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In the next issue of the WCWL UPDATE look forward to reading about the development of the clinical panels and details of the communications plan.

## Meet the WCWL Staff

*Dr. David Hadorn*, who many of you will have met at the November Workshop in Calgary, has been retained as Research Director. We are very fortunate to have an individual with his knowledge and experience as part of the team. As you know, David played a key role in the development of waiting list management strategies in New Zealand, and has published extensively on this and related subjects. David's phone number is (510) 526-1720 and he can be reached by email: [hadorn@dnai.com](mailto:hadorn@dnai.com).

*John McGurran* is your Project Director. John is a product of McMaster's Social & Political Ideas Program (B.A.) and its Design Measurement & Evaluation Program (M.Sc.). He has worked in numerous and diverse clinical and community health settings – always with a focus of applying health research to program planning, evaluation and policy. Prior to coming to WCWL, John served as director of Central East Health Information ship [www.cehip.org](http://www.cehip.org) and was a member of the Departments of Public Health Sciences and Health Administration at the University of Toronto. John can be reached via email at [john.mcgurran@ualberta.ca](mailto:john.mcgurran@ualberta.ca) and by phone at (780) 492-2647.

Administrative support for the project is very capably handled by Sue Yi-Austin. Sue spends about one day per week with WCWL and the remainder of her time is spent with the Alberta Consultative Health Research Network as the Network Coordinator. Sue's email address is [syi@ualberta.ca](mailto:syi@ualberta.ca) and her phone number is (780) 492-0927.

## Welcome to the WCWL Newsletter

Welcome to the first number of what I believe will become a regular communiqué on the progress and business of the Western Canada Waiting List Project.

Please feel welcome to circulate this newsletter to your colleagues. If there is a need for additional information or copies, or if you have any suggestions I am as close as your phone: do not hesitate to contact me.

I anticipate that this modest epistle will evolve into a truly informative project newsletter which will be suitable for a broad audience. Ideally it will be much better looking and may even bear a new name! In an effort to begin the improvement process don't hesitate to get in touch. Let me know what you would like to see in these pages.

This newsletter will be part of the overall communications plan we are developing for the project.

*- John McGurran, Project Director -*

## The Project is Underway

Yes, there has been progress! Funding for the project has begun to flow; staff has been hired; the Steering Committee has met several times; a communications plan is being developed and by the time you read this, the process for forming the clinical panels will be well underway.

The administrative centre for the project is the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Alberta. Dr. Tom Noseworthy is Chair of that department and of the Steering Committee. A full list of partners and contacts is included and members of the Steering Committee are identified.

## The WCWL Partners

### - The Regional Health Authorities -

#### Calgary Regional Health Authority

\*\*Barb Young (403) 541-2734  
barb.young@crha-health.ab.ca

#### Capital Health Authority, Edmonton

Pat McKendrick (780) 407-7157  
pmckendr@cha.ab.ca

#### Capital Health Region, Victoria

Dr. David Newsome (250) 370-8877  
dnewsome@caphealth.org

#### Vancouver/Richmond Health Board

Dr. Charles Wright (604) 875-5395  
cwright@vanhosp.bc.ca

#### Saskatoon District Health

Dr. Barry Maber (306) 655-1219  
maberb@sdh.sk.ca

#### Regina Health District

Linda Young (306) 359-3263  
lyoung@reginahealth.sk.ca

#### Winnipeg Hospital Authority

\*\*Dr. Mark Taylor (204) 235-3282  
mtaylor@mail.sbgh.mb.ca

### - The Medical Associations -

#### Saskatchewan Medical Association

Dr. Allan Florizone (306) 244-2196  
allan@sma.sk.ca

#### Alberta Medical Association

Deb Wilson (780) 482-2626  
dew@amda.ab.ca

#### British Columbia Medical Association

\*\* Darrell Thomson (604) 736-5551  
dthomson@bcma.bc.ca

#### Canadian Medical Association

\*\*Dr. Peter Vaughan (613) 731-8610  
vaughp@cma.ca

## Communications Planning

The very nature of this project dictates that we must develop and follow an effective communication plan – one that reaches the variety of communities which this project encompasses. Operationally, this requires us to be open, strategic and engaging in our work, particularly in the clinical panels.

To help develop this plan we have retained Anne-Marie Downey, an experienced communications consultant based here in Edmonton. Anne Marie will be in touch with many of you in the near future as she collects information upon which to frame her report.

## WCWL Website – Help!!

As discussed by those in attendance at the WCWL Calgary Workshop last November, development of a website for this project is a high priority. There is already a significant amount of information on hand that can be made available to the partners and others more efficiently through a website, and very quickly there will be quite a bit more.

**Help Wanted!** If you have had hands-on experience with website development, if you have an interest in hosting the WCWL site or even if this is a topic you would like to get involved in, don't hesitate to touch base. We are in the process of obtaining an appropriate domain name.

## The Clinical Panels

The WCWL Steering Committee, at its March 31 and April 20 meetings developed a strategy to set up the five clinical panels – one for each of the areas of interest: MRI Scanning, cataract surgery; children's mental health; hip/knee joint replacement and hernia repair.

### *Panel Formation*

The seven Regional Health Authorities have been invited to submit a list of the panels they would like to host. The Steering Committee will make hosting decisions at its May 25 meeting. When the host sites are known, all 19 partners will be invited to nominate panel members. At its mid-June meeting the members will be selected by the Steering Committee and presented to all 19 Partners for endorsement.

