

AFPRN History

In the early 1970's, the Alberta Chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada developed a research mandate and formed a research committee to encourage and promote research in family medicine throughout the province of Alberta.

During the 1980's, the Universities of Alberta and Calgary committed to furthering primary care research and embarked on the process of forming a primary care research unit (PCRU), and in 1989, the infrastructure to support primary care research in Alberta was developed by the combining of the two universities' research efforts via a joint PCRU.

In 1991, a working paper was produced which indicated that, "Before the Alberta PCRU can proceed to implementation of community practice-based research projects, a special relationship with community practices must be established. A natural, historical, ad hoc relationship with the research committee of the Alberta Chapter of the College of Family Physicians provides the foundation for a more formalized working relationship." This paper became instrumental in laying the foundation for the Alberta Family Practice Research Network (AFPRN), and the AFPRN-PCRU partnership. Thus, AFPRN is an ACFP program that arose from the membership - the community doctor.

Dr. Jim Thompson, a community physician in Sundre, was the first Chair of the AFPRN Steering Committee and, with expansion, became the first Director. To ensure the network remain as relevant as possible to everyday family medicine in the community, and that the role of the AFPRN community physician continue to be fully understood, as a partner driving the nature of the research, and as a partner whose special needs in the context of busy family practice be fully understood at all times, he strongly emphasized the following principles:

1. The Director must answer to and take direction from the AFPRN Steering Committee, thereby taking direction from the AFPRN membership;
2. The Steering Committee must be an ACFP committee answerable to the ACFP Board;
3. The Chair of the AFPRN Steering Committee must be an ACFP Board member appointed by that Board;
4. The Director also must be appointed by the ACFP Board. To ensure AFPRN would continue to be sensitive to the needs of the community physician, it was agreed that the Director and the Chair of the Steering Committee must also be a community physician.

AFPRN continued to flourish and in 1998 was successful in its proposal to the Alberta Heritage Foundation of Medical Research and was awarded \$260,000.00 for a three-year period. A grant of \$121,500.00 for a three-year period was also obtained through the Rural Physician Action Plan to train two rural physicians in the Swift, Efficient, Application of Research in Community Health (SEARCH) Program offered by the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

With the success and expansion of AFPRN, a leadership team was formed. This leadership team includes a Clinical Director who is grounded in community family practice and is able to work closely with the academic groups, and the ACFP office.