

# Knowledge Unbound... through Partnerships



ANNUAL REPORT 2007



# Contents

Cover: Ron Schlegelmilch (left), SEARCH Canada Manager of Learning Support, Continuing Care, and Lynn Olenek (right), Senior Policy Advisor, Alberta Health and Wellness, deliver an educator champion workshop at the Grey Nuns Community Hospital in south Edmonton.

SEARCH (Swift, Efficient Application of Research in Community Health) was created to bring research closer to practice in health care. It does so by developing people in health service and research organizations, developing relationships across academic and practice sectors and developing local research information and access.

## our MISSION

To help health organizations make the best decisions through development of people, relationships and information.

## our VISION

Creating knowledge cultures.

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# Message FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Our efforts over the past year have focused on continuing to strengthen SEARCH Canada and to validate the effectiveness of our programs.



The Board team was strengthened in May with the addition of three new members, reflecting our growing activity and wide range of stakeholder relations. Bob Hinings, professor emeritus, School of Business, University of Alberta; Lloyd Sutherland, Professor of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary; and Ron Woodward, President of Red Deer College, bring unique perspectives and experience to the table and we appreciate their participation.

I was delighted to participate in two events honouring three faculty members at the Universities of Alberta and Calgary, who have served over five years, and three more who have contributed for more than 10 years. We recognize that the strength of our faculty team has been built through this high level of commitment and dedication.

We continue to strengthen the policy foundation of the organization, having conducted a review of our existing policies. In the coming year, a new Executive Committee of the Board will further strengthen the efficient governance of the organization, including continued policy review and development.

SEARCH Canada's impacts were affirmed in March, following an external review of our operations and programs against the goals of the 2004-2009 strategic plan, which was developed in concert with our founding members. The review panel consisted of an eminent, independent, pan-Canadian group of experts, chaired by Dr. Jeremy Grimshaw, director of the Clinical Epidemiology Program at the Ottawa Health Research Institute and a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Knowledge Translation. This was the first review to look at SEARCH Canada as an independent organization, as well as its consolidated program initiatives developed over 10 years.

The panel's report was highly complimentary of SEARCH Canada and our members and partners. It confirmed that we are making excellent progress, and endorsed the high value of SEARCH Canada as a resource to improve health services and applied research. Panel members unanimously believe Alberta's system-wide collaboration through SEARCH Canada is unique in Canada, and probably worldwide. It is having a substantial, sustained impact on service quality and health research capacity.

On behalf of the SEARCH Canada Board of Directors, I would like to thank our valued members and partners for their continued support, collaboration and encouragement. I would also like to express our appreciation to the management team, faculty team and employees of SEARCH Canada for their dedication and enthusiasm in delivering on their goals.

JEAN GRAHAM  
Board Chair | SEARCH Canada

# Message FROM THE CEO

At SEARCH Canada we pride ourselves on creating synergy between multiple partners and building new capacities from existing strengths. We know that success depends on doing "Everything in Partnership"; an approach that has served us well, and this year in particular, has led to new and varied opportunities to contribute to health system quality.

Alberta Health and Wellness engaged SEARCH Canada, in partnership with the Centre for Health Evidence, to facilitate the awareness phase of the roll-out of the new health standards for continuing care. This project represents a new application of SEARCH's capacities and expertise for the benefit of Alberta's health system.

In collaboration with Alberta Research Ethics Community Consensus Initiative (ARECCI) of AHFMR we co-hosted a think tank on 'Evaluating System Change' in late November, to tackle the challenges of evaluating initiatives that are intended to result in system-level outcomes. Both the SEARCH and ARECCI teams will build on these discussions to develop innovative and effective evaluation plans.

With the Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) we initiated a pilot agreement in February to increase capacity for applied, practice-driven mental health research across the province. AMHB is sponsoring two additional mental health professionals working in rural areas to participate in the SEARCH VI program, and supporting a mental health researcher to join the SEARCH faculty team.

At their December retreat, the SEARCH Faculty achieved strong consensus on areas for rapid development, including the development of modular, self-directed courseware, designed to provide virtual learning opportunities. The Evidence Literacy project (highlighted later in the report), involving Red Deer College, David Thompson Health Region, the Centre for Health Evidence and SEARCH managers, participants and faculty, has provided all partners with an opportunity to demonstrate this concept.

I was pleased to welcome Cindy Gerdes as our new Director of Programs in September. With new team members in place, and the continued commitment of many long-standing contributors, our attention is fixed on improving existing programs and pursuing opportunities to deliver additional benefits.

