

ABLC Meeting April 25, 2019: 3:00 – 4:00 PM Atlantic

Attended: Larry Baxter (Community), Charles Furlotte (STU), Jacquie Gahagan (Dal), Lois Jackson (Dal), Susan Kirkland (Co-Chair, Dal), Michael Liddell (Community), Jeannine McNeil (PHAC), Caroline Ploem (AIRN) and Gerard Yetman (Co-Chair, ACNL).

Regrets: Marni Amirault (CAAN & AHA Centre), Diane Bailey (Mainline), Donna Bulman (UNB), Stacey Burns-MacKinnon (PEI DHW), Julie Dingwell (Avenue B), Greg Harris (MUN), Susan Kirkland (Co-Chair, Dal), Jo-Ann MacDonald (UPEI), Michelle Proctor-Simms (NSACA), Cybelle Rieber (PEERS Alliance), and Dena Simon (ACNS).

MINUTES

1) Welcome and Check-in (Susan)

- Susan thanked everyone for making the time to come.

2) Review and Approval of Current Agenda and Minutes from February 14th

- The agenda was approved as circulated.
- The minutes should be edited to read that Charles has recently relocated from Hamilton.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ *Caroline will revise the Feb 14th minutes.*

3) AIRN Succession Planning (Susan)

A. Leadership

- There have been some recent developments which have prompted Susan to step down as the Director of AIRN. For one, Susan has recently taken on the role as Head of the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology. More importantly, there have been changes in terms of REACH and the current focus on STBBI testing through the \$6M Biomedical Testing Team Grant and the REACH 3.0 proposal.
- Susan has spoken to Jacquie and Lois and they are willing to step in as co-directors. Both have been involved since the beginning of AIRN, and are strong academic leads.
- AIRN is planning an in-person strategic planning meeting June 25th. That date seems like a natural date of transition. However, we could also begin the transition now by appointing an Interim Director for a decision June 25th, depending on what the ABLC thinks.

Feedback/Input

- Jacquie and Lois were fine with either option, but noted that there were a lot of ABLC members missing from the discussion and that we should get their input. Both are open to looking at different leadership models (e.g. distributed leadership, nodes) if that is what the group wants.
- We do not want to spend our entire strategic planning day talking about governance and new leadership. We should get some direction from the members before June.
- Members agreed that we would develop an OPINIO Survey to seek some preliminary input from members about: (1) Funding for AIRN; (2) Governance Structure; and (3) Terms of Reference.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ *Jacquie will develop an OPINIO Survey to get input from the ABLC member before June 25th.*
- ✓ *Susan will send out a message to all ABLC members as soon as possible to let them know that she is stepping down as the Director of AIRN and as the Co-Chair of the ABLC as of June 25th. She will also let folks know that we will be reaching out to get their input re. issues of governance and long-term leadership. It will be important to be clear that we are not referring to a change in the ABLC Academic-Community Co-Chair model, but in terms of the Directorship of AIRN.*

B. Staffing

- Susan noted that Caroline will also be leaving her position in June. She will continue her work leading up to the BBE and strategic planning day, but will step away at that time.
- Caroline explained that the decision was very difficult but was made for her own mental and physical health. She has really enjoyed working with members of the ABLC, and will do her best, along with Susan, to make the transition as smooth as possible.
- Members of the ABLC expressed support for her decision and wished her well.
- Susan thanked members of the ABLC for their commitment and their support as AIRN transitions.

4) Best Brains Exchange Meeting Update (Jacquie)

- As discussed at the last ABLC meeting, the planning team consisting of Jacquie, Michelle, Jeannine and Caroline submitted a proposal to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to host a one-day Best Brain Exchange (BBE) meeting around STBBI testing in Atlantic Canada.
- The proposal was successful and on Monday, June 24th, we will be bringing key public health decision makers across the four Atlantic provinces together to talk about what is happening around testing in our region. Participants will include the Chief/Deputy Chief Medical Officers of Health (MOHs), as well as senior policy analysts and advisors. There will be some presentations by PHAC, including one on the STBBI Framework for Action. While all four pillars in the STBBI Framework are important, the idea for the day is to focus on the testing pillar.

