

The RURAL Centre News

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Message from the Director

by Judy Guernsey

Welcome to the first edition of our RURAL Centre newsletter! This newsletter will serve as a mechanism to share news about recent funding awards and announcements, current RURAL Centre activities, and other information with our investigators, affiliates, students, and other interested parties. Faced with building a four province-wide network, we want to help you keep up to date on all the activities and upcoming events. We welcome your contributions and ideas!

This year's RURAL Centre Summit (scheduled for August 29th and 30th, 2005 in Halifax) will be a very important meeting for us. So far, we have made good progress in getting to know each other, establishing administrative procedures, and initiating funding for pilot studies and graduate student activities. Now it is time for greater synthesis of our overall research efforts. This will be the focus of our discussions at this meeting.

Since the Centres for Research Development are a new program for CIHR, they are keen to conduct ongoing evaluation of our progress and successes. Hence, they are asking us to compile statistics and other information to assist them with this process. It will be very important for us to participate in this process and we are asking for your cooperation in these activities.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research deserves tremendous credit and thanks for supporting the Centres for Research Development. We wish to acknowledge this and also give thanks for all

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The RURAL Centre's website has been up and running since January 2005. To date, there have been 62,539 hits to the site, with the number of visits increasing each month.

Sections within the website include:

About Us - describes our mission, objectives, research themes, and research activities

Researchers' Profiles - lists all of the RURAL Centre researchers as well as some background information about each person

Documentation - provides links to rural health related research papers and articles

Research & Resource Links - provides links to our partnering institutions, as well as rural health related organizations, agencies, and research programs/initiatives

Notices & Events - lists rural health related funding opportunities, events, and other notices

The RURAL Centre is currently seeking papers and articles to post within the Documentation section. If you have a rural health related article or paper that you would like to be posted, please contact the Centre Coordinator.

Message from the Director

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the efforts from our members. The outputs of the Centre will only be as good as the efforts we put in. I also want to thank Jenny Daw for her outstanding efforts as our Centre Coordinator.

Thank You,

Judy Guernsey

Peer Review Service

The RURAL Centre is pleased to announce that it will immediately begin offering a peer review service for Centre Investigators applying for research grants. Investigators wishing to have their application reviewed by a third party prior to submission may submit it to the Centre to be reviewed for content, typos, grammar, etc. Proposals should be submitted at least two months before they are due to be submitted to the funding agency. The review will be completed within one month of receipt.

CIHR Evaluation

Early in 2007, CIHR will be conducting a mid-term review to assess the Centre. As part of this review, the RURAL Centre will need to complete a self evaluation report to document various data. To aide in the collection of data, the Centre will develop a Work Plan for each Centre member to complete once per year. To minimize the work involved, it is recommended that members keep it up to date on an ongoing basis. The Work Plan will be distributed soon. We appreciate all your contributions to this important review.

Fellowships

In 2004, RURAL Centre Fellowships were awarded to Erin Beattie and Meaghan Gibbons, both Masters students at Dalhousie University. Each of these fellowships were for \$18,000.



Erin is based in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, with her principal supervisor being Dr. Fred Burge. Her research aims to study the difference between rural and urban dwellers with respect to patient satisfaction in Primary Health Care settings. On February 17, 2005 Erin successfully completed her thesis proposal.

Congratulations Erin!

Meaghan is based in the Department of Civil Engineering, with her principal supervisor being Dr. Graham Gagnon. Meaghan's research aims to develop an arsenic treatment technology to reduce arsenic concentrations in groundwater that is used as drinking water in rural communities. Meaghan was recently accepted into a PhD



News from Centre Investigators

Dr. Patrick McGrath - CIHR New Emerging Team Grant

The Women's Health In Rural Communities (WHIRC) research group includes researchers from both the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and Dalhousie University.

Limited research has been performed on the topic of young rural women and their health. For this reason, the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of young rural women is the focus of this project. Young women are the guardians of future health in rural communities and typically make decisions influencing their own health and that of their partners and children. Promotion of rural women's health should not only strengthen the individual, but also strengthen the health of the rural community.

WHIRC will expand upon themes of research on young women and rural health that interact and strengthen each other. These streams are: mental and emotional health, rural safety, and resilience and change in community structures. This project will focus on understanding current challenges facing rural communities and the effects these challenges may be having on the health of young rural women. This initiative will significantly strengthen the rural social science health capabilities at both the NSAC and at Dalhousie, and will provide opportunities for collaboration with other research groups in the region.

Dr. Fred Burge and Dr. Christiane Poulin - Sabbatical

Dr. Burge will be on sabbatical from July 1st, 2005 to June 30th, 2006. Dr. Poulin will be on sabbatical from July 1st, 2005 to December 31st, 2005.

program and was awarded a NSERC PGS scholarship. Congratulations Meaghan!

The 2005 RURAL Centre Fellowship has been awarded to Jillian Ashley-Martin, a Masters student at Dalhousie University. Jillian is based in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, with her principal supervisor being Dr. Judy Guernsey. Jillian will receive \$18,000 to support her research which will explore the association between fungicide exposure and breast cancer incidence in Prince Edward Island. We look forward to seeing the results of her research!



The next competition for Centre Fellowships will take place in March 2006. To be eligible, the student must (1) be enrolled, have applied for, or gained entry to a full-time Masters or PhD program (Year 1 or 2) at one of the Centre's partnering institutions, (2) have one of the Centre members as a supervisor, and (3) be engaged in thesis research relating to one of the Centre's research themes.

