



TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

A Report on the Northern Ontario Symposium
on Clinical | Academic Integration

Sudbury, April 20-21, 2017



At this two-day symposium in Sudbury, clinical and administrative leaders from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), Health Sciences North (HSN), and Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) confirmed their desire to redefine their relationship under a single affiliation agreement. This will not only support synergy and collaboration among these three partners, but in the longer term, will support the creation of a Northern Ontario Academic Health Sciences Network, promoting innovative patient care, education, and research across the region, advancing our shared vision of a healthy Northern Ontario.

In addition to leadership from NOSM, HSN, and TBRHSC, representatives from other important Northern partners in Academic Health Sciences were present and participated in interactive dialogue about clinical teaching and research in Northern Ontario and the need to develop more synergistic and mutually supportive systems, leveraging the best of what each partner has to offer to advance the health of Northern Ontarians.

The key direction from this symposium, which will shape Academic Health Sciences Transformation in Northern Ontario, is described in the pages that follow.

BACKGROUND

Community clinical teaching sites have been active in Northern Ontario since the 1990s. Following the opening of NOSM in 2005, the two largest teaching hospitals, HSN (Sudbury) and the TBRHSC (Thunder Bay) were designated as Academic Health Sciences Centres (AHSCs). To be designated an AHSC, a hospital must be affiliated with a medical school and embrace the three-fold mission: to provide and drive safe, innovative patient care, to educate health-care learners, and to conduct research.

At HSN and TBRHSC medical students, residents, and other health care learners are mentored by talented health professionals. A growing level of research brings fresh insights and advances a culture of innovation, and leading clinical experts are choosing Northern Ontario because of the academic mission and potential that are increasingly evident in the region.

In 2016, with their affiliation agreements due for renewal, dialogue began across NOSM, HSN, and TBRHSC to revisit the terms of these important partnerships, build on existing achievements, develop a unified vision, and enhance collaboration to realize that vision.



THE SYMPOSIUM

On April 20-21, 2017, clinical and other leaders from NOSM, HSN, and TBRHSC, partner hospitals, Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), Lakehead University, Laurentian University, the Northern Ontario Academic Medicine Association (NOAMA), the Northern Teaching Hospitals' Council (NTHC), and the Physician Clinical Teachers' Association (PCTA) gathered to craft the future of clinical teaching and research in Northern Ontario.

Prereading materials were circulated in advance and delegates were encouraged to consider a quotation from the environmental scan interviews: "Don't be bogged down by what IS or what happened before. Focus on what CAN or SHOULD be."

After opening remarks from key senior executives, Dr. Margaret Steele, the Dean of Medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland opened the Symposium, sharing her experience and key factors for success in advancing academic partnerships among medical schools and teaching hospitals.

Leaders from the three organizations then presented key ideas to advance their partnership on five fundamental themes:

1. Leadership Accountability for Academic and Clinical Deliverables
2. Protected Time for Physicians Engaged in Academic Work
3. Supports for Research in Clinical Settings
4. Seamless Administrative Support for Academic Work in Clinical Settings
5. Collaboration and Governance

Subsequently, a World Café session engaged all participants in discussing pros and cons of the potential future paths, confirming key principles, and next steps to advance the partnerships.

The following morning, symposium delegates built consensus through a large group review of the outputs from the World Café, and confirmed general agreement on the next steps to advance an academic health sciences network for Northern Ontario.

Key direction received through the symposium delegates are summarized on the following pages. A short video describing the symposium can be found at: [Symposium Video](#)



Delegates at the Northern Ontario Symposium on Clinical | Academic Integration Provided the Following Key Direction to Shape Academic Health Sciences Transformation in Northern Ontario

PURPOSE OF THIS COLLABORATION

- Our organizations share the following goals:
 - Improving patient and population health outcomes in Northern Ontario.
 - Excellence in health professional education.
 - Knowledge creation and exchange to improve the health of Northerners.
 - Supporting a secure health workforce that meets Northern Ontario's needs.
- Together, through a systematic, coordinated approach to education, research, and care, we can have greater impact, serving as small and large nodes in a network of excellence and innovation, and as a collective resource for all health care providers in Northern Ontario.
- Together, through shared strategic planning, and leveraging the strengths of each partner, we can improve cost efficiencies and advocate with one voice for funding and other resources to advance the health of Northern Ontarians.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NEXT STEPS

