

Building Health Research Capacity through Patient Voice

Paul Fairie

BA (McMaster), MA PhD (Calgary), Senior Research Associate, Department of Community Health Sciences,
Associate Director, Patient Engagement Platform, Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit
Member, The Methods Hub
Instructor, One Day @ UCalgary

Including the patient voice and perspectives during a public health crisis isn't a luxury – it is an imperative helping us through this pandemic. Early, large outbreaks of COVID-19 in Alberta were centred on meat processing plants, facilities often employing newcomers to Canada. The Alberta SPOR Support Unit (AbSPORU) Patient Engagement (PE) Platform is supporting a CIHR-funded project, led by Dr. Gabe Fabreau of the University of Calgary, that aims to better understand the socio-economic and cultural determinants of health and the impacts of COVID-19 outbreaks on newcomers and their communities in the Calgary, Alberta area.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study will explore transmission determinants and dynamics as well as the health outcomes encountered by those affected. The study will also engage, train and collaborate with community members most affected to conduct meaningful and culturally relevant focus groups and interviews. This includes both newcomers and their healthcare providers, allowing for a better understanding of these issues.

The AbSPORU PE Platform is focused on supporting the project's engagement of patients and their communities. It is building health research capacity through training and support in co-designing the project, data collection, and developing and implementing strategies for sharing culturally appropriate and accessible research findings.

“I am very excited and grateful for the support from the SPOR PE platform”, says Fabreau. “Our work over the past few months alone has been incredibly helpful in a full-scale re-organization of our patient advisory committee, PE protocols, recruitment and training of community scholars and integrated/embedded patient.”

The results will have obvious relevance – as COVID-19 continues to plague us, it is important to understand the unique determinants and effects of the disease in newcomer communities in order to be able to react more quickly, and in ways that matter most to this population.

This project is an important case study that will give us a better understanding of health and health care beyond the pandemic – including health issues faced by immigrant communities, their perspectives about access to public health, and complex social determinants of health faced by newcomer communities.

Are you involved in an Alberta-focused health research study with a central patient engagement component? Let [AbSPORU PE](#) know how we can help.

