



UBC Department of Emergency Medicine

Research Retreat

April 10, 2018

Summary & Action Items

Attendees:

Adam Lund, Floyd Besserer, Jim Christenson, Ali Abdalvand, Roy Pursell, David Barbic, Riyadh Abu-Laban, Frank Scheuermeyer, Ka Wai Cheung, Jeff Brubacher, Jessica Moe, Garth Meckler, Quynh Doan, Carolyn MacKinnon, Garth Hunte, Andrew Kestler, Devin Harris, Rob Stenstrom, Brian Grunau, Tamiza Abji

1. Background

Riyad presented an overview of the Activities/Goals of DEM Research Division, DEM Research Metrics over the Last Five Years and Research Objectives from 2017 DEM Strategic Plan. This presentation is available upon request for those who were unable to attend, and introduced the theme of the retreat:

Increasing EM Research Productivity in BC through Better Collaboration and Support

2. Mentorship

Riyad introduced this item by noting few of us have been involved in a formal mentoring process despite the fact evidence suggests benefits of this. Frank chaired the discussion and provided a general overview on the importance of mentorship, citing pre-retreat feedback from faculty members. Jessica Moe and Floyd Besserer each made insightful comments about their personal career trajectories and their resulting thoughts on mentorship. Jessica noted 4 essential qualities in an ideal mentor/mentee relationship for someone with a career research interest:

1. The mentee's own ideas and interests must be supported.
2. The mentor should function as a "trusted advisor", particularly regarding advice on which opportunities to accept or decline.
3. The relationship should allow the mentee access to research infrastructure held by the mentor.
4. The relationship should introduce the mentee to collaborators, opportunities, and supports.

Broad discussion reflected general support for more structure and consistency in the approach to research mentorship for DEM Faculty Members, provided this not mandatory. The importance of personalities "matching up", and mutual commitment was stressed. We then embarked on a consideration of the 3 Discussion Questions:

Discussion Questions

1. Should all faculty with research interest/activity be formally assigned a mentor?

Concerns were expressed with mandatory “assignments”, however we found general support for a system whereby all faculty with research interest/activity, regardless of their level or nature of research role, should have access to a system for linkage with a mentor. Moreover we supported the concept that junior faculty members with a designated research portfolio should all have a formal mentor.

2. What are the various mentor skillsets and mentorship relationships required?

Comments underscored that different types of mentorship relationships require different skillsets on the part of the mentor, these often evolve over time, no one person has all the skills required, and most people have more than one mentor over the course of their career. Examples raised of varying types of relationships (and resulting mentor skillsets required) included supporting research at an emerging site, an early interest in delving into a first research project, a desire for a formal research career, or mentoring an established senior faculty member with ongoing research activity. In some situations this might require establishing relationships with faculty members outside of the DEM, and it was suggested that DEM Adjunct Appointments could be beneficial in this regard.

3. What process and tracking should be instituted to support mentorship in the DEM?

There was agreement that a “registry” of faculty members listing their research skillsets, areas of expertise, and expectations of a mentor/mentee relationship would be helpful. There was also agreement that asking about mentor and mentee relationship should be a standard item for DEM Faculty Members who are reviewed annually by the Department Head, and that being a formal mentor is something Faculty Members should list on their CVs. As such, it was generally felt that relationships of this nature should be formalized and have agreed upon roles and responsibilities articulated in a written document. Jim identified the Australian College of Emergency Physicians Mentorship Handbook as a helpful background document, and had previously forwarded this to Riyadh and Frank.

Action Items:

Riyadh and Frank will bring the above suggestions, and the Australian College of Emergency Physicians Mentorship Handbook, to the DEM Research Committee, with an aim towards crafting a plan for a formal process to support faculty mentorship in the DEM, including the establishment of a registry to help link mentors/mentees.

3. Support

Riyadh introduced this section by noting that it was potentially the most controversial topic, and that any action items would require balance of feasibility and resources. He noted that the establishment of the DEM as an umbrella organization has resulted in an evolution of the role for site-based research directors. Frank provided an overview of pre-retreat attendee perspectives. Jim indicated he was mainly “here to listen” and was open to any suggestions, but noted the

fixed funding pool and that in the absence of additional funds any proposals requiring new resources would require a reduction in other expenses. Jim suggested that we should first think about our goals and then how to achieve them. Both Riyad and Frank facilitated this discussion.

A number of proposals were suggested to improve support:

- clarifying and supporting relationships between faculty members and institutes like C2E2 and CHEOS
- formalizing a biostatistical support service
- hiring a grant facilitator
- buying a part-time statistician, economist or RedCap expert
- providing funding support via small operating grants, if aligned with DEM strategic needs
- creating an inventory of available support (regions, sites, BC Support Unit, CHEOS, etc)
- establishing a list of funding opportunities (both operating and salary)
- streamlining support for financial matters (account creation, payment of invoices, etc)

Attendees raised differing viewpoints regarding the merits and necessity of the DEM providing early career operating funds support. The potential for Health Authorities to be helpful to secure operating funds in some situations was noted, as was the linkage of this topic to appropriate mentorship, and identification of funding opportunities. It was suggested that there may be underappreciated resources such as the benefits of Research in Progress Rounds, or the existence of in-house statistical expertise, such as Rob Stenstrom. Jim noted that Tamiza Abji's recent appointment to a new administrative DEM position will assist with financial matters.

