

CAHSPR ACRSPS

Canadian Association for Health
Services and Policy Research

L'Association canadienne pour la
recherche sur les services et les
politiques de la santé

**VIRTUALLY CAHSPR: A COVID
INFORMED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF
HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH SERVICES
AND POLICY RESEARCH**

May 27-28, 2020

Virtually CAHSPR Sponsored By:



Canadian Institute for Health Information
Better Data. Better Decisions. Healthier Canadians.

2020 Virtually CAHSPR Conference: In a Word

CAHSPR is pleased to share this summary of its 2020 Conference, which was also its first “Virtually CAHSPR” Conference entitled “A COVID Informed Vision for the Future of Healthcare and Health Services & Policy Research”, which was held via Zoom technology on May 27-28, 2020 across Canada and beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION

Virtually CAHSPR Conference 2020: In a Word attempts to articulate the essence of the decisions behind hosting a virtual conference this year, the importance of the CAHSPR community to Canadians and our health system, and the forward facing strategies for the evolution of the health system based on lessons learned through COVID19. We elucidate the opportunities for growth, and the philosophy and vision that are at the centre of all that we do at CAHSPR. *Virtually CAHSPR Conference 2020: In a Word* provides Canada’s health services and policy research stakeholders with an understanding of the vital role that CAHSPR plays in supporting the health services research community, particularly in providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and strategies from a diverse group of speakers and participants such that the broader healthcare and health services and policy research community can learn from each other.

We chose to focus on the words that resonated with attendees about CAHSPR and the conference, showing the relationship between these words and our goal for a sustainable, excellent, responsive environment in which health services and policy researchers can come together to learn and to advance excellence in Canadian healthcare. A few of the words that reflect the experience of those planning and attending *Virtually CAHSPR Conference 2020: In a Word* are: *Flexible, Relevant, Accessible, Visionary, Excellence, Community, Inclusivity, and Gratitude*. These are the words that were prominent in the post conference assessments completed by participants. It is our aim in this report to demonstrate the importance of these words to the conference specifically and to the work of CAHSPR overall.

2. BACKGROUND

In March of 2020 it became clear to leadership at CAHSPR that although a pandemic had not yet been declared, the emergence of COVID19 would become a major influence throughout the entire world. The Board began to discuss the potential impacts of the novel corona virus on our soon to be launched in-person conference scheduled for May 26-29, 2020 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. At this point, the conference planning was complete, sponsorships secured, venues booked, speakers confirmed, and registration was about to go live.

FLEXIBLE

The Board held an emergency meeting at which a unanimous decision to cancel the in-person conference was made. While recognizing this decision would be disappointing to the vibrant community of CAHSPR researchers and policy makers, we believed this decision was unavoidable, and the right decision to make. Recognizing the need to be *flexible* and attempting to limit disruption for our members, we made the decision at this early date, prior to registration opening, and prior to personal travel plans being made.

We spent the following weeks exploring possible avenues to share the outstanding work of CAHSPR 2020 presenters, panelists and participants.

In exploring ways to host a forum that would be meaningful to the community, a decision was made to pivot the focus and the content of our planned conference to meet the most pressing needs of Canadian health service and policy researchers.

A decision was made that the community that is served by CAHSPR would benefit from a highly relevant and accessible conference in the immediate future. Hence, the dates of May 27 and 28, previously held for the in-person conference were secured to host a virtual conference, the first *Virtually CAHSPR*. The decision meant that planning, stakeholder consultation, securing of speakers and technology had to be decided upon and implemented within a one-month horizon.

ACCESSIBLE AND RELEVANT

COVID19 had now been declared a global pandemic and with that came the knowledge that many who would traditionally attend the CAHSPR conference were in the midst of unbelievably busy work and often-times disrupted family lives. The realities of a healthcare system under massive strain, and the associated realities of social distancing that mandated working at home led us to believe a foundational element of our planning would be that our event must be *accessible*.

The CAHSPR Board and conference planning committee reached the decision that in order to ensure the conference was easily and dependably accessible to stakeholders, our focus would be on producing a simple and elegant conference. Our intention was set to keep the technology simple so that we would mitigate the risk of technical glitches. We determined that the use of Zoom, employing a simple presentation format met our needs. This decision was reached recognizing that by foregoing complexity we would have to forego the networking and breakout discussions that are an important part of the traditional in person CAHSPR conference. The best advice we received from those who have expertise in hosting virtual events was that we should not try to replicate the experience of an in-person conference, especially in these early days of virtual conferences.

