

# Evaluating Chronic Disease Self-management in Northern Saskatchewan

## Summary

This article describes an evaluation framework and study that incorporates individual, cultural, and community factors relevant to assessing the effectiveness of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program in northern Saskatchewan communities.

## Key Terms

**Chronic Disease:** A chronic disease is one lasting three months or more, by the definition of the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. Chronic diseases are persistent and generally cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication, nor do they just disappear. Health damaging behaviours are major contributors to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

**Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP):** CDSMPs are created to assist people with multiple chronic diseases or conditions to better cope with their chronic disease. They help individuals with chronic diseases and their caregivers to take control of their conditions and engage in healthy behaviours, through a peer-led program delivered by trained individuals..

**Bonnie Jeffery, PhD, Director, Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU); Carol Gillis, Health Care Consultant; Napoleon (Nap) Gardiner, Northern Health Strategy; and Peter Butt, BA, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, University of Saskatchewan.**

This article describes the development of an evaluation framework that will allow for effective study and assessment of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program in northern Saskatchewan communities. Importantly, the evaluation framework incorporates relevant individual, cultural, and community factors. Effective assessment of the success of health improvement programs is vital to the success and continuation of such programs.

Often, these programs are designed or created by others outside of the community where the program is implemented (Wagner, Austin, & Von Korff, 1996). While any number of these programs may be seen as best practices elsewhere, it is important to consider:

- the realities of the community in which programs are implemented;
- how these realities affect the delivery of the programs; and
- how the realities ultimately affect the success and outcomes of the programs.

Determining the breadth and scope of these realities in northern Saskatchewan is the focus of this study.

In Saskatchewan, the Northern Health Strategy Working Group (NHSWG) has guided the implementation of chronic disease self-management programs through the work of its Northern Chronic Care Coalition (NCCC) sub-committee.

Bonnie Jeffery, SPHERU Director and Researcher, and Carol Gillis, Coordinator for the Northern Health Strategy's NCCC, are co-leading the research team which will develop the evaluation framework. The study will begin in the fall of 2010.

Development of the evaluation framework and completion of the study are funded by a Community Network Partnership Research Grant from the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre (IPHRC).

## Objectives of the Study

This study includes several research objectives:

- Develop individual, cultural, and community indicators that can assess implementation and outcomes of chronic disease self-management programs in selected northern Saskatchewan communities.
- Develop an evaluation framework for chronic disease self-management programs that incorporates appropriate methods and individual, cultural, and community indicators.
- Test individual, cultural, and community indicators that contribute to successful implementation and outcomes of chronic disease self-management programs in northern Saskatchewan communities.
- Test the evaluation framework of chronic disease self-management programs in northern Saskatchewan communities.
- Create capacity among community representatives and research trainees in community-based and participatory community health program evaluation research.



## Evaluating Chronic Disease Self-management ... (Continued from page 3)

- Contribute to the broader theoretical and methodological discourse on evaluating community-based chronic disease management programs that serve aboriginal populations.

Using data collected from a variety of sources (literature reviews, program evaluation, stakeholder interviews, information from community representatives, information collected from community residents, etc.) the research team will determine the factors that are most relevant to the delivery of chronic disease self-management programs in northern Saskatchewan.

### The Study in Action

Chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, are on the rise in northern Saskatchewan (Irvine, Stockdale & Oliver, 2004, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, 2004).

Our team of researchers will work closely with community members and associations, such as the NCCC, through each step of the research process to ensure that individual, community, and cultural factors are highly prioritized. In this way, the research outcomes are expected to be applicable to the communities where the chronic disease self-management programs are implemented.

Implementing a community approach, which recognizes a population-health approach, benefits the research as well as the community (Barr, et al., 2003). By focusing on multiple aspects of the health care journey, we are better positioned to understand the multiple factors that affect an individual's ability to effectively manage a chronic disease, as well as an organization's ability to deliver programs that enhance this management of chronic diseases.


This research project will begin with a thorough review of the available published and unpublished literature on chronic disease programs that have been successful in other regions. Once our documentation of these programs is complete, various chronic disease self-management program stakeholders will be interviewed. Information will also be collected from community representatives during an evaluation and planning workshop, and from community residents during a pilot study of the evaluation framework.

### Sharing Findings from the Study

Ensuring that our research has the opportunity to inform policy making and health programming is an important aspect of our research process.

We will share our findings widely with:

- key stakeholders;
- those responsible for creating and delivering various health programming;
- the academic and research community; and
- individuals suffering from chronic diseases (through a detailed and integrated communication and knowledge translation, mobilization, and transfer plan).

Plain language and informative documents, such as posters, fact sheets and research reports will be tailored to a variety of audiences to deliver our results and messages. 

### About the Authors

**Bonnie Jeffery**, PhD, is the Director of the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU) and a Professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina.

**Carol Gillis** is a Health Care Consultant and former CEO of the Keewatin Yatthé Health Region.

**Napoleon (Nap) Gardiner** coordinates the Northern Health Strategy.

**Peter Butt**, BA, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, is an Associate Professor with the Department of Family Medicine, University of Saskatchewan.

### About the Organization

The **Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU)** is a bi-university research unit with offices located across Saskatchewan, in Regina, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon. SPHERU engages in population health research, which is the study of social factors that contribute to the well-being of various groups within the population. Working across various disciplines, SPHERU researchers collaborate with communities, other academics, and policy-makers to undertake this critical research.

