



CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS

Overview

The CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS is a national partnership among people living with HIV, community-based organizations and other front-line service providers, health researchers from over 20 academic institutions across Canada, and federal, provincial, and regional policy makers. Our mission is to foster and undertake collaborative interdisciplinary research and training to understand the factors driving the epidemic, find innovative solutions, and move research evidence into action. Our goal is to strengthen policies, programs, and practices and make a measurable difference in the health of individuals and communities disproportionately affected by HIV.

The major objectives of the Centre include:

- Fostering interdisciplinary research
- Developing collaborative relationships and networks among researchers and research end-users
- Supporting strategic population health and health services research programs
- Addressing Aboriginal research and KTE needs
- Fostering knowledge translation and exchange
- Establishing a national training network

Background

Canada has tremendous expertise in HIV research, programs and policy, but the small number of academic, practice and policy experts are dispersed across the country. Although individual social scientists, population health and health services researchers are collaborating with one another and with members of the HIV community and policy makers locally and regionally, they have few opportunities to build meaningful partnerships across regions or influence widespread changes in policy and practice. These gaps are largely due to: the lack of infrastructure and leadership to help researchers, community, and policymakers work across disciplines, regions and sectors to assess the impact of social and cultural determinants of health on people and communities; and the lack of capacity in interdisciplinary methodologies, policy analysis, intervention and cost-effectiveness research and Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (KTE). These gaps are exacerbated by the failure to develop the information that policy makers and practitioners need to set priorities, allocate resources and develop effective prevention, treatment, care, and support programs.

The CIHR-funded Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS was launched in May 2009 to address these gaps.

Our Vision

To bring together critical practice, research, and policy skills as well as the lived experience of people with HIV to enhance the health of individuals and communities disproportionately affected by HIV.

Our Role

To provide the core infrastructure support required to engage community, policy makers, and researchers in interdisciplinary teams; break down geographical, theoretical, and conceptual barriers; solve problems in the use, uptake, and implementation of research evidence; and train the next generation of HIV researchers.



Our Philosophy

To find solutions to the HIV epidemic in Canada, we must work differently. We must create a culture of interdisciplinary research that is grounded in social science, population health and health services approaches but reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of these disciplines to reconceptualize the relationship between prevention and treatment. It is essential to build pan-Canadian collaborative partnerships in interdisciplinary research and training, with an emphasis on community-based research, building capacity, and fostering leadership



Governing Structure

As the following schematic illustrates, the Centre for REACH is comprised of an Executive Committee, a Scientific Advisory Group, two Committees and six Programs of Research. The two Committees work across all Programs of Research to set direction to ensure that critical strategic objectives of the Centre are fulfilled. Programs of Research are issue/topic-specific and initiate, develop, and implement research and KTE activities. External reviewers will participate in funding application review processes with the Executive Committee.



Communication Among Centre Investigators

Two in-person meetings per year for all collaborators are scheduled to correspond with the OHTN and CAHR Conferences.



I. Executive Committee

Purpose

To ensure Centre for REACH and the Universities Without Walls training program achieve their aims and objectives.

Responsibilities

- Set strategic priorities and directions for the Centre
- Establish policies and procedures for support and granting programs
- Select the co-chairs for the REACH Committees and Programs of Research
- Support and oversee the activities of the Committees and Programs of Research

Membership

Twelve to fifteen members, including:

- the Director and Deputy Director
- one of the co-chairs of each Committee and Program of Research
- other members as appointed by the Director to ensure appropriate representation in terms of geography, academic/community/policy, gender and race

Terms

Staggered one to three year terms, ensuring that there is continuity.

Frequency of Meetings

- Once a month by teleconference, on the second Friday of each month
- Two face-to-face meetings twice a year, to coincide with CAHR and the OHTN annual research conferences
- Other meetings to be arranged as required



II. Scientific Advisory Group

Purpose

To provide critical strategic guidance for the Centre

Responsibilities

- Provide high-level advice to the Director and Executive Committee
- Review and provide feedback on Centre priorities and programs of research

Membership

Five to six members, including individuals with experience in:

- operating a comparable Centre or infrastructure support program in other jurisdictions
- building teams
- developing interdisciplinary research programs

Terms

TBD

Frequency of Meetings

- Once a year face-to-face or by teleconference
- Individuals consultations at other times as required by the Director



III. Committees

Purpose

Develop and deliver the Centre's key training and capacity building programs

Responsibilities

- Develop the training program to fulfill the objectives of the Universities Without Walls STIHR
- Work with Centre investigators to develop and enhance the capacity for interdisciplinary research, community-based research and other research and KTE skills
- Work across all Programs of Research to help fulfill the Centre's mission

Membership

- Co-chairs selected by the Executive Committee, based on their expertise with effort to balance academic and community/policy investigators
- REACH investigators who want to be part of one or more Committees
- Other members as recruited to provide the knowledge, expertise and experience to develop research projects within the Committee

Terms

Co-Chairs serve for one to three years, ensuring that there is continuity.

Frequency of Meetings

TBD

Universities Without Walls Education Committee

Universities Without Walls serves as the educational arm of REACH.