Relevant and engaging content was a priority for the planning committee and Board. Our members are immersed in the impacts and requirements of the pandemic and their time is valuable. It was of paramount importance to ensure that the content was highly *relevant* and engaging.



“GREAT PIVOT TO VIRTUAL...VERY IMPRESSED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF THE VIRTUAL PLATFORM. IT SEEMED TO RUN SEAMLESSLY.

Participant survey quote



“WELL DONE! LOVED IT! TALK ABOUT MAKING THIS CONFERENCE EQUITABLE AND EASY ACCESS FOR RURAL FOLKS”

Participant survey quote



JUST AN EXCEPTIONAL SLATE OF
SPEAKERS AND A BRILLIANTLY
CURATED PROGRAM! THANK YOU
FOR SO GENEROUSLY MAKING THIS
AVAILABLE TO NON-MEMBERS

Participant survey quote

A vision for the conference emerged in which we sought to engage speakers who are known to be “big thinkers” to discuss and challenge us with content that explored the lessons learned for healthcare as they relate to COVID19. Those big thinkers were tasked with challenging us about the way forward, encouraging us to articulate a vision for the future of healthcare and health services and policy research across Canada. With this, the theme for *Virtually CAHSPR 2020* became: *A COVID Informed Vision for the Future of Healthcare and Health Services and Policy Research.*

3. PRE-CONFERENCE STUDENT WORKSHOPS

VISIONARY

Supporting and recognizing the importance of the cohort of young researchers in Canada is a key component of CAHSPR’s *visionary* strategy preparing for the future of the association. Attendance numbers at the CAHSPR Conference makes obvious the fact that Canada’s cohort of young health services researchers continues to grow. This year, CAHSPR’s Student working group welcomed students and early career researchers to a writing workshop followed by a discussion about health services and policy research career trajectory with members of the CAHSPR Board.

CAHSPR intends to proactively work to meet the needs of this growing group of emerging researchers through the annual conference, networking opportunities, learning opportunities and by leveraging expanded virtual offerings.

The annual CAHSPR conference provides an opportunity for students to present their research, regardless of the stage of their progress as researchers. More substantial accomplishments find their place in the concurrent sessions, while earlier efforts can be presented in poster sessions. All authors whose abstracts were accepted for presentation were provided an opportunity to develop a digital poster to share their work with the research community on the CAHSPR website and through social media channels. This year, the digital posters and all of the abstracts can be found in the Book of Abstracts on the CAHSPR website, <https://cahspr.ca/events/virtually-cahspr/>.



“I ASPIRE TO BE INVOLVED IN HEALTH POLICY
AND THESE TALKS PRESENTED ME WITH MANY
NEW IDEAS TO THINK ABOUT AS WELL AS
POINTS TO THINK ABOUT FOR MY CURRENT
THESIS”

Participant survey quote

4. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

EXCELLENCE

With our focus on providing an elegant and simple virtual conference experience, the Scientific Committee sought to bring world class thought leaders to the conference. The intention was to have them share their insights, challenge thinking and spark dialogue. The sole intention of the Board and Scientific Committee was to produce an experience for members and stakeholders that would have *excellence* embedded in every presentation and every discussion.

The format for the conference was a series of plenary sessions in a modular format, spread over two days. The plenary sessions included either a single presenter or a panel with expertise in the area of interest for that session. Each

panelist/presenter gave a short presentation, followed by a panel discussion and questions and answers from participants.

Those speakers who utilized slides for presentation have shared their slide decks, which can be found along with all of the recorded sessions, which are available at <https://cahspr.ca/events/virtually-cahspr/>

Day 1 Opening Plenary:

COVID19: What Have We Learned & How Has Healthcare & Research Changed?

With the declaration of COVID19 as a pandemic, the demands on the healthcare system changed virtually overnight. The dramatic changes that have taken place in the delivery of care related to the novel corona virus have led to meaningful lessons for us: lessons that if we learn from them will inform how the future of healthcare and health services and policy research will evolve now and into the future.

We assembled a panel for the opening plenary session featuring the following individuals:

Moderator: Roxane Borges Da Silva, President of CAHSPR

Presenter: Michel Grignon, Professor, Department of Economics & Health Aging & Society, McMaster University

Presenter: Sacha Bhatia, FM Hill Chair in Health Systems Solutions & Chief Medical Innovation Officer, Women's College Hospital, Division Head of Cardiology

Presenter: Andre Picard, Health Columnist, The Globe and Mail

In the opening plenary session, the presenters emphasized the importance of incorporating research into decision-making, and using the resulting evidence to drive policy development at all times, but especially in times of crisis such as the pandemic.

