

**RMU**  
Research Methods Unit  
**RMU**

# Annual Report 2011 – 2012



**Mandate of the Research Methods Unit (RMU)**

The Research Methods Unit (RMU), a core research facility located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is designed to promote clinical and health research through the development of necessary and shared infrastructure. The RMU provides epidemiology, statistics, data management, qualitative, and knowledge synthesis research methods support and training to individuals and teams.



## Message from the Research Methods Unit scientific and administrative leads

We are pleased and proud to share with you the first annual report of the Research Methods Unit (RMU). The RMU was established to fill a gap in research capacity and to increase research productivity and quality across the clinical and health research platform at Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre, and Dalhousie University's Faculties of Medicine, Health Professions and Dentistry, and has shown substantial success in meeting that goal. Over the two and one-half years since its inception in the spring of 2010, the RMU has become a top-notch professional consultation unit, the likes of which exists in only a few jurisdictions in Canada. The processes implemented through the RMU have provided a structured environment through which investigators efficiently access the research methods expertise(s) they require. The RMU has successfully consulted on 77 new projects in the past year (109 projects since inception) over a wide range of research methods including study design, biostatistics, data management, qualitative research and systematic reviews, generally in support of submission of funding applications or preparation of conference presentations and posters or manuscripts for publication.

Over the past year, the RMU has partnered with the Department of Medicine to incorporate their methods consultants into the RMU. This arrangement has allowed RMU to increase services offered to the research community and provided DoM investigators with access to a wider range of methods expertise, thus increasing research capacity across the platform. The RMU played a central role in the recently-submitted application to the CIHR Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research and, if that project is funded, RMU will move towards extending consulting services to all the Maritime provinces.

We acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of RMU staff. We thank the Users Committee for their valuable input and support, and Capital Health, IWK and Dalhousie senior administrators who have been committed to supporting and facilitating the success of the RMU. We also thank the QEII Foundation for helping to fund the RMU multi-media and training room renovations and set-up.

Looking forward, the RMU is committed to expanding collaborations and linkages with a wide range of partners including other clinical and academic departments and units, as well as policy- and decision-makers. The spirit of these collaborations is one of innovation and efficiency, with a focus on research excellence.

We encourage your feedback and input at any time, either directly or through the Users Committee.

Adrian Levy  
Director

Lisa Underwood  
Chief Administrative Officer

## Development of the Research Methods Unit

From January to March 2008, meetings were held with fifteen Capital Health departments and divisions to determine the infrastructure researchers required to strengthen and expand their research programs. Without exception, those who participated stressed the need to build upon existing and to develop new capacity in research methodology, database design and management, and data analysis. The lack of statistical supports both at the collaborative and service levels were cited as barriers to moving the research agenda forward. Lack of qualitative research methods support was also identified. Creating linkages among the many existing databases was identified as a need. Such linkages would result in high quality, reliable data being made available and would open up the possibility of research partnerships within and external to Capital Health.

The Research Methods Unit (RMU) was conceptualized as a way to begin to address those research capacity gaps. The development of the RMU was spearheaded in 2009 and 2010

by the Dalhousie Professor/Head and Capital Health District Chief, Community Health & Epidemiology and the Capital Health Director of Research Services. In 2010 Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre (IWK) and the Dalhousie Faculties of Medicine, Health Professions and Dentistry agreed to support establishment of the RMU. When the first full-time RMU employee was hired in April 2010, the RMU was solely comprised of an Implementation Plan concept document and a budget. In the following year, the RMU secured and renovated space, built its consulting infrastructure and added staff in qualitative methods, statistical analysis and systematic reviews. In June 2011 the RMU's Open House attracted an overflow crowd as the RMU was officially launched by senior representatives of Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre and Dalhousie University.

Current partners include Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre and the Dalhousie University Faculties of Medicine, Health Professions and Dentistry. Existing partnerships are developing and evolving, and new ideas, partners, stakeholders and opportunities for linkages are encouraged.



Discovery and Innovation for Health Partnership leaders attend the Research Methods Unit 2011 June 15 Open House (left to right): Dr. Patrick McGrath, (then) VP Research, IWK Health Centre; Chris Power, President and CEO, Capital Health; Dr. Ray LeBlanc, (then) VP Learning, Research and Innovation, Capital Health; Dr. Adrian Levy, Director, RMU and Dalhousie University/Capital Health Head and Chief, Community Health & Epidemiology; Lisa Underwood, CAO, RMU, and Director of Research Services, Capital Health; Anne McGuire, CEO, IWK Health Centre; Dr. Tom Marrie, Dean, Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine; and Camille Angus, (then) Project Coordinator/Analyst, RMU.

