

Effecting Systems Change to Support Public Health Practice

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Background

- **Systems shift:**
 - From hospital to community
 - To health promotion, disease prevention model
- **Limited research:**
 - Existing CHN workforce capacity
 - How to optimally utilize CHN/PHN workforce
- **Build Public Health capacity:**
 - Need to strengthen infrastructure & capacity is widely recognized
 - PHNs are largest group in public health workforce
 - Expectation to focus on promoting, protecting, & preserving the health of populations
 - Tension in PHN practice between population-focused/individual approaches

Canadian Community Health Nursing Study: Towards a Sustainable Workforce (2006-2009)

- **Project 1:**

What is the supply of Community Health Nurses (CHNs) in Canada?

- Analysis of CHN demographic attributes using: 1) 2007 CIHI Secondary database
2) demographic profile of ~6700 questionnaire respondents

- **Project 2:**

How do the enablers & barriers for CHNs to practice their competencies compare across sub-sectors, age, cohorts, educational levels, & employment?

- NSHRU CHN Questionnaire (Baumann et al., 2006) distributed to 13,775 RNs & LPNs working in all community sub sectors

- **Project 3:**

What organizational attributes best support optimal public health nursing (PHN) practice?

- Focus groups using: Appreciative Inquiry in 6 geographic regions across Canada

Researchers

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Project 3: Organizational Attributes That Best Support Optimal PHN Practice

Methods

- **Focus groups** (n=23) were conducted across Canada (BC, Prairies, North, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada)
- **Participants** included front-line PHNs and policy makers/managers (n~156)
- **Appreciative Inquiry** (*what works best*) & **Nominal Group Process** were employed

Analysis

- **Preliminary thematic analysis:** completed by participants in the focus groups, using nominal group process
- **Second stage analysis:** Researchers and decision makers engaged in:
 - collation of data
 - further analysis to refine thematic analysis
 - development of recommendations

Findings: Organizational Attributes that Best Support PHN Practice



Government /System Attributes

- Flexible and adequate funding structures
- “Champions” for public health
- Public health planning and coordination

Local Organizational Culture: Values & Leadership Characteristics

- Clear mission, vision & goals that are shared among staff
- Culture of creativity and responsiveness
- Effective leadership that values diverse PHN roles

Front-line Management Practices

- Effective program planning
- Promote and value public health nursing practice
- Support autonomous practice
- Committed to learning and professional development
- Effective human resource planning & adequate staffing
- Support public health partnerships & community development
- Foster effective communication
- Support healthy workplace policies

Conclusions

- Public health organizations are **complex, adaptive systems**
- Need for **strong leadership** throughout the public health system
- Need sound **human resource planning**
- **Collaboration** is core public health approach & requires **structural supports**
- Need to foster a **culture of innovation risk taking, & ongoing learning**
- **PHNs need to be a partner** in promoting optimal practice

Policy Recommendations

- The PHAC, provincial ministries of health, local health authorities & universities provide **targeted funding for leadership & management development** at all levels of the public health system.
- Local public health management further develops **outcome-driven evidence-informed service delivery models** that facilitate PHN creativity and responsiveness to community needs.
- Public health decision makers and managers continue to assure that programs have **funding flexibility & PHNs have practice autonomy** to support effective community development & partnerships that ultimately optimize health outcomes.
- **Public health managers** have an in depth understanding of the PHN role & support PHNs to maximize public health competencies.

References

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Funders

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