

Strengthening Public Health Research and Practice Capacity in Canada

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BY Erica Di Ruggiero, Associate Director,
CIHR-Institute of Population & Public Health



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CIHR- Institute of Population & Public Health Mission Statement

The CIHR-IPPH will support:

- ❖ research into the complex interactions (biological, social, cultural, environmental), which determine the health of individuals, communities, and global populations; and,
- ❖ the application of that knowledge to improve the health of both populations and individuals, through strategic partnerships with population and public health stakeholders, and innovative research funding programs.



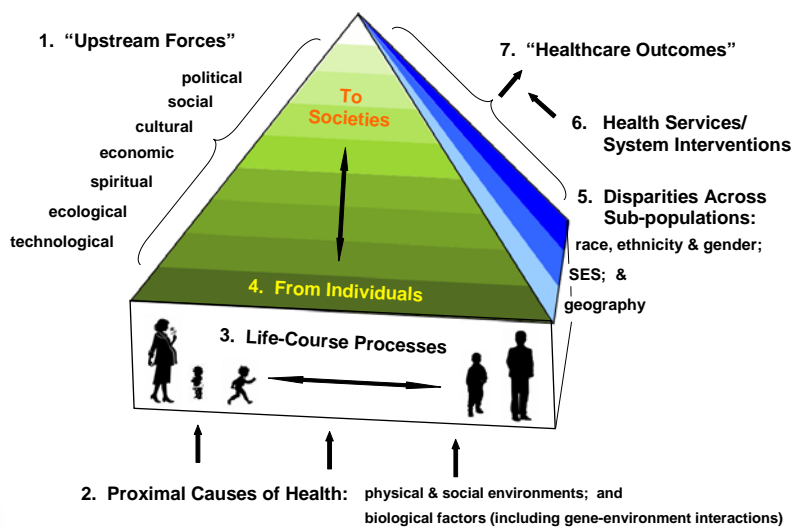
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Cette présentation a été effectuée le 23 octobre 2006, au cours du Symposium "La recherche et la formation comme fondements des actions efficaces en santé publique - Les expériences nationales et internationales" dans le cadre des Journées annuelles de santé publique (JASP) 2006. L'ensemble des présentations est disponible sur le site Web des JASP, à l'adresse <http://www.inspq.qc.ca/jasp>.

IPPH Strategic Priority Areas In 2002-7

- Capacity building for cutting-edge and relevant PPH research and its application
- Understanding and addressing the impacts of physical and social environments on health
- Analyzing and reducing health disparities
- Global health (especially in resource-limited low- and middle-income countries)
- Characterizing gene-environment interactions to prevent disease

Figure 1. CIHR-IPPH Conceptual Framework of Population Health





Renewed Focus on Public Health Principles

- ✿ Seek the **root** causes of disease and disability - a focus on determinants
- ✿ Consider and deal with **whole** populations
- ✿ Understand and apply the principles of **social change, over the life course**



Public Health Workforce Challenges

- Numerous national and provincial reports calling for action to strengthen public health system but challenges remain...
- Assessment of the state of public health human resources in Canada is limited by sparse data (**Learning from SARS - Renewal of Public Health in Canada, October 2003**).
- Jurisdictions struggling with critical shortages in their respective public health workforces in the face of growing public health concerns
- Overall supply problems with the public health workforce
- Inequitable distribution of the public health workforce across the country

Public Health Workforce Challenges (cont'd)



- Need to explicitly define competency assessments upon which to base public health human resources planning and training (although efforts are underway to define core competencies in public health);
- Differing approaches by academic institutions to training, coupled with limited access to professional training programs (until only recently) that provide opportunities to learn in practice settings;
- Need for improved linkages between university departments of all kinds concerned with public health (i.e. lack of inter- and multi-disciplinary collaboration);
- Limited access to appropriate continuing education opportunities for existing public health professionals; and,
- Limited salary support across the public health career trajectory

Responding to the Challenges...

- Academia is responding through creation of professional Masters of Public Health (MPH) Programs
- MPH guidelines required to ensure level of consistency and quality across programs in Canada. Critical program components need to be defined to ensure meaningful designation
- Some doctoral and post-doctoral award funding, as well as mid-career salary award support dedicated to public health now being offered

Responding to the Challenges

(cont'd)

- Development of Guidelines Document for MPH Programs in Canada completed in the summer 2006
- Vision for MPH Program - A professional degree intended to prepare students:
 - for public health practice;
 - to develop the capacity to organize, analyze, interpret and communicate knowledge in an applied manner; and,
 - to be able to apply knowledge in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policy and program interventions.

Masters of Public Health Award Program

Purpose:

- To contribute to a reliable supply of highly qualified public health professionals able to respond to current and emerging public health problems
- To provide special recognition and support to students who are pursuing a public health professional Master's degree in Canada
- To build capacity for effective knowledge translation and use of research evidence by the public health system.

Masters Program continued..