Quynh proposed the DEM create an inventory of relevant funding and support opportunities, and there was wide endorsement of this concept. Furthermore, it was suggested that site-based research directors may be in a position to offer in-kind support from their research infrastructures. Riyad and Frank are finalizing a "10 Step Guide" for Carrying out Research by DEM Faculty Members", to be housed on the EMN Research Resources area as well as the DEM website. Finally, Frank noted UBC family medicine website has a valuable repository of research resources that could assist the DEM.

Discussion Questions

1. What additional support would be beneficial to BC EM researchers?

There was widespread support for a DEM Research Support Inventory, which would be regularly updated, regarding both EM specific and potential EM opportunity research funding and supports in BC and beyond. It was suggested we contact CAEP to identify whether any national registry exists. Finally, there was guarded/potential enthusiasm for the provision of operating funds support from the DEM for Faculty members in special circumstances where all other support venues had been exhausted, although this would be contingent upon the costs and consequences thereof.

2. Specific to #1, what should the DEM provide and what is the role of Site Based Research Directors in locations where they exist?

The sentiment was site based research directors have several unique roles: (1) they identify unique local income and advocate for their groups; (2) they act as a bridge between their sites and (i) the DEM, and (ii) external research requests, regarding identification of opportunities for their faculty members; (3) they provide in-kind support for their group members through access to Research Assistants and Coordinators. It was not felt that the importance of this local role, in locations with significant research activity, was negated by the emergence of the DEM and its research administrative infrastructure.

3. How can we optimize the BC EM Network as a Core Platform to support BC EM research?

There was general enthusiasm for the potential role the EM Network can play in facilitating engagement and knowledge dissemination for research purposes, particularly to engage multisite research. Some recent applications of the EMN were noted, including a survey, and attendees were encouraged to consider ways to optimize EMN utilization. It is unclear why the EMN has not yet maximized potential regarding research engagement, (posts, questions, suggestions) and it was suggested we need to identify any barriers and impediments. This utilization gap may have arisen from an advertising and awareness issue, a structural issue with the platform, or other factors.

Action Items:

Riyad and Frank will further consider how best to establish a DEM Research Support Inventory, and bring this forward to DEM Research Committee. Means to use the EM Network for the advancement of research will continue to be pursued. The possibility of a system whereby Faculty Members can secure operating funds in special circumstances and for projects of particular strategic importance will be further explored with Jim and, if appropriate, brought to the Research Committee for additional consideration.

4. Teamwork

Riyad provided background on the issue of teamwork and collaboration, and how one's view on this might vary depending on whether a Site or DEM lens/perspective is applied. He noted several potential areas for increased collaboration: (1) within & between DEM faculty member groupings; (2) between Pediatric EM and the DEM; (3) between DEM and other BC agencies (BCEHS / health authorities); (4) between BC and Canada via NCER and external opportunities. The WHO Partnership Pentagram mentioned during the Research Pillar Goals of the 2017 DEM Strategic Plan was referenced. Jim attended NCER, indicated he was very impressed with potential opportunities, and suggested that the DEM should have a "contingent" there next year. Quynh suggested that PERC is successful because it purposefully links researchers across sites to develop studies and collaborate on funding submissions, and suggested that the DEM & EMN could evolve to a similar model.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the key areas where we feel teamwork and collaboration within BC can be improved to benefit EM research?

There was strong support that DEM/PEM collaborations could be increased and improved, and that in general all adult projects should consider whether the PEM population could be included (and vice versa). Beyond this, it was suggested that specific locations be identified used as an initial “nidus” to advance research collaborations outside the Lower Mainland.

2. Specific to #1, what changes can we institute to positively impact the situation?

There was enthusiasm for a physical gathering to advance Research Collaborations in BC, and one suggestion put forward was to use a portion of EM Research Day(s) for this means: extending the event beyond the single day would allow a NCER-type event. The potential role of site based Research Directors to increase local alignments and collaborations was also noted. Two opportunities for providing a “safe space” to pitch research ideas were noted: the EMN (virtual) and the SPH Emergency Update Whistler Conference (physical)

3. How can we best optimize opportunities and collaborations outside of BC?

The importance of NCER, and the opportunities it creates was stressed, and there was encouragement for increased participation in 2019. We discussed the potential for the DEM to be a central point of initial contact for new external (out of BC) requests to engage in multisite research, and found general but not unanimous support for this; it was decided that the DEM Research Committee should further consider this.

Action Items:

Frank and Riyad will bring forward the concepts and recommendations under each of the 3 questions above to the next DEM Research Committee meeting to help determine what to move forward on.

Next Steps

Riyad and Frank will craft a summary of the Research Retreat discussion to circulate to DEM Faculty, to present to the DEM RC for further deliberation, and to advance the action items. The next DEM Research Committee meeting is planned for May 2017.