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Building a scholarly research program for rural and remote family medicine faculty

**Cheri Bethune, Patricia McCarthy, Shabnam Asghari, Wendy Graham, Shari Fitzgerald,
Discipline of Family Medicine**

Purpose: Rural and remote family medicine (FM) faculty experience numerous barriers to participating in scholarly research activity such as lack of time, geographic and professional isolation, and limited access to professional development opportunities. In an effort to help address these barriers, the 6 for 6 Program, a scholarly research program for rural and remote family medicine faculty, has been established. The purpose of this program is to promote a foundation of research scholarship activity and a process for knowledge translation amongst rural and remote family medicine physicians. **Methods:** This is a mixed-methods multiphase project: I) identifying priority research skills for rural and remote faculty and an appropriate knowledge translation process; II) curriculum design, development and implementation; and III) program evaluation. Phase I consists of a systematic literature search, environmental scan, focus group, and key informant interviews. Purposeful sampling was used to select 15 rural and remote FM physicians practicing in Newfoundland and Labrador to participate in the focus group. Snowball sampling was used to select 10 informants to participate in key informant interviews. Phase II consisted of small- and large-group meetings and brainstorming sessions with the project committee and other select stakeholders in an effort to inform curriculum design, development, and implementation. Following Phases I and II, lists of priority topics for the scholarly research curriculum, faculty and program needs, and key components of the teaching and learning framework were developed. **Results:** The reported results are based on Phases I and II of the project. Preliminary analyses demonstrate that rural faculty face particular barriers to participating in scholarship, such as limited access to academic services and opportunities to network and collaborate with other faculty members. One key recommendation that has emerged is the establishment of a provincial research network with experts providing mentorship and support. Participants also stressed the importance of utilizing structured, face-to-face learning methods while also maintaining flexibility to meet the needs of rural faculty. **Conclusions:** Successful implementation of a scholarly research program tailored to the needs of rural and remote FM faculty requires dedicated research support, mentorship, and a curriculum utilizing synchronous and asynchronous learning.