

NCOHR Team Building Workshop: Modelling the Interaction of Multidimensional Risk Factors in Caries Disparity

SUMMARY REPORT

In September 2014, Drs. Elham Emami (Associate Professor, Université de Montréal) and Linda Booij (Assistant Professor, Queen's University and Sainte-Justine Hospital) along with postdoctoral fellow Dr. Svetlana Tikhonova (Université de Montréal) led and organized a 2-day workshop to facilitate the development of new multi- and inter-disciplinary collaborative research teams on caries and oral health disparity. Several scientists with expertise in oral health and caries research, clinical psychology, nutrition, social work, health literacy, health policy and health services research, as well as community-oriented and Aboriginal research were invited, and have been introduced to community-based oral health and primary care providers, community stakeholders, policy makers and research scholars in order to:

1. Exchange knowledge on multidimensional modelling of caries disparities, and to identify caries disparity research gaps and needs;
2. Discuss innovative strategies and interventions, targeting aspects of caries disparity that can be controlled by stakeholders, decision makers and primary health care providers, and that can attract external funding;
3. Develop strategic national and international interdisciplinary participatory action research partnerships in the caries disparities field, that have the potential to strengthen research capacity and to provide mentored training opportunities for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty members.

The first day of the workshop started with welcoming remarks by Dr. Debora Matthews, Director of the Network for Canadian Oral Health Research and Dr. Arlette Kolta, Director of the Quebec Network for Oral and Bone Health Research. Next, the workshop continued with oral presentations, panel discussions and round tables. During these sessions, international and national expertise from different fields highlighted research, and discussed with stakeholders the best interventions and practices addressing caries disparities.

The workshop was centred on the following themes:

- Epidemiology, prevention and intervention of caries. We discussed the latest research in terms of effective and less effective interventions, and how interventions used in other fields can be applied to dental care.
- Bio-socio-psychological pathways contributing to risk for caries. We discussed research on the impact of early life stress on mental, oral and physical health, as well as the biological underpinnings, and the challenges of assessing early life stress in vulnerable communities.
- Participatory approaches in seamless integration of oral health and primary health care.
- Challenges in conducting research, implementation of effective interventions, and knowledge transfer in rural and remote, Indigenous, poor and immigrant populations.

On Day 2, two expert research officers from the Université de Montréal provided comprehensive information on current funding opportunities. The workshop participants were then divided into groups to discuss and plan for collaborative studies, followed by a plenary group discussion with all workshop participants.

The feedback provided by participants on this 2-day workshop was very positive. All the participants reported that the workshop was useful and that it increased their knowledge. Other key outcomes included building partnerships between Cree First Nation communities in Northern Quebec and researchers from the Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke, McGill University, University of Toronto and Alberta University, in order to collaborate in the near future on research activities to address oral health and caries disparities. Following this workshop, the Quebec Association of Dental Public Health invited two of the workshop participants (Drs. S. Tikhonova and F. Hugo) to present their research at the upcoming annual meetings. The leaders of the workshop as well as a group of workshop participants were invited by the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul to conduct an interdisciplinary workshop for disseminating knowledge in dental public health and primary care in Brazil.

Acknowledgments:

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Workshop Participants

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