

# Building Research and Evaluation Capacity in a Community Health Service

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## I. BACKGROUND

Staff members at Community Health Services are increasingly urged to provide services and practices that are evidence based. However, in general, staff members often lack the incentive to embrace research and evaluation to inform their practice. A number of reasons have been postulated as to why this occurs, namely, a lack of research and evaluation training, a lack of confidence in research, a high work load leaving little time for extracurricular activities such as evaluation and research, a lack of budget allocation for evaluation and research, and a lack of trust and belief that evaluation and research can enhance skills. To provide services that have evidence base requires organisations to develop new innovations and ideas that can change and implement a culture in which staff members can engage in researching and evaluating practice. Western Region Health Centre has initiated an action research project that would enhance the capacity of staff members to consult, understand and conduct research and evaluation projects. My PhD project involves a Cooperative Inquiry and Ethnographic Action Research project that aims to build an organisational culture in which a greater understanding of the value and effectiveness of research and evaluation is achieved. My project aspires to accomplish this by building and enhancing staff members' capacity to conduct their own research and evaluation projects within the organisation.

## II. METHOD AND DATA

The project incorporates a qualitative research method involving a Cooperative Inquiry and Ethnographic Action Research design. Data was obtained through observation and semi structured interviews with cooperative inquiry group meetings recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

## III. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Four areas have been identified as imperative to enhancing the organization's capacity to conduct research and evaluation projects. The areas identified are organizational policy (ethics, job descriptions), knowledge and competencies (training, mentoring), Communication (intranet) and resources (software, database access). By addressing these four areas, the organizations culture has changed in which staff members are embracing research and evaluation as an element of their practice.