian (Manager Grant Development, Cumming School of Medicine)
- **Agenda:**
Overview on Cumming School of Medicine COVID-19 research resources, including funding/collaboration opportunities

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Canada's Chief Science Advisor has collaborated with the Government of Canada's departmental science advisors, the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, Compute Ontario and the University of Toronto to launch CanCOVID, a new Canada-wide network of health, science and policy researchers to facilitate COVID-19 research collaboration.

For more information on the CanCOVID initiative:

Visit: cancovid.ca

Email: info@cancovid.ca

Follow on Twitter: [@CanCOVID](https://twitter.com/CanCOVID)

The primary federal authoritative source of information for all Canadians on COVID-19 is Canada.ca/coronavirus, as

<https://cancovid.ca/>

CanPath COVID questionnaire

- Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow's Health (CanPATH – formerly known as the Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project) to deploy a COVID-19 questionnaire to all participants in this cohort (>300,000 Canadians).
- This opportunity is rare for us to provide input on a national cohort study that has been on-going and is well-established.
- Access the data collected from this questionnaire for research
- Review by Friday, April 17th

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

- Call for researchers: **Supporting Canada's COVID-19 response**
- Researchers in Canada continue to pull together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic
- PHAC is **requesting support** from public health agencies, schools, institutes, researchers and trainees who are interested in participating in **national calls for public health evidence reviews, environmental scans, and other areas of need.**
- If you are able to offer your support to PHAC, please contact us (iph@ucalgary.ca) with relevant appointments and credentials, and the area in which you can offer support.

Updates from O'Brien

- UofC COVID task force (Christine)
- O'Brien Institute Operations and Communications (Jamie/Pablo)
- Executive committee portfolios / representatives (*if attending and have information to share*)
 - Awards
 - Alberta Health Services
 - Community Health Sciences
 - Communications / Seminar and events
 - Internal Peer Review
 - Mentorship and Leadership
 - Research Impact Assessment
 - Partnerships / International
 - Policy
 - Trainees

Update from Collaborating groups

- Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging
- Centre for Health Informatics / University of Calgary Biostatistics Centre
- Geography of Health
- Global Health
- Group for Research with Indigenous Populations
- Health Economics
- HTA unit
- MakeCalgary & Vivo Project
- Mathison Centre
- Methods / AbSporu
- Population Health and Prevention
- Vulnerable Populations / StreetCCRED / Refugees Health
- W21C Research and Innovation Centre

Career Development and Wellness of Our Members

- Series of sessions addressing aspects
 - Work/home/family balance
 - Self care
- Early Leader Council – Tenure Track Clock
- Other ideas, suggestions, comments



Mentorship and leadership portfolio
April 16, 2020 – Zoom meeting

Creating a Community of Practice of Public Health Researchers During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Networking Session # 3

Host: Aliya Kassam, lead for Mentorship and Leadership portfolio

Notes

This session compiled updates from different groups collaborating with the Institute, and their project related to COVID-19. Links to additional resources for researchers (e.g. UofC web-pages dedicated to the response to COVID-19, the UofC Slack, CanCoVID) are available in appendix.

Updates from:

- 1) Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging and collaborators – *Ann Toohey, Scientific Coordinator*
 - a. The Centre has been identifying COVID projects exploring the implications of the pandemic for older adults.
 - b. *Meghan McDonough (Kinesiology)* is amending her ongoing project examining social support, social barriers, and social outcomes related to physical activity participation among older adults, particularly those who are vulnerable to social isolation. This project has been expanded to include examining experiences of older adults who are unable to participate in group physical activity recreation opportunities due to COVID-19. Meghan's team is also planning further proposals to look at how social distancing during COVID-19 affects older adults' experiences with physical activity and social participation, and implications for their well-being. **Ideas regarding the process of recruiting participants during the COVID-19 pandemic are welcome**
 - c. *Sara Mallinson (AHS – Health Systems Evaluation and Evidence)*: Their existing grant from the Canadian frailty network looks at primary care and the management of frail people and people who are on the cusp of becoming frail. Recruitment has stopped, however they are exploring contacting current participants for questionnaires looking at personal experiences, management of healthcare needs & social isolation during the pandemic.
- 2) Centre for Health Informatics/Methods Hub – *Catherine Eastwood, Manager CHI*
 - a. The [COVID tracker tool](#), built by Tyler Williamson's team, uses high quality Alberta Data, is updated every 24hrs and is improved everyday. Data from other provinces comes from publicly available sources, which is not as strong as the data from Alberta
 - b. CHI is also looking to digitize Healthlink data, because paper forms (≥ 50000) started to be used when Health Link was overrun with thousands of calls per day.



- c. Sharing data: Ethics requests to access secondary datasets can be fast-tracked (inpatient/outpatient data, lab data, hospital data, emergency room data, even long-term care data). Analytics support is available.

3) Global Health - *Jennifer Hatfield*

- a. The project in Tanzania on health system strengthening for maternal and newborn child health is now wrapping up. Leftover funds will be used for different aspects of emergency preparedness “on the ground in rural areas” in regards to COVID-19. The funds will be used for practical reasons, like purchase of PPE, training of staff, etc. Any ongoing research is currently on pause.