Co-Sponsors:

- Jointly issued by the CIHR-Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH) and the PHAC-Office of Public Health Practice (OPHP)

Eligible Programs:

- In the RFA, a "public health professional Master's degree program" is defined as a primarily course-oriented program that includes a practicum. The program should aim to prepare students for the practice of public health.
- Complements existing Graduate Award programs.
- Both part-time and full-time students enrolled in MPH programs that meet criteria in guidelines will be eligible for these awards


PhD and Post-doc Award Programs

- To provide recognition and funding to students and academic researchers early in their career, providing them with an opportunity to gain research experience.
- To provide a reliable supply of highly skilled and qualified researchers.
- 2 Waves of Funding to date. Re-launch planned in 2007

Inaugural Applied Public Health Chairs Program

- Modelled after CHSRF/CIHR Chairs Program
- Intended to complement Canada Research Chairs
- Letter of Intent Deadline (mid-October); Full applications due in May 2007
- Program Objectives:
 - ❖ Support high quality and focused programs of policy and program intervention research of national relevance to public health
 - ❖ Educate and mentor the current and next generation of public health researchers (trainees, post-graduate students and junior faculty), practitioners and policy makers.
 - ❖ Support Canadian universities to develop graduate and continuous education programs in public health
 - ❖ Foster formal linkages with the public health system to support the effective application of research into policies, programs and practice.
 - ❖ Stimulate innovative approaches in public health intervention research, education, mentorship and knowledge translation

What's Next?

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- ❖ Creation of Schools of Public Health in Canada
 - ❖ Public Health Agency of Canada is leading development of discussion paper to define what constitutes a 'school of public health' with advice from the Public Health Human Resources Task Group
 - ❖ National leadership required to facilitate accreditation process for Masters of Public Health programs and Schools of Public Health in Canada ?

Building Public Health Services Research – New Opportunity

Partnerships for Health System Improvement (IPPH
and PHAC involvement for the first time)

- **Purpose:** Support teams of researchers and decision-makers interested in conducting applied health research useful to health system (including public health) managers and/or policy makers over the next two-to-five years
- **Deadline for Letters of Intent:** December 4th, 2006

Building Public Health Services Research – New Opportunity (cont'd)

- Illustrative examples of research domains:
 - ❖ The impact of regionalization on the delivery of public health services;
 - ❖ Workforce planning:
 - application of methods for projecting the requisite number of public health practitioners;
 - application of methods for assessing and projecting the multidisciplinary mix of public health practitioners needed to respond to current and emerging public health challenges
 - ❖ Relative strengths of different governance structures being implemented as part of public health reforms within provinces/territories;
 - ❖ Effectiveness of public health human resource recruitment and retention approaches to improve access to quality public health programs and services;

Building Public Health Services Research – New Opportunity (cont'd)

- Illustrative examples of research domains:
 - ❖ Financial analysis of public health service organizations, including current trends in expenditures and sources of funding, with an emphasis on the comparative analysis of benefits and risks of each major approach across Canada;
 - ❖ Organizational skills and resources (e.g. information systems, program funding) required to deliver effective programs and services in different contexts; and,
 - ❖ Assessing the role and capacity of public health organizations to support action on the social determinants of health.

Strengthening intervention research capacity

Scope

- Population-level and community-level interventions are intended to shift the risk of entire populations or communities by focusing on community/societal-level factors (individual, social, cultural, economic and/or environmental and their interactions) which account for the distribution of risk in a society.
- Rather than only targeting individuals most at risk, interventions include both policies and programs intended to protect, promote and/or improve the health of people.

What's Needed?

- Relevant, timely, rigorous intervention evidence that is made readily available to inform Canadian policy, program and practice decisions
- A sustainable multi-year intervention research infrastructure for Canada

Challenges

- Building an 'intervention research' constituency – do we have the capacity?
- Funding structures – How can intervention research and policy/program intervention funding be better aligned? Who should fund this research? (national/provincial research agencies, NGOs, PHAC)
- Peer review of intervention research proposals? – Are panels equipped? Is a dedicated panel needed?
- Tackling the myths about intervention research
- Training – extent and availability of graduate training in this area

Proposed Domains of Activity

- Intervention infrastructure – e.g. networks of researchers and decision-makers
- Research Funding (mixed portfolio – investigator-initiated & strategic funding to address policy/practice needs)
- Training and Mentoring – e.g. fellowships in intervention research; graduate curriculum
- Capacity building – e.g. workshops for researchers, trainees, peer reviewers, etc.

Progress to Date and Next Steps

- IPPH initiated planning committee (also involves INMD, Public Health Agency of Canada, NGOs, research funder and research community representatives)
- Commission background work to include compelling case studies of this kind of research (i.e. lessons learned from Canadian Heart Health Initiative)
- September 2006 workshop of key decision-makers, research funders, NGOs, selected researchers to broaden the constituency
- Draft intervention research infrastructure plan for Canada

Way Forward

- Focus not only on understanding but also intervening on the complex root causes of disease and disability -- more emphasis needed on supporting population level intervention research
- Further strengthen public health infrastructure capacity to effectively use PPH evidence – the champion of “upstream” thinking
- More deliberate emphasis on creating the kind of institutional structures that facilitate the generation and application of knowledge relevant to programs, policy and practice and foster meaningful academic-practice collaborations – IPPH-funded Centres for Research Development are a start
- Changes to tenure and promotion criteria to recognize the value of applied research and its utilization