- *The Provincial Ministries of Health* -

**Alberta Health**

Dr. Lynn Redfern (780) 415-2784  
lynn.refdern@health.gov.ab.ca

**British Columbia Ministry of Health**

Neil Fatin (250) 952-1170  
neil.fatin@moh.hnet.bc.ca

**Saskatchewan Health**

\*\*Lauren Donnelly (306) 787-3219  
ldonnell@health.gov.sk.ca

**Manitoba Health**

Pat Hosang (204) 786-7358  
phosang@health.gov.mb.ca

- *The Health Research Centres* -

**University of Alberta**

\*\*Dr. Tom Noseworthy (780) 492-6682  
tom.noseworthy@ualberta.ca

**University of British Columbia**

\*\*Dr. Morris Barer (604) 822-5992  
mbarer@chspr.ubc.ca

**Manitoba Centre for Health Policy & Evaluation**

\*\*Dr. Charlyn Black (204) 789-3442  
c\_black@umanitoba.ca

**Health Services Utilization and Research Commission**

\*\*Steven Lewis (306) 655-1500  
lewiss@sdh.sk.ca

\*\* denotes members of the Steering Committee

As with size, there were a number of factors that had to be included when defining the categories of panel membership. The following model provides a practical and realistic combination:

- an acknowledged clinical leader from the host regional health authority to serve as co-chair
- three to five clinical specialists, including representation from an academic environment, a non-academic environment and from other regions
- two or three family physicians whose practices include frequent referrals to the clinical area under study
- one or two clinician from a specialty which frequently refers patients to the area
- one individual from a health administration background
- Dr. David Hadorn, project Research Director and panel co-chair

*Resources and Deliverables*

In confirming the five subject areas described in the proposal, the Steering Committee acknowledged that some fine tuning would have to be done by the panels, when constituted. The first task for each panel will be to draft its terms of reference and define a set of deliverables within the time frame of project.

Once these are in place, a budget for each panel will be developed in terms of research and information systems support.

*And In Conclusion...*

As project director I am acutely aware of the fact that interest in this initiative is high, and has been so since the Calgary Workshop. I hope to be able to report that the panels are up and running in the next issue of this newsletter.

The Steering Committee would assure that the multidisciplinary clinical panels represent an effective mix of clinical and geographic characteristics.

*Panel Size and Composition*

The size of a panel is a critical characteristic. It should be large enough to encompass input from the geographic and clinical communities, yet small enough to work effectively as a team. Further, there needs to be sufficient involvement from clinicians in the host agency. The model adopted by the Steering Committee sets a maximum of 12 member although it is recognized that panel size may vary slightly.

Appropriate size and composition are required to assure the development of clinically coherent, valid and useful tools to help prioritize patients waiting for care.

## About WCWL

This one-pager describing the WCWL Project is presented in response to several requests for a short summary piece. More detailed information is available upon request.

### *Who...*

A consortium of four medical associations, seven regional health authorities, the four western provincial ministries of health and four health research centres has received funding from Health Canada's Health Transition Fund to address some of the key issues associated with waiting lists in Canada. This initiative is known as the Western Canada Waiting List Project (WCWL).

### *What...*

The project will work to standardize what is meant by 'waiting time' and to develop tools to assist decision makers with allocation of resources. Of particular interest is how information systems can be used to help with the management of waiting lists. The project will focus on five conditions or procedures: Magnetic Resonance Imaging, hip and knee joint replacement, cataract surgery, hernia repair and children's mental health services. These represent a range of diagnostic, procedural and consultative interventions that will permit a comprehensive evaluation of the waiting list issues and aid in the development of a range of decision-making tools applicable in a variety of settings.

### *Where...*

Funded for 18 months and with its administrative centre at the University of Alberta, the work of this project will take place within five multidisciplinary clinical panels - one dedicated to each of the clinical situations of interest. Each panel will be hosted by a regional health authority and will consist of a cross section of clinicians who are involved in and who refer patients for the five procedures.

### *When...*

In November 1998 in Calgary a WCWL-sponsored Workshop brought together a group of scholars, clinicians, regional health authority staff, medical associations and government officials for wide ranging discussions of waiting list issues. The session ended with the formation of a WCWL Steering Committee to attend to recruitment and administrative matters and to provide project leadership. In March 1999 the Project Director and Research Director were hired. In April the process to develop the five expert multidisciplinary clinical panels got underway. Regular progress updates will be issued.

### *Why...*

Over the past few years, there has been increasing media coverage of the length of time patients wait for access to needed medical services. These 'waiting periods' are often pointed to as indications of under-funding of Canada's health care system. In 1998, a major study sponsored by Health Canada ("Waiting Lists and Waiting Times for Health Care in Canada More Management!! More Money?") concluded, among other things, that "there are no standardized sources of data currently available for compiling national information on waiting lists" and that "there is widespread interest in standardizing data and coordinating and integrating waiting lists." The Western Canada Waiting List Project will begin this work.

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## UPDATE

### WESTERN CANADA WAITING LIST PROJECT

THE UPDATE is the monthly newsletter of the Western Canada Waiting List Project. It is published at the Department of Public Health Sciences, 13-103 Clinical Sciences Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G3. For more information, please contact John McGurran, Project Director, at 780-492-2647 or [john.mcgurran@ualberta.ca](mailto:john.mcgurran@ualberta.ca) visit our website at <http://www.wcwl.org>

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