

1967 Summer School of Frontier Medicine: Impact on Medical Students and Indigenous Communities



Background

In 1967 seventy senior medical students drawn from every Canadian medical school and 20 experienced faculty members took part in a Summer School of Frontier Medicine, held in the Northwest Territories.

“The program consisted of three parts:

- (a) 10 days at Inuvik for lectures, films and discussions on the prevalent medical conditions, and the social and anthropological problems;
- (b) seven days of field work in small Indian and Eskimo communities of the Territories when participants in small groups worked with the frontier nurses, saw the medical problems and cultural conditions, met many native people and gathered data for research projects; and
- (c) three days at Edmonton for summation and evaluation.”

Research Goals

Our goal is two-fold:

- 1) to interview some of the student participants in this summer school and determine what impact participation had on their careers, and
- 2) interview community members to determine the impact of this program on the community

Research Questions

- 1. What was the impact of participation in the Frontier Medicine summer school on attending physicians' careers?
- 2. What was the impact of the Frontier Medicine summer school on participating communities?

Methods - Recruitment

We will advertise through the Canadian Medical Association journal and other physician publications to identify former participants in the summer school.

Methods – Conducting Interviews

We will interview up to 15 former participants to determine the impact on their careers.

Potential interview venues: and acknowledge the communities' jurisdiction over the conduct of research

- 1. Face-to-face interviews, recorded on-site
- 2. Telephone interviews recorded through Skype
- 3. Audio and/or video recorded interviews at a gathering or reunion of participants, funds permitting

Using a semi-structured approach, we hope to gain an understanding of how the School of Frontier Medicine shaped the participants practice of medicine in relation to FN/IM people, as well as how the experience of participating in the summer school affected the community members. The historical nature of our project provides a unique opportunity to assess the impact of community based FN/IM medical education on students, faculty and community members to better inform present day efforts to reform curriculum and improve FN/IM health care.

Methods – Cultural Safety

We will work with Indigenous communities and participants in accordance with CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People. As a result we will:

- 1. build collaborative relationships
- 2. respect Indigenous worldviews
- 3. work in accordance with local protocols
- 4. acknowledge communities' jurisdiction over the conduct of research
- 5. work using OCAP principles of ownership, control, possession access, and critical analysis

Proposed Interview Questions

Faculty/Medical Students

- 1. Describe the impact of your attendance at the Summer School of Frontier Medicine on your medical career.
- 2. How did attending the Summer School of Frontier Medicine change how you interacted with patients?
- 3. How did attending the Summer School of Frontier Medicine influence where you chose to practice?
- 4. What was the most important thing you took away from the Summer School of Frontier Medicine?
- 5. Are you aware of any impact of attending the Summer School of Frontier Medicine on others who attended?
- 6. At the time, do you remember thinking that the experience would influence how you practiced?

Proposed Interview Questions

Community Members

- 1. Do you recall the Summer School in 1967?
- 2. How did having the medical students in your community have an impact?
- 3. Did anything change for you because the students were here?
- 4. Did the health of the community change after the students were here?
- 5. Are there any stories shared by Elders about that time that you would be able to share now?

Research Outcomes

Information gleaned through this study will be offered to the Canadian medical education community in the form of recommendations regarding the incorporation of cross-cultural experiences into medical school curricula.

References

Bryans, AM. The Summer School of Frontier Medicine, CAMSI Exchange Inuvik 1967. *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 1969 (Mar. 15); 100: 512-515.

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