CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS

Universities Without Walls: A CIHR Strategic Training Program in HIV/AIDS Health Research
Population Health and Health Services Research in HIV/AIDS: The Gaps and Challenges

• Small # of researchers scattered across the country
• Little or no infrastructure provided by universities to support population health and health services research
• Too many studies still describing the problems; few trying to solve them (intervention work is dismal)
• Few resources/expertise to move evidence into action
• Need for collaborative networks with key decision-makers, community and front-line providers to shape research agenda / priorities and processes and to have impact
Population Health and Health Services Research in HIV/AIDS: The Solutions

The CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity HIV/AIDS Program listened and created an extraordinary funding opportunity to support population health centres and training initiatives.

Now it is our turn!!
Here is how we think we can provide solutions and make a difference.
CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS

(Research Evidence Into Action For Community Health)
Who Are We, Our Mission and Goal

• The CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS is a national network of leading health researchers from over 20 academic institutions across Canada, federal, provincial and regional policy makers, and over 15 front-line community-based agencies.

• **Our mission**: undertake interdisciplinary research to understand the factors driving the epidemic, find innovative solutions and move research evidence into action.

• **Our goal**: strengthen policy, programs and practices, and make a measurable difference in the health of individuals and communities disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS.
Targets and Outcomes for Year 1

• 8-10 Projects supported addressing thematic aims
• 6-8 Interdisciplinary networks established
• 6-8 teams utilizing database platforms
• 4-6 Pilot Interventions supported
• 4-6 CIHR Catalyst grants submitted
• 4-6 CIHR Operating grants submitted
• 6-8 New partnerships developed with other initiatives
• 2-3 Funds leveraged with other initiatives
• 2-3 Projects that have influenced programs / services
Major Objectives -1

Build and support a national centre to foster interdisciplinary research

• Support interdisciplinary teams of academic faculty, community members and policy-makers

• Promote collaborative health research

• Capitalize on our diversity of approaches and conceptual models.
Major Objectives -2

Foster meaningful and collaborative relationships and networks

• Between researchers and research end-users, such as community-based organizations, people living with HIV, knowledge brokers, policy makers, public and voluntary sector, program administrators, and clinical and public health practitioners

• Provide expert advice to research teams to enrich and contextualize the scope and impact of their initiatives

• Partner to set regional and national research priorities.
Major Objectives -3

Establish a national training network

Universities
Without Walls

A CIHR Strategic Training Program in HIV/AIDS Health Research
Our Targets and Outcomes for Year 1

• 20 Academic, community and policy students enrolled
• 10 CIHR / OHTN training awards secured
• 10 Research, community and policy practica / placements
• 5-6 Learning modules developed
• 6-8 Interdisciplinary lectures offered
• 3-4 Learning opportunities developed (grant-writing, ethics)
• 10-12 Students engaged in new projects / with new Faculty
• 3-4 New partnerships developed with other training initiatives
• $50K Funds leveraged with other training initiatives
Support strategic population health and health services research programs to broaden their impact on priority populations locally and in other regions in Canada

• Take collaborative approach to establishing research priorities
• Maximize potential of existing cohorts and databases to address critical social science, population health and health services gaps and priorities
• Secure research funding through other funding research opportunities (e.g., CIHR, NIH) to enhance our capacity and impact.
Major Objectives -5

Foster and support the translation and exchange of research evidence

• Increase the impact of research on policy, programs and practice

• Make KTE processes and strategies effective and responsive to the needs of people with and affected by HIV in their local settings.
Major Objectives -6

Address Aboriginal population-specific HIV/AIDS research and KTE needs

• Establish formal partnership / MOU to work collaboratively and support the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

• Bridge and support linkages between academic and community investigators

• Make Aboriginal population health a priority in ongoing cohort studies across Canada.
Major Objectives -6

Address Aboriginal population-specific HIV/AIDS research and KTE needs

• Establish formal partnership / MOU to work collaboratively and support the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