## Research Methods Unit personnel

At 2012 March 31, the Research Methods Unit employed eight staff and offered services in epidemiology, qualitative methods, data management, biostatistics and systematic reviews.



Camille Angus  
Coordinator/Analyst



Raewyn Bassett  
Qualitative Methodologist



Steve Doucette  
Senior Biostatistician



Adrian Levy  
Director



Colleen O'Connell  
Biostatistical  
Consultant



Robin Parker  
Clinical Research  
Librarian



Sandra Pauls  
Finance and  
Administrative Officer



Chris Theriault  
Research Database Consultant



Kara Thompson  
Biostatistician



Lisa Underwood  
Chief Administrative Officer

## RMU liaisons

The Research Methods Unit is a clinical and health research collaborative effort. In addition to collaboration at the senior administrative level to facilitate operations of the RMU, we established linkages with a number of key research capacity partners.



Upal Nath  
PHRU Liaison



Jill Hatchette  
IWK Liaison



Jill Hayden  
NS Cochrane  
Centre Liaison

## Research Methods Unit project support in 2011-12

For the period of 2011 April 1 to 2012 March 31:

- The RMU opened 77 new project files. This is in addition to ongoing work on many of the 32 project files that were commenced in the previous year.
- RMU invoices recovered 17% of budgeted operating expenses.
- The RMU supported 14 funding applications (largest successful grant: ~\$12 million over four years).
- RMU consultants were co-authors on 17 publications.
- The RMU provided consulting services to the following:

### Capital Health

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Anesthesia         | Neurology  |
| Cardiac Surgery    | Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery                           |
| Cardiology         | Pathology and Laboratory Medicine                        |
| Critical Care      | Pathology and Point of Care Research<br>Training Program |
| Dietetics          | Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMNR)              |
| Endocrinology      | Psychiatry   |
| Emergency Medicine | Radiation Oncology                                       |
| General Surgery    | Multi-Organ Transplant Medicine                          |
| Geriatrics         | Urology  |
| Hematology         |  |
| Medical Oncology   |  |

### IWK Health Centre

Anesthesia  
Pediatrics  
Social Work

### Dalhousie University

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Faculty of Medicine:                    | Faculty of Health Professions: |
| Community Health & Epidemiology         | Nursing                        |
| Family Medicine                         | Pharmacy                       |
| Medical Education                       | Physiotherapy                  |
| Microbiology & Immunology               | Occupational Therapy           |
| Vaccinology                             | Social Work                    |
| Faculty of Dentistry:                   |                                |
| Research Development Office             |                                |
| Student Affairs                         |                                |
| Dental Clinical Sciences (Periodontics) |                                |

*Note: Primary project affiliation data collected. However, there is frequent crossover of projects between institutions and/or departments & divisions.*

## Research Methods Unit education and training in 2011-12

- The Research Methods Unit (RMU) held its first Clinical Epidemiology Workshop in June 2011. The goals of this two-day workshop were to introduce participants to the field of clinical epidemiology, basic principles and techniques of clinical epidemiology, and types of research study designs used in clinical and epidemiologic research. The workshop was filled to capacity (17 participants) and will run again in November 2012.
- Numerous Integrated Health Research Training Partnership (IHRTTP) sessions presented by RMU consultants on quantitative/stats, qualitative and mixed research methods were well attended and generated follow-up queries for the RMU.
- The RMU small-group Qualitative Methods Workshop Series in summer 2011 was so well attended that a second series was held in spring 2012.
- A number of summer 2012 collaborative systematic review workshops with the Nova Scotia and Canadian Cochrane Centres were in planning stages during the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
- On an ongoing basis, individual training and mentorship in research design and methods was provided to a number of new investigators.

## Research Method Unit participation in strategic initiatives in 2011-12

The Research Methods Unit (RMU) is actively involved in development of a CIHR Maritimes Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) application. The RMU leadership team are members of the Nova Scotia SPOR Working Group which applied for and received development funding from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (NSHRF) for preparation of a Maritimes SPOR proposal. In September 2011, the applicant team of David Anderson (nominated PI), Adrian Levy (co-PI), Camille Angus, Patrick McGrath, Lisa Underwood and Anita Unruh (co-Investigators) were awarded a \$49,969 NSHRF REDI Catalyst award for “Developing a Maritime CIHR Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) Proposal—the Nova Scotia SPOR Working Group.”

RMU Coordinator/Analyst, Camille Angus, was invited to sit on the Planning Committee for a new provincial conference, Knowledge in Health Care, a clinical and academic conference to promote the use and generation of research within clinical environments, as well as to develop networks of collaborators and to raise awareness of existing research infrastructure supports. The conference was held in Halifax on April 12-13, 2012.

