

## **Health Research Data Platform – Saskatchewan approves its first users, ringing in a new era for Saskatchewan Health Research**

Saskatchewan health researchers are poised to take a leap forward in how they access data, transforming health research in our province. In January, a major milestone was achieved when two research teams were approved to begin conducting analysis through the Health Research Data Platform – Saskatchewan (HRDP-SK) for the first time.

The HRDP-SK is the first platform in Saskatchewan to integrate health data from multiple agencies. Partners have been working together over the past two years to develop a secure environment that enables secondary data users – those who use previously collected data for a new purpose, such as research – to access health data. The data is de-identified to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Funded by the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research (SCPOR) and Health Data Research Network (HDRN) Canada, work on the HRDP-SK is supported by seven partners, including Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, eHealth Saskatchewan, 3S Health, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatchewan Health Quality Council, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health.

“HRDP-SK advancements are instrumental in improving health data access here in Saskatchewan. Researchers can now bypass several time-consuming steps and access more databases more efficiently,” says Christina Weise, SCPOR’s Executive Director and HDRN Canada board member. “Having a data access centre will better position and align Saskatchewan with other provinces and help to ensure not only that our data is represented in research, but that results from the research are based on relevant information, improving likelihood of implementation.”

HDRN Canada Scientific Director Dr. Kim McGrail said that enabling Saskatchewan to be part of multi-regional studies in Canada will be a great boost to the research in the province: “Researcher access to data through HRDP-SK is an incredible step forward and the result of great partnerships and a lot of consultation.”

Researchers can now request data via the HRDP-SK website. Additional data integration work is underway to increase the number of databases available, which will allow the HRDP-SK team to support a greater breadth of research requests.

Dr. Derek Jorgenson, a professor in the College of Pharmacy at the University of Saskatchewan and Principal Investigator of the project *An Interprofessional Model for Chronic Pain Management*, recently received approval for his team to access data through the HRDP-SK. “The HRDP-SK has created a process for researchers in Saskatchewan to access the health system data that is already being collected,” Dr. Jorgenson explains. “This opens the door to incredible opportunities to identify health system problems sooner and better measure the impact of the solutions to those problems.”

Dr. Haizen Mou is a University of Saskatchewan researcher whose project *Evaluating the Cooperative Community Clinic Model* has also received access approval. “For health researchers in Saskatchewan, having access to health data via HRDP-SK is a major milestone,” Dr. Mou says. “The platform

allows our team to develop a comprehensive understanding of the utilization, costs and effectiveness of the primary care system in Saskatchewan. With this research, we will be able to make evidence-based policy recommendations that improve the health and healthcare of people in Saskatchewan.”

Over the past 18 months, the HRDP-SK has consulted with over 30 research teams to support their data inquiries and they are currently working with another ten teams to complete data access requests. The demand for access to health data through the HRDP-SK continues to increase.

Heather Dyck, a Patient Partner engaged with SCPOR, summarizes the significance of recent HRDP-SK accomplishments, stating, “The people of Saskatchewan require access to the health system data necessary to plan system changes that benefit patients, do research that matters to patients and have government programs that meet the health needs of all people; rural, urban, remote, First Nations and Métis. That is why we need the HRDP-SK.”

[Learn more about the HRDP-SK and accessing health data for research purposes.](#)

*The [Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research](#) is part of Canada’s Strategy for Patient Oriented Research (SPOR) implemented by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). CIHR matches funding provided by nine Saskatchewan partner organizations that play a key role in supporting POR across the province. SCPOR is committed to meaningful inclusion of diverse voices and culturally safe practices in research and training. Together, patients, researchers, healthcare providers and decision makers work collaboratively to build a sustainable, accessible, and more equitable healthcare system.*

*[Health Data Research Network Canada](#) is a pan-Canadian network of member organizations that hold linkable health and health-related data for entire populations and/or have mandates and roles relating directly to access or use of those data. Member organizations include provincial, territorial and pan-Canadian organizations that span all of Canada. HDRN Canada facilitates multi-regional access to administrative data for researchers through its [Data Access Support Hub /DASH](#) in order to improve health and health equity.*