5) AIRN Strategic Planning Meeting

- Jacquie explained that the planning team thought it would be timely and financially efficient to piggy-back an AIRN strategic planning meeting following the BBE. We have asked some of the BBE presenters (e.g. Genevieve Tremblay from PHAC) to stay and present for a second day.
- A very high level draft agenda for June 25th was submitted to the ABLC. The agenda may change once we send out a survey and hear from members of the ABLC. All feedback is welcome now as well.
- We have submitted several requests for funding for June 25th to bring AIRN members together for the planning day. Thank you to the NS Advisory Commission on AIDS for their contribution. We have also put a request to REACH (Sean Rourke) and to bioLytical (Rick Galli) for some funding support. Jeannine is also exploring the possibility of funding from PHAC. Stay tuned... we hope to hear back within the next few weeks.
- The AIRN Planning Day will be held at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax. AIRN will do its best to bring in as many members as possible from outside Halifax.
- There was no specific input on the agenda at this time.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ *Please submit any immediate input into the AIRN planning day agenda to Caroline. There will also be an opportunity to provide input via the OPINIO survey that will be sent out before June 25th.*

6) National Organization Updates

A. PHAC update (Jeannine)

- Waiting for the announcement for the next Harm Reduction Fund Application call. Hoping that it will come out late April/early May. It will be an open call.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ *Jeannine will send out info about the application to Caroline for distribution to the ABLC and the AIRN listserv as soon as she hears.*

B. Action Hepatitis Canada (Gerard)

- AHC will be holding their annual meeting in Montreal May 22nd to coincide with the release of the Hepatitis Elimination Blueprint (“The Blueprint”).
- Cybelle has taken a position with the PEI government beginning May 6th and will no longer be with AHC and PEERS Alliance.
- AHC has been encouraging the ministers of health in NS, NB and NL to develop a Hepatitis Elimination plan similar to PEI’s. They have written letters to all of the health ministers and have given them draft copies of The Blueprint.
- Requested a meeting with the Minister Haggie (Health Minister in NL) to present the PEI plan and see what is possible in the province. Unfortunately, an election was called for May 19th, so the letter was put on hold. Minister Haggie has been very supportive, and the hope is that he continues in his role.
- Received a letter back from Minister Flemming in NB. He will not be attending the release of “The Blueprint.”
- AHC is planning to continue working on an Atlantic Hepatitis elimination strategy following the NL election.

7) HIV Stigma Project (Michael)

- Michael reported that we are wrapping up the pre-implementation phase. He has been working with six Project Assistants (each working between 20 and 40 hours in total). More than 1000 postcards and 150 posters have been distributed; the team has connected with more than 100 organizations. Interest in the project has been achieved!
- At this point, more than 70 people living with HIV are interested in being interviewed for the HIV Stigma Index, and there are quite a few more who said they were potentially interested. Given that our goal for the implementation phase is 100 interviews, we have a really great start. People from all four Atlantic provinces are interested, and we have good representation from the Indigenous community. Dave Miller has done a great job.
- Both Susan and Caroline expressed gratitude for Michael and the Project Assistants for the great work that they have accomplished in such a short time.
- The biggest challenge at this point will be to keep the momentum going and to get to the next stage as soon as possible.
- The proposal is almost done and the next step is to submit ethics applications. We will need REB applications for the academic researchers involved, as well as for the various provincial health authorities across the Atlantic region.
- If all goes well, we should be looking at training the PRAs this summer once the REB applications are in process. We need to get the training underway as soon as the REBs applications are in process. We don’t want to have people trained and lose momentum by not being able to start interviews in a timely fashion.

