



Setting Research Priorities for Alberta

– Child Health & the Environment –
- Proceedings -

G. C. Shelley

April 2, 2008

Attendees

Name

Organization

Dr. Irena Buka	Caritas Health Group
Cecilia Bukutu	Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
Dr. Xingjie Cui	Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
Dr. Stephan Gabos	Alberta Health and Wellness
Dr. Karen Grimsrud	Alberta Health and Wellness
Tara Hanson	Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
Kathy Hunter	Health Canada
Dr. Mishka Lysack	University of Calgary
Neil MacDonald	Alberta Health and Wellness
Dr. Rupasri Mandal	University of Alberta
Dr. Jonathon Martin	Dept. of Public Health Science
Dr. Alvaro Osornio	University of Mexico
Nancy Reynolds	Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
Dr. Don Spady	University of Alberta
Dr. Suzanne Tough	Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research & Institute of Maternal and Child Health
Brenda Woo	Health Canada

Purpose Restated

Alberta has been very active in efforts relative to C H & E. If we are to have an impact, we will have to focus efforts on a number of priority initiatives.

The day was intended to create a forum for discussion and an agreement on priorities.

Agenda

9:00 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions	Nancy Reynolds
9:15 a.m.	Presentation – The State of the Art	Gabe Shelley
9:30 a.m.	Discussion – Areas of Interest	All
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	Discussion – Priorities	All
12:00 noon	Lunch	
12:45 p.m.	Discussion – Moving Ahead	All
2:00 p.m.	Adjournment	

Questions Discussed

- A. What is going on in research in Alberta? What are the needs? Where are the strengths?
- B. Where are there gaps in what others are doing?
- C. Where should Alberta focus?
 - 1. Research Types:
 - Basic
 - Applied
 - Policy-Informing
 - 2. Research Activities:
 - Longitudinal Studies
 - Targeted Studies
 - Surveillance and Bio-Monitoring
 - 3. Areas of Focus:
 - Air
 - Water
 - Metallics
 - Other Chemicals
 - Built Environment
 - 4. Within an area:
 - What priorities can we agree upon?

Questions Discussed (Cont'd)

- D. How best to get collaboration among
 - Investigators
 - Research institutes
 - Government
 - Other granting agencies
 - Private sector?

- E. How to get multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary work happening

- F. What next steps should be taken?

Where Should We Start?

Topics Proposed

- Need a new lexicon
 - “make health an illness”
 - capture the anxiety
- Initiate a longitudinal project
 - required as input to almost everything else
 - or identify what data required using a strategic information gathering process
- Focus on Alberta’s unique issues
 - oil sands
 - physical effects in Fort McMurray
 - more broadly throughout Alberta
- Focus on Alberta parents’ concerns
 - e.g. air quality
- Need a diagnosis of the problem
 - do a survey as the first step

Where Should We Start? (Cont'd)

Topics Proposed

- Examine genetic-environmental mix
- Focus on measurement/risk assessment
- Focus on basic science
 - new approaches: e.g. chemical combinations
- Build capacity by getting researchers together
 - determine what we have in Alberta and what we can do
- Tie the building blocks together
 - need a locus for the overall topic
 - other ideas:
 - scientific symposium
 - consensus conference
 - model on the Inukshuk Conference

Three Priorities Agreed

- ① Conduct diagnosis of the problem
 - do a public survey as the first step
- ② Initiate a longitudinal data collection project
- ③ Create a central entity

Thoughts on the Diagnosis Priority

- The pieces of this would be:
 1. environmental data including information from environmental databases and human biomonitoring
 2. population and health databases
 3. the links that can be made between 1 and 2 using geodata techniques with statistical analysis
 4. a survey identifying current perceptions and concerns in the community
- Survey is the first step
- Should be informed by science
 - access existing information
 - GeoLink and CYDL are examples

Thoughts on the Diagnosis Priority (Cont'd)

- Compare survey results to what researchers see through their scientific endeavours
- Purposes of the survey:
 - collect data on Albertans' priorities with respect to this topic
 - educate Albertans
 - serve as a document to advocate for priorities
 - provide input to knowledge mobilization strategy
- Parameters
 - sample size at least 1,200
 - time required = 18 months
 - cost = \$100 - \$250,000

Thoughts on the Longitudinal-Project Priority

- Purpose is to set a baseline
 - could use AHW Administrative Data to start
- Build on existing initiatives; learn from their processes
 - Tomorrow Project
 - Nutrition Project
- Coordinate with other projects
 - Bio-monitoring
- Recognize learnings from above, but longitudinal study has to be stand-alone
- Other provinces might contribute, but after Alberta has initiated its own project

Thoughts on the Longitudinal-Project Priority (Cont'd)

- Content options:
 - health effects to environmental influences
 - which chemicals to monitor?
 - genetic influences
 - socio-economic data
- Require long-term political will to sustain the project
 - Early deliverables will create interest
- The project also requires leadership
 - training program
 - capacity building
- Require funding strategy
- Recognize that this can be done in parallel with other priorities

Thoughts on the Central-Entity Priority

- **Characteristics:**
 - Credible
 - Understands research
 - Sustainable/durable
 - Motivated by the topic
 - Can acquire resources
 - Innovative
 - Risk-taker
 - Able to bring diverse researchers together
 - Excellent communication skills
 - Knowledgeable on policy
 - Understands how government works
 - Able to advocate for the topic
 - Committed to the topic
 - Able to support the network of researchers
- Entity must be a champion

Thoughts on the Central-Entity Priority (Cont'd)

- More likely an existing entity than a new one
 - candidates proposed:
 - School of Public Health
 - ACCFCR
 - Women and Children's Health Research Institute
 - Institute of Maternal and Children's Health
 - not led by industry
- Role:
 - develop strategy
 - work with stakeholders in a partnership model
 - construct and negotiate agreements
 - acquire resources
 - fund priorities
 - integrate data from throughout the network
- Look at other models
 - e.g. Clean Air Strategic Alliance
- Funding required
 - estimate \$1 million/year