## Department of Medicine/Research Methods Unit collaboration in 2011-12

The final months of the 2011-2012 fiscal year included development of a novel Department of Medicine (DoM) and Research Methods Unit (RMU) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate in the provision of high quality, professional research methods consulting services to enhance support to and success of Department of Medicine researchers. In order to facilitate this partnership, the RMU seconded from the Department of Medicine Kara Thompson, biostatistician, and Chris Theriault, research database consultant, for a one-year period.

This arrangement is an opportunity to trial a new form of research methods consulting support delivery for the Department of Medicine that features DoM access to a wider range of expertise and services, and increased efficiency and accountability for consultant activity through the more structured RMU intake and administration process. RMU, in turn, is able to add data management and additional biostatistical capacity to the range of services offered across the Capital Health, IWK and Dalhousie partners. This arrangement will undergo regular review and discussion between Department of Medicine and RMU in order to ensure ongoing evaluation and timely attention to any concerns that may arise in this novel arrangement. In early 2013 a full review involving all relevant parties will inform whether the MOU will be renewed.

## Research Methods Unit Users Committee 2011-2012

Chaired by Dr. Robert Green (Associate Professor, Department of Anesthesia, Division of Critical Care Medicine and Department of Emergency Medicine, Dalhousie University and Capital Health), an advisory committee of Research Methods Unit (RMU) services users from across Capital Health, IWK and the Dalhousie Faculties of Medicine, Health Professions and Dentistry held their first quarterly meeting on February 2, 2012.

The RMU Users Committee provides feedback and advice directly to the RMU Scientific Director and Chief Administrative Officer to assist the RMU in providing services that align with research methods support and training needs within the clinical and health research community. Specifically, the Committee's functions are to:

- support the mandate of the Research Methods Unit and the terms of the partnership between Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre and the Dalhousie Faculties of Medicine and Health Professions and Dentistry
- promote and support the RMU and RMU linkages with partners, the research community and other community stakeholders
- provide a community voice and represent community input in identifying resource needs and gaps in service to optimize RMU's client-centered focus to support capacity and functionality
- provide ongoing feedback and advice on RMU successes and areas that need improvement
- support effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and innovation in the RMU

### RMU Users Committee



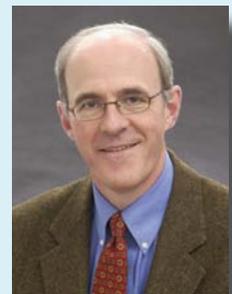
Rob Green (Chair)



Martha Smith Brilliant



Janet Curran



John Hanly



Sean Gorman



Debbie McLeod



Sara Whynot

**Research Methods Unit Financial Statement  
(2011 April 1 – 2012 March 31)**

|   | <b>Actuals<br/>2011/12</b> |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>                                    |                            |
| Opening Balance                                   | 339,291                    |
| Revenue Research Grants (start-up one-off)        | 24,141                     |
| Cost Recovery (18% of 2011-12 operating expenses) | 39,050                     |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                              | <b>\$ 402,482</b>          |
| <b>Operating Expenses</b>                         |                            |
| Compensation                                      | 201,800                    |
| Recruitment/Travel                                | 2,229                      |
| Professional Memberships                          | 170                        |
| Professional Development                          | 210                        |
| Advertising/Marketing                             | 410                        |
| Catering  | 1,715                      |
| Printing/Photocopying/Office & Computer Supplies  | 11,064                     |
| Computer Leases                                   | 1,438                      |
| Postage/Courier                                   | 131                        |
| Telephone Equipment Rental                        | 640                        |
| Telephone (long distance)                         | 114                        |
| Maintenance of Equipment & Furniture              | 133                        |
| <b>Total Operating Expenses</b>                   | <b>\$ 220,054</b>          |
| <b>Capital Expenses</b>                           |                            |
| RMU initial space set-up (remainder)              |                            |
| Signage   | 1,042                      |
| Furniture/Minor Equipment Purchases               | 24,886                     |
| Software  | 4,432                      |
| <b>Total Capital Expenses</b>                     | <b>\$ 30,359</b>           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                             | <b>\$ 250,413</b>          |
| <b>Closing Balance</b>                            | <b>\$ 152,069</b>          |



**Research Methods Unit (RMU)**  
**Centre for Clinical Research**  
**5790 University Avenue, Room 113**  
**Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 1V7 CANADA**  
**Tel: (902) 494-2653**  
**Fax: (902) 429-1166**  
**RMU@dal.ca**  
**[www.cdha.nshealth.ca/rmu](http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/rmu)**

# **RMU** Research Methods Unit **RMU**

The Research Methods Unit is a joint initiative of the Discovery and Innovation for Health Partnership between:

- Capital Health
- IWK Health Centre
- Dalhousie University



Capital Health



IWK Health Centre



**DALHOUSIE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

*Inspiring Minds*