• Bridge and support linkages between academic and community investigators

• Make Aboriginal population health a priority in ongoing cohort studies across Canada.
MOU – CAAN and OHTN

• To establish an Aboriginal Committee that will develop and support a program of research to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities across Canada
• To recruit and support one to two students each term to participate in Universities Without Walls Initiative
• To integrate Aboriginal health issues/research needs into other REACH initiatives
• To recruit Aboriginal health researchers to participate on REACH committees and teams
• To support a research coordinator who will support the Aboriginal REACH Research Committee, coordinate projects and assist in developing capacity for teams to prepare grant applications
MOU – CAAN and OHTN

• To create a series of lectures and a learning modules on Aboriginal HIV/AIDS health issues that emphasize culturally competent practice and other knowledge/skills identified by the Aboriginal Committee

• To share information

• To provide data support, linkages and analyses for use by CAAN researchers when developing grants, presentations, publications and interventions

• To ensure that Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) principles are utilized in all areas of OHTN, REACH Centre and CAAN research initiatives with respect to Aboriginal Peoples.
Platforms for Strategic Research to Enhance the Health of Individuals and Communities

1. Provide infrastructure and an environment for strategic research to enhance the health (i.e., reduce risk, enhance resilience) of communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. Work in interdisciplinary teams to engage diverse communities, synergize and apply interdisciplinary methodologies, conduct intervention research, and develop KTE strategies.

3. Provide infrastructure support to build rigorous regional, inter-regional, inter-sectoral and national programs of research.
Capacity Building Initiatives in REACH

1. **INTERDISCIPLINARY METHODOLOGIES.** Enable members to develop interdisciplinary methodologies to address specific research challenges.

2. **HARNESS THE POWER OF LONGITUDINAL HIV COHORTS AND HEALTH SERVICES DATABASES.** Harness the power of existing cohorts and health services databases and encourage teams to use the databases and data linkages as a platform for start-up projects (linked to existing/support new cohorts), and to use this type of data in their work.
Capacity Building Initiatives in REACH

3. **INTERVENTION RESEARCH.** To develop/implement interventions to reduce new infections and improve the health of people with HIV, consider at least two conceptually separate questions: (1) whether a new intervention should be chosen or adopted, given existing information, and (2) whether additional research is needed to inform this choice.

4. **POLICY ANALYSIS.** Create capacity for innovative, interdisciplinary, and empirically-grounded policy analysis: create a clearinghouse of HIV-related policy knowledge that recognizes complexity.

5. **KTE.** Informed, goal-driven interactions to create context-specific useable knowledge.
Successes to Date: 1\textsuperscript{st} 6 Months

1. 1-week Summer Learning Institute (July) – 50 students
2. Family Front and Centre (August) – APA, NIH, CIHR, OHTN, REACH – 200 participants – Intervention research for families
3. Alberta Think Tank on Housing and health
4. Catalyst grants – BC (Housing) and Ontario (HIV/AIDS education intervention in elementary schools)
5. CBR operating grants – BC (PHA health needs and services), CAAN (national housing study, scoping review)
6. Partner and investigator on CAAN intervention grant to CIHR
7. Development of MOUs – CAAN and AIRN
8. Hired staff – Managers for UWW, research and KTE
9. Partnership with CAHR for training – 2 CAHR Scholarships
10. Developing Websites for UWW and REACH
11. Partner in 2\textsuperscript{nd} North American HIV, Housing and Health Conference
REACH Resources and Support

1. REACH Staff to support education, training, research project development and KTE
2. IT infrastructure and funds to support team networking
3. Think tanks / deliberative processes for developing new ideas and directions
4. Pilot funding for projects and interventions
5. Proposal development to CIHR, PHAC, OHTN, NIH
6. Access to population health databases and cohorts
7. Access and links to health services / administrative data
8. Support for moving research into action
CIHR Centre for REACH in HIV/AIDS

Universities Without Walls: A CIHR Strategic Training Program in HIV/AIDS Health Research

Sean B. Rourke, Ph.D.
sean.rourke@utoronto.ca