8) Grants Recently Funded/Pending/In Development

- Susan referred members to this agenda item, and highlighted a few of the recent funding decisions. Lois was asked to provide an update on the work related to the Halifax Overdose Prevention Site.

a) Decisions (since Feb/19)

- Project PEER Catalyst Grant [NPI: Greg Harris] – *Funded: \$40,000 (1 YR)*
- CIHR HIV/AIDS Biomedical and Clinical Team Grant – Testing, Reaching the Undiagnosed and Linkages to Care: “REACHing” for impact? [NPI: Sean Rourke] – *Funded: \$6,000,000 (5 YRS)!*
- CIHR Best Brains Exchange [Jacquie] – *Funded: Amount Unknown*
- NS Advisory Commission on AIDS Ad hoc Grant Funding: June 25 AIRN Strategic Planning [Jacquie] – *Funded: \$6,000*

b) Pending

- REACH 3.0 [Sean Rourke] – Decision: Apr30/19
- REACH: Advancing STBBI Testing Across the Atlantic Region – Decision: ?

c) In Development

- The Atlantic Canada Stigma Index Implementation Project (Caroline)
- Halifax Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) (Lois)
 - Lois explained that an organization called “HaliFix” has been started. It is formally known as the “Halifax Overdose Prevention Society.” It was formed to draw more attention to the need for an OPS in Halifax.
 - Direction 180 and Mainline have been trying for several years to establish a Safe Consumption Site. While Dr. Robert Strang has been supportive, the Minister of Health has not. He has said that the Department has to make a policy decision around the issue.
 - There continues to be a lot of media interest, particularly around the first voice perspective. Matt Bonn has taken on this role and has been amazing. He has even been on the front page of the Globe and Mail.
 - There has been resistance from some people in North End Halifax, and HaliFIX has been trying to reach out widely, including local churches and the business sector to educate them around the evidence behind OPS.
 - There is a Go-Fund-Me page for HaliFIX to get an OPS off the ground. There is also a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram page in support of this initiative.
 - T-Shirts have been made and are for sale, but the demand currently is greater than the supply, so AIRN will not promote until further notice.
 - There are far too many people dying from overdoses, so the hope is to start an OPS as soon as possible.

9) Ongoing Research Projects

- Halifax Area Network of Drug Using People (HANDUP) Peers Assisting, Lending Support (PALS) (C. Maclsaac)
- The COAST Study (L. Jackson & C. Maclsaac)
- “New Technologies & Chem Culture: Examining Deployment and Effects among MSM” (M. Numer)
- The **PANACHE** study (**P**references **A**nd **N**eeds for **A**ging **C**are among **H**IV Elders in Canada)” (S. Walmsley & K. Murzin)

- “Harm reduction and addictions interventions among people hospitalized with injection drug use-associated infective endocarditis” (T. Brothers)
- Canadian Blood Services “ACB and MSM – it’s not an oxymoron” (O. Dryden)
- “Additional Harm Reduction Services in two Sites in Nova Scotia: An Exploration of Advantages, Community Interest, and Methods of Delivery” (L. Jackson & D. Bailey)
- “The Canadian HIV Stigma Index CBR Project” (F. Ibáñez-Carrasco)
- Ending HIV Stigma in Canada: Adapting & Applying Contact-Based Interventions (S. Rourke)
- “Halifax Area Network of Drug Users Stands Up” (HANDUP Stands Up) (C. MacIsaac)

10) Upcoming Events

- [Harm Reduction International Conference 2019 \(HR19\)](#) — Apr 28 to May 1 [Portugal]
- [CPHA Public Health 2019](#) — Apr 30 to May 2/19 [Ottawa]
- [CAHR 2018](#) — May 9 – 12 [Saskatoon]
- [8th Canadian Symposium on Hepatitis C Virus 2019](#) — May 24 [Montreal]
- [Canadian Liver Meeting](#) — May 24-26 [Montreal]
- [41st Annual Guelph Sexuality Conference](#) — June 21-22 [Guelph]
- [8th International Conference on Hepatitis Care in Substance Users](#) — Sept 11 - 13 [Montreal]

11) Next Meetings (every second Thursday of the month from 10 – 11 AM)

- The next scheduled meeting (May 9th) conflicts with the CAHR meeting.
- A Doodle poll will be send out to determine another potential date and time.