Tanzania is in a unique and very difficult position since the president has been reluctant to implement protocols for physical distancing and rapid response. We will have to see how that unfolds. Uganda has been more proactive and more responsive in their response to following WHO suggestions.

4) MakeCalgary / Vivo Project (*Fiona Boulet – Make Calgary Coordinator, Jennie Petersen, RA in CHS*)

- a. [Vivo](#) is working with Gavin McCormack and Tish Doyle Baker to evaluate their large play initiative. One aspect of that evaluation is a baseline survey that would go out to a sample of households in North central Calgary. Since the survey is intended to capture changes in physical activity, social interaction, play, parks usage, etc, there is obviously quite an impact on behaviors because of the physical distancing measures due to COVID-19. Questions were added to the survey to show how COVID has affected those different behaviors. There will also be a more in-depth qualitative follow-up with some participants regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their behaviors.

5) Vulnerable populations

- a. StreetCCRED (*Steven Richardson – StreetCCRED Program Coordinator*):

Research has slowed down since the beginning of the crisis and efforts have been focused on helping frontline workers. Although slower than hoped for, the city's response has been positive. They've created an “isolation hotel” in the North of the city where anyone symptomatic or who has tested positive, is able to isolate. They've also provided each of the shelters additional spaces to ensure that a social distancing can actually take place. Since the beginning of the crisis, the shelters have seen an influx of people accessing them. They've also seen 4x the amount of overdoses (which might not be COVID related, but is certainly having an impact on the sector).

- b. Evaluation support for Correctional facilities (*Rima Tarraf - Health Systems Evaluation and Evidence, AHS*)

As part of the ongoing evaluation support by AHS to provincial correctional facilities, Rima and her team has been trying to help develop a quick feedback loop to guide their correctional health response to COVID-19 (AHS provides all the health care support to



correctional facilities). The team has been in touch with health care managers, Justice, and the Solicitor General to see what challenges they've been facing. There are a lot of challenges, including on the communication front (e.g. How to get PPE, and mixed messaging around who should be getting PPE). Rima's team is also hoping to gather inmates' perspectives.

c. Refugee health (*Jennifer Hatfield*)

BHSc students, led by Dr. Turin Chowdhury, are looking for mentors who would be able to help them with their qualitative research analysis. **Anyone interested should get in touch with Dr. Hatfield**

6) OHMES – Gretchen Greer, Manager

- a. The Office of Health and Medical Education Scholarship, in partnership with Community Health Sciences and under the direction of Aliya Kassam, runs a weekly journal club on Mondays at noon. For this month the topic is “public health emergencies and how they impact medical education”. It is a particularly interesting time for medical learners, medical students and resident physicians who are dealing with redeployment or contact tracing. **Anyone from UofC or AHS are free to join.**

7) Media requests:

- a. Any requests coming from the media should be directed to the Institute Communications team (*Pablo Fernandez – Manager Strategic Comms, Brittany DeAngelis – Senior Comms Coordinator*) OR the CSM communication team (*Kelly Johnston - Senior Communication Specialist*), for support around those requests.

8) Mentorship and Leadership portfolio and wellness of our members (*Aliya Kassam*)

- a. It is important to acknowledge the wellness of our members. As academics, researchers, members of the O'Brien Institute community, we all are undergoing a lot of changes and challenges. We wanted to get a sense of whether some sessions would be helpful with respect to working from home, work life balance, the family and self-care. We hope to hold group sessions to help with coping, sharing challenges and successes.
- b. Concerns were raised because of the impact of COVID-19 and the “academic clock” for the tenure track positions. We've reached out to TUCFA and we will report back on this topic.
- c. There are a lot of wellness resources out there, but it is hard to navigate, and we hope to add a central place for wellness resources links on the O'Brien Institute web-page.



Resources for researchers

O'Brien Institute

- O'Brien Institute COVID-19 Response page:
<https://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/obrien-covid-response>
- Current O'Brien Institute member COVID-19 related projects
<https://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/obrien-covid-projects>
- Fostering a Community of Practice of Public Health researchers during the COVID-10 pandemic (networking sessions)
<https://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/membership/members-resources/institute-mentorship-and-leadership-portfolio#community-of-practice>

University of Calgary

- COVID-19 Response: Guidance for UCalgary Researchers
<https://research.ucalgary.ca/covid-19>
- UofC COVID collaboration (VPR & OADR offices)
<https://research.ucalgary.ca/covid-19/collaboration>
- University of Calgary COVID-19 slack workspace for researchers
<https://app.slack.com/client/T010VFK72HJ/C0111T18350/details/members>
Featuring an O'Brien Institute slack channel: **#oiph_public_health_research**
- Centre for Health Informatics (CHI): COVID-19 Tracker
https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/centres/centre-health-informatics/research/chi_covid-19_tracker
- Community support (Community Engagement office)
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/community/covid-19-support>

CIHR

- Updates of CIHR programs, including information on decisions regarding the cancellation of the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition and other announcements
<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51917.html#faq-spg2020>
- Read the FAQ sheet that was derived from discussions at a recent CIHR University Delegates meeting [here](#).

CanCOVID

- An expert community of Canadian COVID-19 researchers, clinical collaborators, and healthcare stakeholders from across the country
<https://cancovid.ca/#home>