

NCOHR Summer Research Institute

Thinking Interdisciplinarity in Oral Health Research

Workshop Summary Report

September 2014



Background

This symposium sought to address the challenges of 'siloed' research and facilitate innovative/interdisciplinary collaboration that is aligned with the CIHR priorities among dental faculties, schools and other disciplines. Over the last few decades the landscape of health research in Canada has changed drastically. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has promoted these changes by placing a strong emphasis on the creation and translation of new knowledge for improved health for Canadians. Interdisciplinary research strategies and integrating a wide spectrum of health research is key to making this translational approach successful.

Aims

The purpose for the symposium was to bring together early and mid-career oral health researchers interested in interdisciplinarity from across Canada to explore the theory, philosophy and practicality of engaging in interdisciplinary research.

We offered a unique approach where the theory of interdisciplinarity was presented and discussed followed by the relational aspects of learning with, from and about each other as an underpinning philosophy for team work.

Finally, we provided a session on working through the practical conditions in which interdisciplinarity becomes successful through a process of five conversations:

- Imagination
- Humility
- Commitment
- Discernment
- Hospitality



**Network for Canadian
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Summary of Activities

The workshop had 20 participants representing Laval University, Dalhousie University, Western University, University of Saskatchewan, University of Toronto, University of British Columbia and The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (Ottawa, Ontario), and McGill University representing 7 dental Schools / Faculties and Dental Hygienists.

The main presenter was Dr. Richard Hovey and was assisted by Dr. Christopher Bedos. The two and one-half days were structured into a series of presentations by the organizers, followed by whole group discussions, with sufficient time for interactive working groups to develop and explore possible research ideas while learning the skills to facilitate the co-creating of future interdisciplinary teams. During the symposium we moved from in-depth introductions of the participants about their current roles, research interests and brief explanation why they believed interdisciplinary research was important for their future considerations. We spent time working on how to define what our disciplines were and how these could be used to answer research questions more completely with greater application. These activities lead to the formation of four interdisciplinary working groups that continued to discuss and plan tangible applications for continued research.

Key Outcomes and Future Plans

The end product was the development of 4 interdisciplinary teams of researchers who intend to continue working together in the future. Our future plans are to stay connected and to formalize the group work into interdisciplinary grant proposals.

