

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR RURAL DOCTORS: TRIALS, TEACHINGS AND TESTAMENTS

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ABSTRACT: Oral Presentation

- Purpose:** Barriers like professional and geographical isolation prevent rural physicians, the most knowledgeable and experienced players in rural medicine, from conducting research. The Discipline of Family Medicine has responded to these barriers with *6for6*, a tailored six session curriculum that provides Memorial-affiliated rural physicians with the expert training, support and mentorship to challenge their research barriers and embark on a research agenda. Here we will present barriers and enablers to developing a research education program for remote physicians, underscore key successes from a three-year curriculum pilot and highlight important lessons for anyone interested in pursuing a similar initiative.
- Methods:** Needs assessment to identify skills and services needed by rural physicians to engage in research and curriculum development using the Kern 6-step curriculum development approach.
- Results:** The *6for6* curriculum has been piloted for 3 years and evaluated with pre-and post-program and pre-and post-session surveys measuring self-reported knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding research topics covered in the training sessions. Paired samples t-tests found significant improvements from pre- to post-test for knowledge (Mean difference = 3.375, $p < .003$) and attitudes (Mean difference = 0.5, $p < .033$). Participants report that *6for6* is rurally relevant, supportive and has improved their research skills. Participants are producing tangible research scholarship, including grant proposals, journal articles and academic posters).
- Conclusion:** *6for6* is catalyzing a culture of research in rural areas of Canada, empowering rural physicians to develop rural solutions for rural problems. The program continues to evolve and improve as evaluation data is used to fine tune the curriculum.