Pilot Project Funding

RURAL Centre Pilot Project Funding is intended to support the application for future grants from external agencies for new initiatives (or new dimensions of current projects) that address the mission of the RURAL Centre.

To be eligible for Pilot Project Funding (1) the applicant must be a RURAL Centre Investigator, (2) the Pilot Project must be a new initiative (or a new dimension of a current project) that addresses the Centre's mission, (3) the Pilot Project must involve collaboration with another Centre Investigator or Centre Affiliate external to the applicant's own institution or department, and (4) if awarded, the Pilot Project Funding must be used to support the application for a future grant from an external agency where there is an external peer review (eg. CIHR, SSHRCC, etc) and the PPF applicant must be listed as the primary applicant or co-applicant on this future grant application.

The application deadline for the current round of funding is August 2, 2005. See the Centre website for details.

Meet the Recipients



Dr. Robert Gordon
Rural Occupational and Environmental Health Hazards

This project looks specifically at the perceptions held by Nova Scotian farmers and a portion of the residential community regarding the land application of treated municipal sewage sludge (biosolids).

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Graham Gagnon)



Dr. Judy Guernsey
Resource Reliant Communities

The purpose of this project is to develop linkages between the RURAL Centre and the New Rural Economy (NRE) project headquartered at Concordia University. The NRE is a large national study that aims to gain greater understanding of the meaning of 'social capital' within the Canadian rural context. The goal of the linked initiative, in broad terms, is to examine how these NRE factors impact the health of rural Canadians.

(Centre Members Involved: Marie DesMeules, Claudia LaGace, Victor Maddalena, Dr. Doug Willms)



Dr. Don Langille
Special Rural Populations

This project will examine adolescent sexual behaviours, social norms, and attitudes among youth, parents, and citizens, as well as the provision of sexual health services and education in two rural NS communities to determine what it is about them which results in differences in adolescent pregnancy outcomes.

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Richard Gould, Dr. Madine VanderPlaats)

Upcoming Events

(see www.theruralcentre.com for details)

The RURAL Centre Annual Summit
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 29-30, 2005

Sixth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Rural Health Research Society
Quebec City, Quebec
October 27-29, 2005

The 2005 Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Conference
Halifax, Nova Scotia
November 6-8, 2005



Dr. Robert Maher
Rural Occupational and Environmental Health Hazards

This project (a companion project to Dr. John VanLeeuwen's) seeks to identify information among PEI watersheds to select candidate watersheds that could be twinned to the Thomas Brook watershed in NS to examine common environmental issues, particularly those concerning waterbone contamination with pathogens and chemicals.

(Centre Members Involved: Odwa Atari, Dr. Robert Gordon, Dr. Judy Guernsey, Dr. John VanLeeuwen, Jeff Wentzell)



Dr. Patrick McGrath
Special Rural Populations & Social Cohesion and Community Resiliency

This project will focus on adolescents in the Mi'kmaq communities of Indian Brook and Eskasoni. It will examine the youth's drinking motivations to aid in developing culturally relevant interventions to protect against alcohol problems in youth.

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Don Langille)



Dr. Barbara Neis
Resource Reliant Communities & Rural Occupational and Environmental Health Hazards

One project will document methods and data sources that can be used to determine the full economic burden of occupational injuries and disease associated with the fish harvesting and processing industries in Newfoundland.

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Stephen Bornstein, Dr. Arla Day, Dr. Ron Colman, Adam O'Neill-Sherrard)



Pilot Project Funding

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The second project aims to develop, pilot, and evaluate research tools in the Corner Brook region of Newfoundland for directly soliciting information about the prevalence and causes of industrial accidents, near-miss incidents, and industrial disease from loggers, allied workers, and contractors.

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Judy Guernsey)

To date, the RURAL Centre has awarded \$27,000 in Pilot Project Funding to Centre Investigators from five of our eight partnering institutions.



Dr. John VanLeeuwen

Rural Occupational and Environmental Health Hazards

This project (a companion project to Dr. Robert Maher's) seeks to test surface water from a small number of candidate watersheds on PEI to determine their appropriateness as a twinned watershed to the Thomas Brook watershed in NS to examine common environmental issues, particularly those concerning waterbone contamination with pathogens and chemicals.

(Centre Members Involved: Odwa Atari, Dr. Robert Gordon, Dr. Judy Guernsey, Dr. Robert Maher, Jeff Wentzell)



Dr. Swarna Weerasinghe

Rural Occupational and Environmental Health Hazards

This project will examine whether rural Nova Scotians have an increased risk for upper respiratory and cardiovascular disease compared to their urban counterparts due to exposure to high levels of environmental contaminants after controlling for meteorological parameters.

(Centre Members Involved: Dr. Judy Guernsey, Dr. Robert Maher)

Feedback and Submissions

The RURAL Centre will publish its newsletter on a quarterly basis. We would like your feedback about this newsletter as well as suggestions for content. We are also accepting article submissions and news items about Centre Investigators. Please send all comments and submissions to the Centre Coordinator.

Acknowledgements

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A Collaborative Initiative Of:
Dalhousie University, Memorial University, Mount Allison University, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, NSCC Centre of Geographic Sciences, Saint Mary's University, University of New Brunswick, University of Prince Edward Island, and researchers at other academic institutions across Atlantic Canada

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