Alberta is unique in its sustained investment in a capacity-building organization like SEARCH Canada, as evidenced by our three-year review. We are very excited about what has been accomplished to date, and look forward to continuing to work with our members and partners for the benefit of Alberta's health system and its citizens.

I am honoured to be a part of an initiative with such far-reaching ramifications for the future of health in Alberta and beyond. I am privileged to work with such a dedicated Board of Directors and committed, visionary member organizations. I would also like to thank SEARCH Canada staff, faculty and participants, past and present, for their commitment and hard work.

SARAH HAYWARD  
CEO | SEARCH Canada



"Alberta is unique in its sustained investment in a capacity-building organization like SEARCH Canada."

# Performance HIGHLIGHTS

“The SEARCH Classic program has engaged 150 health professionals from every health region across Alberta.”

Seated left to right: Robert Hayward and Gordon Fick; standing left to right: Sheila Evans, Ann Casebeer, and Trish Reay.

## People

- Twenty-four participants completed the SEARCH V program with presentations of their local and provincial projects at the SEARCH Conference June 15, 2007, in Edmonton.
- Including SEARCH VI, the SEARCH Classic program has engaged 150 health professionals from every health region across Alberta, and nearly every discipline and healthcare sector.
- Twenty-seven participants, representing all nine health regions, CapitalCare, Calgary EMS, Health Canada, the Excel Society and the Community Medicine Residency Program of the University of Alberta form the SEARCH VI cohort, which commenced in April 2007.
- Working in partnership with the Centre for Health Evidence (CHE) and Alberta Health and Wellness, SEARCH Canada oriented 400 ‘educator champions’ in over 40 workshops, delivered across the province to create awareness of the new Continuing Care Health Standards. This network of educator champions is being developed to provide support for awareness and implementation in every continuing care setting in Alberta, with health workers from senior managers to front line aides being supported for access to and interpretation of the standards.
- SEARCH Canada was delighted in 2006 to recognize the contribution and dedication of a number of long-serving faculty members. Celebrating their 10-year anniversaries in 2006 were: Ann Casebeer, University of Calgary; Gordon Fick, University of Calgary, and Robert Hayward, University of Alberta. Celebrating five-year anniversaries were faculty members: Sheila Evans, University of Calgary; Karen Golden-Biddle\*, University of Edmonton, and Trish Reay, University of Alberta.

\* Dr. Golden-Biddle has since left SEARCH Canada to take a position as Professor of Organizational Behavior with the Boston University School of Management.



## Information

- Participants from SEARCH 1 to SEARCH V have undertaken more than 25 provincial projects (relevant to a number of organizations) and more than 150 local projects (relevant to a participant’s organization), which are agency-driven and collaborative applied research or research application.
- Through its Custom program, SEARCH Canada supported a number of community-based research and evaluation projects, including: the Eckville Community Needs Assessment (David Thompson Health Region); campaign evaluation support for suicide awareness (Palliser Health Region); evaluation framework for Young Family Wellness program (Aspen Regional Health), and post-partum despression network evaluation (East Central Health).
- The Aspen Learning Centre is designed to support education, communication and secure information access to educators and managers. Aspen leaders are Carol Connolly, SEARCH III and Jeanne Annett, SEARCH IV, who run the Research and Evaluation unit. Two orientation sessions have been provided and new resources added. A session on searching the literature was also delivered through SEARCH Custom. There are 50 active users.
- Individual accounts have been launched and orientation sessions held for Peace Country Health. When complete, this desktop will provide access for up to 45 managers to customized knowledge resources, as well as for up to 2300 clinical staff to more general knowledge resources.

## Relationships

- SEARCH Canada and the Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) initiated a pilot program in February, aimed at building capacity for applied, practice-driven mental health research across the province. As part of the pilot, the AMHB sponsored two mental health professionals working in rural areas of regional health authorities to participate in the SEARCH VI program, and supported a mental health researcher to join the SEARCH faculty team to provide instruction and mentorship for program participants. SEARCH Canada added two places in SEARCH VI to accommodate these participants.
- SEARCH Canada hosted a Managers’ Orientation and Priority Setting meeting in April to orient SEARCH VI participants’ managers to SEARCH Canada and the expectations of the SEARCH Classic program. SEARCH regional champions, faculty and staff were also invited to participate in a priority setting exercise to short list issues of importance to their organizations, and to the health system as a whole. These priorities will inform the selection of relevant SEARCH VI participants’ provincial projects.
- SEARCH Canada partnered with the Palliser Health Region and Medicine Hat College in November to deliver the third annual research day. Titled, “Enlighten Your Load,” the event was held at Medicine Hat College and attracted 30 participants, including practitioners, researchers and health sciences students from the college.