Day 1 MacNaught-Taillon Award Lecture:

Power & Peril: How Information and Informatics are Shaping Pandemic Response

The MacNaught-Taillon (M&T) Leadership Award is awarded at the CAHSPR conference in association with the Justice Emmett Hall Memorial Foundation and CHLNet. This year's winner is Dr. Jennifer Zelmer, the President and CEO of the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement. The award is given every three years and is accompanied by a \$1,000 bursary to an emerging health leader as selected by the MacNaught-Taillon award winner. This year Dr. Zelmer has chosen to give the bursary to an emerging patient partner leader. There was a call for submissions, which were adjudicated by other patient leaders based on applications received by June 19th, 2020. The 2020 M&T Emerging Patient Leader recipients are Kim Kaley and Payal Khazanchi. The bursary will build their capacity as leaders and patient partners.

As the recipient of the award, Dr. Zelmer explored how personal protective equipment (PPE) is the visible symbol of pandemic response, while information and informatics are less visible but equally critical elements of effective public health action for health care providers, for governments, and for society as a whole. Yet, their use is not free from peril. Dr. Zelmer explored both dimensions and what they tell us about what is needed for the transition phase of COVID19 that we are entering.

Moderator: Maggie Keresteci, Executive Director, CAHSPR

Award Introduction: Ms. Dianne Parker-Taillon

Presenter: Jennifer Zelmer, President & CEO, Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, 2020 MacNaught-Taillon award recipient

Day 2, Opening Session:

Great Adaptations: COVID19 Inspired Vision for the Future of Healthcare in Canada

This session brought together a panel with broad expertise in the health system to explore the way forward for population health and the healthcare system. The panelists examined how we might incorporate lessons learned about the social determinants of health, what the face of primary care can look like as well as the role for hospitals as they have been shaped by our experience in dealing with the pandemic. COVID19 has revealed gaps in how we care for vulnerable people, including older adults and the panelists delved into how this experience has increased the urgency to implement new models that focus on people, not buildings.

Moderator: Alan Katz, President-Elect, CAHSPR

Presenter: Zayna Khayat, Future Strategist, SE Health

Presenter: Vivek Goel, Vice President, Research and Innovation & Strategic Initiatives, University of Toronto

Presenter: Joshua Tepper, Family physician, CEO and President of North York General Hospital

Day 2, Second Session:

Collateral Damage: The Unintended Consequences of COVID19

While few would dispute the magnitude of the direct impacts of the COVID19 crisis, the downstream consequences have yet to be clearly articulated. The panel discussed the gaps and inequities that have been revealed as well as the wide-ranging collateral damage of the pandemic, which is exacting a largely unseen toll on individuals, communities and society at large.

Moderator: Maggie Keresteci, Executive Director, CAHSPR

Presenter: Amelie Quesnel-Vallee, Canada Research Chair in Policies & Health Inequalities, McGill University

Presenter: Colleen Flood, University of Ottawa Research Chair in Health Law & Policy, Inaugural Director of Ottawa Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics

Presenter: Lisa Ridgway, Patient partner with Vancouver Island Health Authority, BC Support Unit

Day 2, Closing Session:

Putting Clothes on the Emperor: Opportunities for Healthcare and Research in the COVID Aftermath

The closing session for *Virtually CAHSPR Conference 2020* brought together the discussions throughout the conference. The session brought together the lessons learned and incorporated the vision for the future that was envisioned over the course of the conference. Dr. Lewis built on the insights gained by encouraging participants to explore the opportunities that exist for the health system and research in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Moderator: Alan Katz, President-Elect, CAHSPR

Presenter: Steven Lewis, Professor of Health Policy, Simon Fraser University

Concurrent Sessions

Perhaps the heart of the in-person CAHSPR Scientific Conference is the opportunity provided to researchers to present their work in the many concurrent sessions and poster presentation sessions hosted at the Conference. In 2020, CAHSPR received a total of 527 submitted abstracts for consideration. From the submitted abstracts, 482 were chosen for presentation in both concurrent sessions and posters. There was tremendous diversity of excellent work all related to the conference theme of equity in healthcare, including indigenous people and other priority populations.