- Social accountability to all Northern Ontario communities.
- Active partnership, characterized by transparency, accountability and trust .
- Solidarity, equity and active championing among partners.
- Inclusivity: perspective of learners, patients, researchers, and clinicians informs the way forward.
- Shared academic and strategic planning, aligned with Northern Ontario's needs.
- Visible, sustainable, streamlined systems and processes that support inter-organizational alignment.
- Recognition that collective action is needed.
- Building an environment that encourages risk and innovation, with mechanisms for collective input and action (liberating structures).
- Commitment to leadership development.



NEW LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

- A new integrated leadership structure is needed, which ensures accountability for academic as well as clinical deliverables.
- The model must include performance metrics that hold leaders accountable, and must be embedded in the AHSC leadership framework.
- A new leadership structure should include role clarity, clear deliverables, accountability, transparency, and inclusivity of regional partners and all specialties.
- The structures and accountabilities must extend into communities.
- Some shared leadership roles are needed across the North, including strong leadership within each discipline with responsibility across the North.

PROTECTED TIME FOR PHYSICIANS ENGAGED IN ACADEMIC WORK

- Physicians in Northern Ontario have heavy clinical workloads, and currently engage in academic work in addition to full clinical loads.
- To advance the academic mandate of the AHSCs, participants supported moving forward with an academic funding plan (AFP) that would address clinical loads and provide protected time for academic work:
 - There are concerns that an AFP may reduce take-home pay;
 - Some senior physicians may not wish to engage in academic work and new funding systems may need to be on a “go-forward” basis with new hires; and,
 - There are differing views about where to begin, potentially rolling out by discipline.
- Systems, such as over-recruitment, must be in place to ensure clinical needs are addressed, while allowing physicians time for academic work.
- As academic clinician roles are defined, a new leadership structure is an essential prerequisite to rolling out the new expectations.

SUPPORTS FOR RESEARCH IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

- A unifying vision is needed for research in Northern Ontario that focuses on population-based health outcomes.
- Balance is needed among investigator-initiated, institution-initiated, and community-initiated research.
- Research support services exist for the AHSCs. NOSM is in a position to develop and provide research support services for the broader Northern Ontario health-care communities.
- Key steps: Research Ethics Boards (REB) reciprocity agreements, training and mentorship for emerging researchers, and access to qualified research personnel.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS FOR ACADEMIC WORK IN CLINICAL SETTINGS

- Local structures for administrative support are needed, integrated in the context of a new Pan-Northern leadership structure for each discipline.
- Discussion and decisions are needed about how to fund needed administrative support positions.
- Adequate local resources for funding are required
- A clear standardized job description is needed that encompasses all the local/discipline needs for administrative support.
- Streamlined and clear points of contact, and reduced turn-over, needed at NOSM.

COLLABORATION AND GOVERNANCE

- A single governance structure and a single agreement connecting NOSM and the two AHSCs are needed.
- Laurentian University and Lakehead University, and the North East and North West LHINs must be key collaborators in this partnership.
- A broader Northern Ontario network, including other education and health organizations in Ontario was identified as a longer-term vision, with some noted concerns that form must follow function – that the purpose must be clear.
- “Getting it right” with important alignment and synergies between NOSM, HSN, and TBRHSC is a key first step.

PROPOSED PRIORITIES IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS

1. Clarify a unified vision for the three organizations.
2. Relationship Development:
 - a. Regular contact of an “Academic Transformation Team” (3 CEOs, VPs Academic, Associate Deans).
 - b. Relationship development with sites outside of Thunder Bay and Sudbury.
3. Significant progress to a unified leadership structure and a coherent and unified AFP.
4. Creation of a single collaboration agreement and new governance structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WORKING GROUP

1. Recognize this as a transformational project and resource appropriately, with adequate staff.
2. Keep the momentum going from the symposium.
3. Keep external and front line partners and stakeholders engaged and informed.
4. Ensure that whatever approach is embraced is scalable to the broader community/partners.



Together we are stronger!





Health Sciences North
Horizon Santé-Nord



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine
École de médecine
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Thunder Bay Regional
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