October 14, 2009

Opening Remarks

Roderic Beaujot
Academic Director, University of Western Ontario Research Data Centre.

Welcome to the 7th national conference of the Canadian RDC Network. We are delighted to have you at the University of Western Ontario, and to London Hall in particular.

As the topic for this year's conference, we have chosen "Health over the Life Course." We have sought to include two types of research:

1. lifecourse analyses of factors affecting health, that is, studies that follow trajectories, exploring the influence of earlier behaviour on subsequent health issues in the lives of individuals, or exploring the influence of earlier contexts, be they social, family, community or policy contexts, on subsequent health issues in the lives of individuals;
2. analyses of health issues at given developmental stages, that is studies that focus on children's developmental issues, or health questions specific to adolescents, the middle aged, the old and the oldest old.

As seen from the program, the conference consists of six regular sessions with a total of 21 papers, two keynote addresses, a research and policy roundtable, and 19 posters. Among the 21 papers of the regular sessions, 13 were based on lifecourse analyses and the other 8 look at health issues at given developmental stages.

At the pre-conference yesterday, we had an excellent exposé of the potential for administrative health data from Manitoba, Quebec and Ontario. We hope that our discussions will enhance the analyses of existing data and push the development of further data sources. We certainly came to appreciate the value of administrative data, but also the complexity, costs and investments that are needed to be able to profit from these data. At the same time, we should take note of a comment from Leslie Roos that properly used administrative data, as with RDC data, allows us to "play in the big league," with people around the world taking note.

The pre-conference also made a tour of the main sources of Statistics Canada health data available in the RDCs, in particular: Canadian Health Measures Survey, Canadian Community Health Surveys, National Population Health Surveys, and Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

Let me first acknowledge the three agencies that have organized the conference: The University of Western Ontario Research Data Centre, the Aging and Health Research Centre, and the Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster.

Let me also acknowledge the organizations that have supported this conference.

- We have received funding from the Canadian Research Data Centre Network, funding which in turn comes from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

- We also received a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in particular from the Research Unit of the Health System Planning and Research Branch. Thanks in particular to Don Embuldeniya, who is Acting Manager of the Research Unit, and to two representatives from the Ministry who are on the program, Sten Ardal at the Research and Policy Roundtable this afternoon, and Lorraine Greaves the Discussant to the first session this morning.

- From the University of Western Ontario, we have funding from Research Western, thanks to Ted Hewitt, VP, and Jerry Kidder, Associate VP-Research. We also have funding from four faculties at Western. For the Faculty of Social Science, thanks to Brian Timney, Dean, and to Julie McMullin, Associate Dean. Julie McMullin will be introducing our keynote speaker tomorrow. For the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, thanks to Carol Herbert, Dean, and Victor Han, Associate Dean. For the Richard Ivey School of Business, thanks to Carol Stephenson, Dean, and Roderick White, Associate Dean. For the Faculty of Health Sciences, thanks to Jim Weese, Dean and Jan Polgar, Associate Dean.

- We also have funding from the Aging and Health Research Centre at Western, and Andrea Willson will speak in a moment on behalf of the Aging and Health Research Centre.

- Finally, we have funding from the Inter-Disciplinary Initiative on Population and Lifecourse studies, thanks to Lorraine Davies, the Leader of this IDI, who will also be discussant to Session 2 this afternoon.

As I am recognizing organizations, let me acknowledge Statistics Canada, who is more than a partner in this whole RDC network, in particular Gustave Goldmann and Heather Dryburgh, who are co-managers of the Micro Data Access Division at Statistics Canada. Gustave will be the chair of Session 1 and Heather of Session 2.

Let me also recognize that the 119 conference participants have come from a number of departments in government and academia.

- At the federal level, besides Statistics Canada, we have the Public Health Agency of Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and Assisted Human Reproduction Canada. From the Ontario Government, besides the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, we have the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. From the Quebec Government, we have Institut de la statistique du Québec and Institut National de santé publique du Québec. At the local or regional level, we have City of London, Middlesex-London Health Unit, St. Joseph's Health Care, Dearness Home, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, and Bloorview Kids Rehab.

- The departments at Western that are represented here include: Sociology, Geography, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Food and Nutritional Sciences, Family Medicine, Nursing, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

- From the University of Toronto, there are people here from Public Health, Labour and Health Economics, and Health Policy Management and Evaluation. From the University of Guelph: Centre for Families, Work and Well-being. From York University: Mathematics and Statistics, and Environmental Studies. From Université de Montréal, Sociology as well as

Social and Preventative Medicine. From University of Ottawa: Economics. From Nipissing University: Sociology. From McMaster University: Sociology, Economics, Neurosciences. From University of Waterloo: Sociology, Economics, Health Studies and Gerontology. From McGill University: Sociology, Epidemiology. From Institut National de Recherche Scientifique: Urbanisation, Culture et Société. From University of Manitoba: Community and Health Sciences, Family Medicine. From University of Regina: Public Policy. From University of British Columbia: School of Population and Public Health. From University of Victoria: Geography.

- Outside of Canada we have Ohio State University: Economics; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Sociology; Yale University: Economics. Auburn University: Human Development and Family Studies; University of Michigan: Epidemiology.

Next to speak will be Andrea Willson, Associate Professor of Sociology, and Director of the Aging and Health Research Centre. Andrea has recently won the Outstanding Research Award of the Section on Aging and the Life Course of the American Sociological Association, for her paper along with Kim Shuey and Glen Elder, entitled 'Cumulative advantage processes as mechanisms of inequality in life course health'. Andrea Willson will be presenting a paper in the first session this morning, and Kim Shuey will be chair of Session 5 tomorrow.

Our final speaker is Raymond Currie, Executive Director of the Canadian Research Data Centre Network, and Dean Emeritus from the University of Manitoba. Raymond Currie has played key roles in both the Data Liberation Initiative and the RDC Network, in establishing various protocols for working relationships among researchers, Statistics Canada and the policy community. For more on Raymond, I have here a copy of his *Secure and Uncertain: A father's story* (Anderson House, 2008).