Research for Policy: Responding to COVID-19 -- Population Health and Health Services
Date/time: 28 May 2020 (1:00-2:00 pm EST)

Moderator: Kathleen Morris, Vice-President, Research and Analysis (CIHI) and Board Member, CRDCN

Panelists:
- David Green, Professor of Economics (University of British Columbia)
- Rhonda Kropp, Assistant Vice-President, Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Branch (Public Health Agency of Canada)
- Julie Bernier, Director, Health Analysis Division (Statistics Canada)
- Tracie Afifi, Professor of Community Health Sciences (University of Manitoba)

Moderator notes:
- The moderator welcomes the panelists and participants in coming together to convene and connect with colleagues during this extraordinary time in our country's history, noting that 246 colleagues from universities across the country, from various levels of government and from the nonprofit sector, registered for the webinar.
- Also noted: CRDCN is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year and would like to thank CFI, CIHR, SSHRC, Statistics Canada, university partners from across the country as well as provincial government and private sector partners for their ongoing support.

Note on this summary document
There was a wealth of ideas presented and exchanged during each of the webinars and we encourage you to watch the recordings in full: https://crdcn.org/covid-19-webinar-series. In this summary, we present a brief overview of the discussion, framed according to a delineation that emerged in each of the webinars: (1) data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term, and (2) research and policy questions for the medium and longer term. That said, there are, of course, strong links between these and the research and policy questions discussed during the webinars in some way involved the full spectrum of shorter to longer term implications.

Data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term
- At the beginning of the crisis, StatCan formed a committee on COVID to look at data gaps, and how to share data/information that they could collect or were already collecting on a regular basis. Their activity has included: producing a weekly dashboard, launching a geoanalytics system, nowcasting, collecting data through crowdsourcing and LFS panels, modelling, and the COVID-19 banner on their website (see https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/covid19).
- There was some discussion by the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada regarding data issues that are not new to COVID, but are inherent to the limitations of public health surveillance data: the timeliness, granularity, incompleteness, integration of the data, and getting information out that is accessible and that can be used for multiple purposes. They are working with provincial and territorial colleagues to try to address some of those issues.
- In March, the BC Centre for Disease Control (BC CDC), looking for input on the economic impacts of COVID, contacted the Vancouver School of Economics (UBC), which assembled four teams: current state of the economy; heat map of industries and occupations; joint modelling of the economy and

the virus; examining inequality/poverty implications. See
https://covid19.economics.ubc.ca/projects/project-1/ for more info and to see the tool developed
to advise the BC CDC; the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC) has provided resources for the
team to create the tool for every province.

- On the role that national and provincial nonprofits can/should play in providing access to
information on vulnerable populations through crowdsourcing surveys or other methods: Core
datasets for surveillance purposes are limited and have some very significant data gaps. Colleagues
working on the ground with vulnerable populations are vital sources of information for data and,
from a qualitative perspective, have wisdom gained through access to vulnerable populations in the
best and most respectful ways possible.
- How have the public health measures related to COVID either positively or negatively influenced
people's nutritional habits and food purchasing patterns?

Research and policy questions for the medium and longer term
- Questions to consider related to children and families: what are the impacts of COVID-19 on family
conflict, on child maltreatment, on intimate partner violence, on parents' mental health, on well-
being resilience, and what resources do children and families need?
- In addition, key data gaps (that cannot be filled through routine surveillance) include the following:
race/ethnicity burden by different populations; impacts across healthcare sector occupations;
unintended consequences of emergency measures (such as family violence, substance use, sexually
transmitted infections, changes/perceptions/actions regarding vaccinations) by different
populations (e.g. sociodemographics, Indigenous populations, etc.).
- Some of the challenges for researchers (and research assistants) during the lockdown were
discussed (such as a halt in access to data on research that was underway and implications for
research funding received); also discussed were opportunities that the lockdown created for
interdisciplinary research and connections across research programs that were typically not related.
The importance of both working together and bringing the data together was noted.
- Among the lessons learned through COVID on the data gaps and how best to fill them: While much
work has been done to prepare for a pandemic, there is a gap in terms of putting in place
infrastructure and resources for rapid response in terms of having studies that are pre-planned, are
Research Advisory Board-approved, and are ready to launch. Surveillance systems can move
relatively quickly to gather data, but surveillance does not provide what research provides.

Keeping the conversation going …
CRDCN is creating a framework based on the key research and policy questions discussed in the
webinars to guide concrete next steps. We will be launching CRDCN community channels on Slack in
June 2020 in order to provide a platform -- for researchers, data experts, policy-makers and program
deliverers-- to connect about key questions, map out next steps and collaborate to advance research
and policy efforts. Stay tuned and join us as we continue to support the important work of the CRDCN
community.