

OPENING REMARKS

Canadian Research Data Centre Network 7th Annual Conference

presented at Conference on Health over the Life Course, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, 14-16 October 2009.”

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Welcome to the 7th Annual National Research Data Centre Network Conference.

Bienvenue à la septième conférence nationale du réseau des Centres de données de recherche.

Given the particularly high profile that public health is experiencing (I won't say enjoying) these days it is fitting that our conference is focused on Health Over the Life Course.

We appreciate that the current health emergency in Canada has made it impossible for Dr. Butler-Jones to open our conference. But we look forward to the presentation by Mr. Sylvain Segard, Director General of the Centre for Health Promotion of the Public Health Agency of Canada, who is eminently qualified to address our topic.

We are also privileged to welcome Kathleen Harris, James Haar Distinguished Professor, Sociology, Carolina Population Centre, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It is wonderful to have such a distinguished international contributor. In addition I welcome all of you to our conference.

Nous sommes très fiers de notre réseau. Je veux vous faire part des remarques à propos de notre réseau par Dr. Colleen Flood, Directrice scientifique de l'Institut des services et des politiques de la santé (ISPS), un des instituts de recherche en santé du Canada.

“In essence, the CRDCN is for CIHR health services and policy researchers and population and public health researchers the equivalent to the bench laboratories of basic science researchers and the hospital research laboratories of clinical scientists. It is an essential national health data infrastructure that is critical to the success, quality and impact of health research in Canada.”

Evidement nous avons une responsabilité très important. Pendant les années dix-neuf-cent-quatre-vingt-neuf, Statistique Canada a embarqué dans une accumulation d'information essentielle pour mesurer, comprendre et gérer les défis que la société canadienne devrait faire face dans le nouveau millénaire. Les centres des données de recherche était crée pour assurer que ses nouvelles enquêtes pourrait être analysé en profondeur, tout en respectant la confidentialité de l'information (J'une 2009).

Since the RDCs started offering secure access to detailed micro-data in 2001, over 2,600 researchers (including 1000+ students) have worked in a growing number of RDCs on over 1,500 projects, using a constantly expanding range of micro-data files to examine a broad range of issues, with questions of health and socio-economic equally represented. From a base of 9 Centres, the Network has now expanded to 25 sites, with our latest addition being Yellowknife, NWT, which will open in 2011. The University of Western Ontario opened its RDC in 2005, and this year began hosting a Branch at the University of Windsor.

We are very encouraged that administrative health data from the Provinces of Ontario and British Columbia have recently been added to the data sets in the RDCs. These additions will permit much better linking to national data through the census and other Statistics Canada national surveys.

In addition to improving data access, the Network has been working to increase Canada's pool of trained researchers and to strengthen links between researchers and the potential users of their findings. Countless numbers of students, university and government researchers have attended the seminars, workshops and credited graduate courses developed in the RDCs, and our dissemination activities are starting to take effect. Eighty presentations were made directly to policy makers in 2008 alone, as well as 480 conference presentations and hundreds of publications in refereed articles and books.

Our national Conference is another dimension of our dissemination activities. Also, at the end of this month I invite you to visit our new website, rdc-cdr.ca where a searchable publications database will replace our bibliographic list of publications. The new version includes a range of features that will make it a useful and appealing tool for research and dissemination, and it will be invaluable for creating research syntheses. Our first effort in the area of syntheses has been an outstanding success. Dr. Scott Patten, from the University of Calgary and Dr. Heather Juby, Our Knowledge Transfer Coordinator located at the University of Montreal co-authored a synthesis of all the studies on depression in RDCs. The paper has been downloaded over 5,000 times in over 40 countries.

The 2005 joint SSHRC /CIHR award as well as the Canada Foundation for Innovation award in 2007 has allowed the CRDCN to develop, expand and achieve far more than if each centre had acted alone. While keeping Network operating costs to a minimum, we continue to pursue our goals with constantly upgraded network policies, consensus decision-making procedures, an effective executive committee, greater accountability to one another, specific network activities and an increasingly effective communication system. The CRDCN is now a thriving research resource, of benefit to researchers, policy makers, the media and the public who are interested in understanding and improving the socio-economic and health dimensions of our society.

In conclusion, permit me to thank The University of Western Ontario, our host RDC and its quiet but dynamic and ever efficient Director, Rod Beaujot, who I want to add, regularly makes very effective contributions to our national network, as well as Andrea Willson, The Aging and Health Research Centre Director, whom I have just had the pleasure of meeting, and the numerous sponsors, whom Rod will acknowledge.

One of our goals is to Make Research Count. Je suis certain que cette conférence va contribuer à ce but. Merci. Thank you.