SEARCH relies on a variety of mechanisms to strengthen capacity in the health system.

# Knowledge Unbound

## THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Strong, mutually beneficial partnerships and linkages are fundamental to SEARCH Canada's continued success as a leader in applied research and knowledge transfer.

SEARCH Canada takes a system-wide, integrated approach to capacity development for innovation and accountability. It provides a province-wide mechanism to bring together health research, health service delivery, and higher education, and delivers programs and services that respond to the context and needs of both rural and urban health regions operating across Alberta and beyond. It is an approach that fosters increased collaboration and cooperation for health system benefit.

### Applying Research to Improve Practice – Project Profiles

SEARCH relies on a variety of mechanisms to strengthen capacity in the health system – from its SEARCH Classic program that enables people working in health care organizations to assess or conduct research and apply the results, to funding of community-based faculty to support the research capacity development requirements of specific regions through its Custom program.

#### Evidence Literacy Project Aimed at Improving Skills

The Evidence Literacy (eLiteracy) project demonstrates the impact possible when you leverage partner resources to respond to a strategic need.

“As an “evidence friendly” organization, the David Thompson Health Region (DTHR) is committed to developing and supporting research and evaluation activities,” says Roberta Dubois, Manager of the region's Respiratory Health Services. “When our respiratory therapists identified a need to increase their skills in evidence literacy to support the development of best practice guidelines, we supported the project as a means to build their capacity. The DTHR provides additional support from the departments of Research and Evaluation, Quality Improvement and a DTHR Advisory Management Team. Long-term, it also supports the region's recruitment and retention goals, by demonstrating a commitment to best practice.”

The resulting project used the resources and met the needs of multiple players.

SEARCH Canada works with Alberta health organizations to build capacity for evidence-based practice. Through its Custom program, the organization is making relevant courseware more widely available. Desktop-based eLiteracy modules, developed for the SEARCH Classic program by Dr. Robert Hayward at the Centre for Health Evidence (CHE) and Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta, supplied the training content. The CHE also provided the specialized online learning technology required, through their VIVIDESK™ ‘Desktop’ technology.

SEARCH Canada funds Research Development Advisors through local university and college faculties to work within the regions. One RDA position is located at Red Deer College, in keeping with that organization's applied research mandate. Dr.

Scott Oddie, RDA, and his students provided on-the-ground support in mentoring respiratory therapists throughout the project. This group also leveraged the project to obtain funding from the Alberta Association of Colleges and Technical Institutes (AACTI) to determine the effects of a virtual learning and peer learning community approach in building eLiteracy capacity among health professionals.

In Phase I of the project, 11 respiratory therapist team leaders from the DTHR completed eLiteracy training, designed to increase their ability to ask, acquire, assess and appraise the evidence from the research literature. Currently, an additional 20 team members (therapists) are completing the training with mentoring support from their team leaders and members of the eLiteracy Advisory team. Following their training, the teams will begin the process of developing and implementing best practice guidelines for DTHR's Respiratory Health Services.

The project team expects to demonstrate both an increase in respiratory therapists' knowledge of research evidence, and also that the eLiteracy courseware is an effective means of developing these skills.

“We recently received endorsement of this curriculum and approach by the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT) and the College and Association of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta (CARTA). CARTA approved the project as part of the members' continuing competency requirements in the Advanced Continuing Educational Activities category. In this category, members earn three hours of credit for every hour they spend on the project,” says Roberta. “Both agencies are interested in the project with an eye to the future and its outcomes, which have implications for all members in advancing the practice of Respiratory Health Service.”

In the next phase of the project, each team's goal will be to implement clinical practice guidelines. Individual teams are focused in one of seven identified areas of practice: ventilation management, airway management, neonatal/infant pediatric care, chronic disease management, continuing care, sleep/CPAP, and professional development/ continuing competency.

#### Local Projects

As part of their participation in SEARCH Classic, participants are asked to complete a local project, focused on summarizing what is known on a topic of relevance to decision-making in the sponsoring organization. These projects emphasize the application of skills in Choosing Evidence, such as searching for, appraising, selecting and synthesizing research studies. Following are examples of local projects completed as part of SEARCH V.



Scott Oddie (front left), Research Development Advisor (RDA) with SEARCH Canada, and Psychology Instructor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Red Deer College; and Roberta Dubois (front right), manager of Respiratory Health Services, David Thompson Health Region, work with Red Deer College BA Psychology students Sarah Hovind and Chad Newton to deliver onsite sessions in evidence literacy to respiratory therapists, like Rick Brooks (seated).

