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Title

What Factors Are Associated with the Research Productivity of Primary Care Researchers in Canada? A Qualitative Study

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Research Capacity Building

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Research evidence to inform primary care (PC) policy and practice is essential for building high-performing PC systems. Nevertheless, research output relating to PC remains low worldwide.

Objective: To examine the individual, professional, institutional and system factors that influence the research productivity (RP) of PC researchers.

Study Design and Analysis: We used a qualitative, descriptive key informant study approach to conduct semi-structured interviews with senior, mid-career and early-career PC researchers across Canada. Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Setting: Canada.

Population Studied: PC researchers.

Intervention/Instrument: Semi-structured interviews.

Outcome Measures: Qualitative perceptions, experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

Results: Twenty-three PC researchers participated in the study. An interplay of factors was perceived to enable or reduce RP. Facilitators of RP included personal (psychological characteristics, spousal occupation, and support), professional (mentorship before faculty appointment), institutional (mentorship, institutional type), and system (international collaborations) factors. Barriers to RP included personal (parenthood, gender, race, and educational background) and system (systematic bias, environment) factors. Professional (national collaborations, research expertise, and length of career), institutional (leadership, culture, resources, protected time), and system (funding for PC research, geography, research data infrastructure) factors served as barriers or facilitators.

Conclusion: Funders and academic institutions are critical in supporting and accelerating RP. At the institutional level, departments should recruit leaders committed to PC research who will cultivate a

supportive, flexible, and equitable culture for researchers. This should be accompanied by investments in research and administration, dedicating protected time, and formalizing mentorship programs. Trainees and early-career faculty should choose to work in supportive working environments and seek out different mentors and colleagues that will respectfully support their career goals. At the systems level, governments and granting agencies should consider targeted funding for PC research and training and support a national data infrastructure to enable the continuous flow of PC research. At all levels, strategies must be implemented to address gender and racial inequalities.