As noted, CAHSPR received an unprecedented number of excellent research abstract submissions for the planned in-person conference. When COVID19 forced the cancellation of the in-person conference, we agreed that the excellent quality of the submissions deserve recognition and so each of the abstracts accepted for presentation are collated and presented on the CAHSPR website in a book of abstracts.



“AMAZING OPPORTUNITY FOR SOME GOOD
THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION THAT WOULD
NOT HAVE BEEN ACCESSIBLE OTHERWISE
(ESPECIALLY FOR A HEALTH SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATOR/DECISION MAKER
AUDIENCE)”

Participant survey quote

A tremendous amount of work went into the research & resulting abstracts that were submitted for presentation at the in-person CAHSPR conference. We want to share this high calibre work with our community and a compilation of digital posters provide a glimpse into the outstanding work that our health services and policy researchers are undertaking.

Both the book of abstracts and the digital posters can be found at: <https://cahspr.ca/events/virtually-cahspr/> to further highlight the work of CAHSPR researchers, each of the digital posters is being highlighted on CAHSPR social media channels throughout the summer months.

5. KEY TAKE AWAYS

COMMUNITY

At CAHSPR we recognize the important role of *Community* in the work that our researchers undertake, and in our conferences and workshops. Although we did not have our in-person conference, we recognize the benefit of our members interacting and forming networks with each other and with the broader research community.

Attendance at CAHSPR affords early researchers with the opportunity for peer comment and feedback, often from more senior researchers in the audience, as well as others whose research focuses on similar topics. In addition to the formal presentation, the CAHSPR Conference traditionally provides ample opportunities for young researchers to meet with more senior colleagues, both for in depth discussion of research methodologies and for career counseling. We are actively pursuing other opportunities for our theme groups to connect, for researchers to connect with those in similar areas, with their local geographic peers and through other virtual means. We believe this presents an exciting new direction for CAHSPR and the members of our research community.

While the pandemic has limited the ability to have face to face meetings, it has not reduced the appetite for interaction. Our *community* continues to grow and evolve despite COVID19.

INCLUSIVITY

The shift to a virtual conference opened opportunities to expand and broaden the audience who normally benefit from the conference. This year's Virtually CAHSPR event welcomed more than 1,200 registrants, with a significant majority of these never having been members of CAHSPR. In particular, there was a strong patient partner presence, which was hailed as groundbreaking by many attendees. There was a strong level of support for the *inclusivity* experienced during the conference.



EVEN IF IN-PERSON CONFERENCES RESUME
I HOPE THE ORGANIZERS THINK OF
OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIRTUAL INTERACTION,
AT LEAST FOR THE MAIN PLENARIES AND
KEYNOTES

Participant survey quote

GRATITUDE

We are exceptionally *grateful* to our members, stakeholders, speakers, sponsors and supporters for supporting us through a new experience as we went from planning an in-person conference to a virtual one within a matter of weeks. CAHSPR is grateful to our sponsors and partners for their support of our annual conference and for the work of the health services and policy research community.

The level of support and the generous feedback provided to us after Virtually CAHSPR has been outstanding. This support and feedback will inform our work going forward and will pave the way for future innovation as we strive to meet the needs of the health services and policy research community, so that together we can improve health and health care in Canada.

IN SUMMARY

While the conference covered a broad range of issues related to COVID19, as evidenced by the speakers and the subjects they explored, the following issues/challenges faced in addressing the gaps brought to light by the pandemic, ways to enhance the health care system and improving the health of populations received frequent mention:

- ❖ Looking at the impact of the pandemic from a social determinants of health perspective
- ❖ Shifting the focus of the health care system away from the provision of acute care, and towards population health, health promotion, disease prevention
- ❖ Understanding the impact of pandemic on aging Canadians, especially those in long term care and retirement residences and developing strategies to learn from harm they have experienced
- ❖ Understanding the needs of vulnerable populations, going beyond the traditional limits of the healthcare system, and finding ways to address those needs
- ❖ Finding more effective ways to provide digital care in an ongoing way, with an emphasis on more appropriate funding methods that encourage the most appropriate use of virtual care
- ❖ The importance of consistent and direct communication
- ❖ There was considerable recognition of the value that patients bring to health services research, planning and delivery of healthcare, with presentations from patient partners and discussion with patient partners in each session



“I LOVED THE VIRTUAL CAHSPR APPROACH. THIS WAS A TERRIFIC TWO DAYS OF PRESENTATIONS AND DIALOGUE AND CAHSPR IS TO BE CONGRATULATED”

Participant survey quote