The UWW Education and Training Committee advises the Centre for REACH Executive Committee, Programs of Research, and staff on how to:

- Maintain a focus on pan-Canadian and diverse students and diverse key HIV issues
- Encourage learning opportunities for UWW fellows that include interdisciplinarity and intersectionality, progressive pedagogy, and novel theories, models, and (social) technologies
- Identify and support professional opportunities for UWW faculty
- Provide field-based mentoring, practicum, and internships in policy and community settings
- Monitor and evaluate UWW effectiveness and soundness at regular and timely intervals
- Promote mutually beneficial partnerships with existing learning and community service activities in academic and non-academic organizations to provide the UWW curricular pieces jointly



Capacity Building Committee

The Capacity Building Committee works across all Programs of Research to:

- Foster research and KTE expertise and skills sharing among academic, community-based, and policy sector collaborators
- Promote research and KTE expertise and skills sharing among Centre members working in different regions across Canada
- Facilitate the capacity of Programs of Research and collaborators to apply interdisciplinary methodologies to research and KT activities
- Enhance capacities to utilize data from longitudinal HIV cohorts and health services databases across all Programs of Research



IV. Programs of Research

Purpose

Fulfill the mandate of the Centre by promoting collaboration between team members across multiple disciplines, sectors, communities, and regions, to develop and implement research projects and KTE activities in their areas/issues of focus

Responsibilities

- Identify signature projects/priorities within their Program of Research
- Employ interdisciplinary approaches and frameworks and apply and develop interdisciplinary methodologies, drawing from social science, humanities, population health, and health services fields
- Promote community engagement and community-based research and pursue activities driven by community needs
- Promote and operationalize the Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV and AIDS (MIPA) principle
- Integrate KTE and policy issues
- Pursue and promote research activities across the diverse range of populations affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly responding to the specific research and KTE needs of ethnocultural and racialized communities
- Pursue and promote research activities across geographical regions

Membership

- Co-chairs selected by the Executive Committee, based on their expertise with effort to balance academic and community/policy investigators
- REACH investigators who want to be part of one or more Programs of Research
- Other members as recruited to provide the knowledge, expertise and experience to develop research projects within the Program of Research

Terms

Co-Chairs serve for one to three years, ensuring that there is continuity.

Frequency of Meetings

TBD

The six Programs of Research within the Centre for REACH are:

Interventions

The Interventions Program of Research develops and pursues research and engages in KT activities on interventions, including community-based interventions, structural interventions, and combination (behavioural, structural, social, and/or biological) interventions. The Interventions Program of Research focuses on developing evidence-based programs that reduce risk and/or enhance resiliency, incorporates harm reduction approaches, pursues positive prevention activities, supports PHAs, and targets populations and regions most in need. The Interventions Program of Research engages in activities to establish priorities for developing interventions and adapting proven programs and interventions to community settings, including developing and promoting local pilot programs. This Program of Research also works to advance and apply methods to evaluate interventions.



Aboriginal Health

The Aboriginal Health Program of Research addresses Aboriginal population-specific HIV/AIDS research and KTE needs. The Aboriginal Health Program of Research develops and pursues research on determinants of health and resiliency, health outcomes, access to health services, and treatment for on-reserve, off-reserve, and urban Aboriginal communities, among other emergent issues. This Program of Research advances and promotes OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles and community-based research (CBR) principles and methodologies and conducts research using longitudinal cohort data and health services databases. The Aboriginal Health Program of Research liaises with other Programs of Research and the UWW Education and Capacity Building Committees to share knowledge and skills, particularly in CBR, resiliency approaches, and interdisciplinary research. It is formally linked with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, and will collaborate with other researchers/research programs that focus on Aboriginal health and HIV.

Health Services and Economic Evaluation

The Health Services and Economic Evaluation Program of Research develops and conducts research and engages in KT activities on topics such as clinical treatment and health outcomes, HIV/HCV co-infection and other co-morbidities, surveillance and monitoring of the epidemic, and cost-effectiveness analyses. This Program of Research will capitalize on health services datasets and databases and longitudinal cohort study data, efforts to improve HIV-related data in health services datasets; create linkages between health services datasets and databases, health research databases, and cohort studies; expand the use of health services databases and longitudinal cohort data and capacities to extrapolate these data for application to research in other contexts; and enhance data collection, use, and management in regions of the country that do not presently have comprehensive health services databases.

Determinants of Health

The Determinants of Health Program of Research explores the structural, cultural, behavioural, biological, and social determinants of health and the impact of these determinants on affected communities. Research and KT activities in this Program of Research include, but are not limited to, risk and resilience, aging and quality of life, rehabilitation, disability, housing, employment, social relationships, stigma, gender, race/ethnicity, immigration/refugee status.

Health Policy

The Health Policy Program of Research addresses questions related to decision making, emerging views of participation and governance, of the role of scientific expertise in the political sphere, and the expanded context of policymaking. The Health Policy Program of Research develops and conducts research and engages in KT activities on topics such as the impact of criminalization; labour force and income support policy related to HIV, disability, and rehabilitation; housing policy and its links to HIV exposure, transmission, and care and health of people living with HIV/AIDS; school-based policies; the role of healthy public policy in mitigating women's health outcomes; harm reduction as a human rights issue for marginalized populations; and policy levers related to evidence on social determinants of health and health disparities.

Global Health

The Global Health Program of Research explores research and policy work that has impacts globally as well as in Canada. The Program works to create links between researchers and policy makers working globally, and facilitates relationship building and foster sharing of knowledge and research approaches between the North and the South.