

## Rural research: Let's make it happen!

James Rourke, MD,  
FCFP(EM), FRRMS,  
FCAHS, LLD<sup>1,2</sup>,  
David

Bradbury-Squires,  
MD, MSc, CCF-  
P(EM)<sup>3,4,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rural Road Map Implementation Committee, SRPC, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland, <sup>4</sup>Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL, Canada, <sup>3</sup>Discipline of Emergency Medicine, Cross-Appointment with Discipline of Family Medicine Faculty of Medicine, Memorial University of Newfoundland, <sup>4</sup>Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL, Canada, <sup>5</sup>SRPC Research Committee, Society of Rural Physician of Canada

Correspondence to:  
James Rourke,  
jrourke@mun.ca

Canadians living in rural communities need rural research to improve their health and healthcare.

Urban-based research just does not usually translate into better rural health or healthcare and is especially disconnected from remote Indigenous communities. COVID has emphasised the need to engage rural communities and health-care stakeholders to study their own health issues to develop, synthesise and mobilise knowledge required on the ground. This has been difficult to achieve, but some doors have begun to open. Let's make it happen!

Memorial University's research skills development programme, <sup>6</sup>for6, and the Rural Coordination Centre of BC Rural Physician Research Support Project provide east and west coast lighthouse examples that demonstrate rural physicians are interested and ideally suited to become effective community-engaged researchers.<sup>1,2</sup>

Research education, connection and support are the magic ingredients to assist them. In 2010, Canada's Academic Health Science Centres embraced the 'Three missions, one future' vision of becoming Networks combining clinical excellence, education and research.<sup>3</sup> Since every Canadian medical school has a distributed education network, it is

time now for them to build research into these rural networks to advance rural clinical care, rural medical education and rural recruitment and retention. This model has been successfully developed in Australia.<sup>4</sup>

For decades, the doors to mainstream funding, support, and capacity building seemed closed for rural health research.<sup>5</sup> The Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC), in collaboration with the Canadian Family Physicians of Canada and Rural Road Map Implementation Committee advocated to Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) to make it mandatory that research initiatives and programmes should include a 'rural' lens to ensure that the rural and Indigenous health population needs are effectively being addressed and met. In 2021, CIHR took notice and rural health research is now noted in the new CIHR Strategic Plan 2021-2031: A Vision for a Healthier Future.<sup>6</sup>

What is further encouraging is that SRPC co-partnered with CIHR's Institute of Health Services and Policy Research (IHSPR) in October 2021 in co-hosting a focus group session with rural researchers, providers and decision-makers across Canada on integrating care for rural populations as part of a new research initiative to be announced in 2022. Revitalised

Received: 15-01-2022    Revised: 29-03-2022    Accepted: 26-04-2022    Published: 29-06-2022

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: WKHLRPMedknow\_reprints@wolterskluwer.com

**How to cite this article:** Rourke J, Bradbury-Squires D. Rural research: Let's make it happen! Can J Rural Med 2022;27:116-7.

Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:  
www.cjrm.ca

DOI:  
10.4103/cjrm.cjrm\_4\_22

in 2021, the SRPC Research Committee will continue discussions with CIHR in exploring ways to build rural health research capacity and to develop and disseminate quality rural medical research to inform evidence-based policymaking for better equitable access to rural health care.

We would like to hear from physicians and others across Canada who are interested in rural research. Please send your ideas to SRPC's Research Committee through [Info@SRPC.ca](mailto:Info@SRPC.ca).

(See also SRPC website <https://srpc.ca/research-committee>).

**Acknowledgements:** Carmela Bosco, SRPC Lead, Rural Road Map Project in providing the context and background for this article as well as facilitated discussions between SRPC and CHIR-IHSPR.

**Financial support and sponsorship:** Nil.

**Conflicts of interest:** There are no conflicts of interest.

## REFERENCES

1. MacLellan C, Bethune C, Heeley T, Graham W, Button C, Asghari S. Assessing the effectiveness of a research training program in developing research competency and productivity among rural physicians. *Can J Rural Med* 2021;26:103-9.
2. Rural Coordination Centre of BC. Rural Physician Research Support Project. Available from: <https://rccbc.ca/rccbc-initiatives/grants-and-awards/rural-physician-research-support-project-grant>. [Last accessed on 2022 May 22].
3. Skura E. Task force urges medical school networking. *CMAJ* 2010;182:E437-8.
4. Lyle D, Greenhill J. Two decades of building capacity in rural health education, training and research in Australia: University Departments of Rural Health and Rural Clinical Schools. *Aust J Rural Health* 2018;26:314-22.
5. Rourke J, Wilson R. Research funding by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research: More rural needed! *Can J Rural Med* 2020;25:11-3.
6. Canadian Institute for Health Services and Policy Research. IHSPR 2021-26 Strategic Plan: Accelerate Health Care System Transformation through Research to Achieve the Quadruple Aim and Health Equity for All; June 2021. Available from: [https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/documents/ihspr\\_strat\\_plan\\_2021-26-en.pdf](https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/documents/ihspr_strat_plan_2021-26-en.pdf). [Last accessed on 2022 May 22].

## GET INVOLVED IN SRPC COMMITTEES

Are you passionate and willing to help support rural health care in Canada? Join one of the many SRPC committees, bridge the gaps, and discuss how we can shape the future of rural and remote health.

To join any of the following committees, contact [info@srpc.ca](mailto:info@srpc.ca)

### Standing Committees

Anesthesia  
Canadian Journal of Rural  
Medicine  
Communications/Membership  
Emergency  
Environmental  
First 5 Years in Practice  
Global Health  
Indigenous Health  
Maternity and Newborn Care  
Nominations and Awards  
Rural Critical Care  
Research  
Resident  
Rural and Remote Medicine  
Course Planning  
Rural Road Map

Rural Surgery (ESS/OSS)  
Rural Specialists  
Student

### Provincial Committees

Alberta  
British Columbia  
Manitoba  
New Brunswick  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
Northwest Territories  
Nova Scotia  
Nunavut  
Ontario  
Prince Edward Island  
Quebec  
Saskatchewan  
Yukon