SEARCH Canada takes a system-wide, integrated approach to capacity development for innovation and accountability.

“My goal was to provide a foundation to support more selective use of this therapy.”

### Health Technology Assessment Contributes to Changed Practice

SEARCH V participant, Greg Duchscherer, is a Clinical Development Leader for Respiratory Services in the Calgary Health Region. Based on the topic for his local project, he and his manager realized he would need to go beyond a standard report to affect a change in practice.

So, with the support of his region and his SEARCH Canada faculty mentor, and using connections made through SEARCH Canada, he approached the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) for assistance in completing a health technology assessment on the use of inhaled Nitric Oxide (iNO) in the adult intensive care patient population.

“Over the past year and a half, the cost of administering this therapy has increased 10 fold in Canada, almost doubling the daily cost of caring for a patient in the ICU,” he says. “In addition, the clinical benefits remain unclear. Despite the increasing cost and lack of evidence supporting a clear-cut benefit of this experimental therapy over conventional management, the use of iNO to treat patients with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) has remained relatively static. My goal was to provide a foundation to support more selective use of this therapy within our region, initially, and since the report is applicable all across Canada, in other health regions as well.”

Patients suffer from inflammation and injury to the lung, due to a number of causes. The syndrome results in low levels of oxygen in the blood, which can cause further injury and dysfunction in other organs. These are some of the most acutely ill and highly unstable patients cared for in an adult intensive care unit. While improvements in general treatment strategies have resulted in better outcomes for these people over the past 20 to 30 years, the limitations associated with the various conventional management strategies often force clinicians to consider the use of other, non-conventional strategies to improve oxygen delivery.

The use of iNO is one such strategy, used most often as a last resort therapy in ARDS. When inhaled, it can produce changes in the lung that reduce blood pressure and help improve the amount of oxygen transferred to the blood. The degree of improvement depends on a number of factors. In about 40 per cent of patients, this therapy produces no response at all.

“With this technology, we see some improvement in oxygenation in about 60 per cent of patients,” Greg says, “but this is typically short-lived and, in some cases, actually causes the patient to deteriorate when it is discontinued. This report tries to answer many clinically relevant questions regarding optimal use of this therapy, including the modification of existing protocols and policy to be used more selectively; to discontinue the therapy earlier when we don’t see a response, and to reconsider using it at all in situations with a low probability of success.”

Greg is now working to disseminate his results and share his experiences - both within and external to the region.

“One Attending Physician has suggested I present the report to the ICU Executive



Greg Duchscherer, Clinical Development Leader, Respiratory Services, Calgary Health Region (left); Jim Winnick, Regional Manager, Respiratory Services, Calgary Health Region (centre); and Dr. Christopher J. Doig, Medical Director, Foothills Multisystem Intensive Care Unit, and Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary (right), are working to apply the findings from Greg’s SEARCH V local project to improve practices around the use of inhaled Nitric Oxide (iNO) technology within the Intensive Care Unit.

Committee – to make the clinical leaders in the region more aware of the cost increase and evidence related to efficacy. The next step will be to roll these recommendations out as a change in our guidelines and policy.”

As for Greg, personally, he is grateful for all the support he received along the way and for the experience gained in conducting this health technology assessment.

### Looking at the Link between Pain and Aggression

As a physiotherapist with many years’ experience in continuing care, Camille Poulin knows how distressing aggressive behaviour in people with dementia can be. It can also be dangerous for caregivers. So when Camille, who currently works for Aspen Regional Health as InterRAI Project Lead, identified potential topics for her SEARCH V project, investigating the link between aggression and pain was a top-rated choice – not only by her but also by her colleagues. “It’s a common client concern for rehabilitation and nursing staff,” she says. “We knew the results would be significant to the multidisciplinary teams that look after people with dementia.”

Camille conducted a review of the research literature, including clinical practice guidelines and Canadian theses. “The evidence supports the existence of a relationship between pain and aggression in late-stage dementia,” she says. “Furthermore, late-stage dementia pain and aggression symptoms respond favourably to analgesics. When multidisciplinary care teams address residents’ pain, they also decrease aggressive behaviours.”

Her findings have been disseminated widely to continuing care facilities in Aspen Regional Health and shared throughout the SEARCH network. As a result of the research, language around pain has been added to Aspen’s aggression policy for continuing care residents. Aspen also recently completed a search for pain assessment instruments to be used in its continuing care centres. The incorporation of pain assessments has the potential to decrease the incidence of aggressive behaviours, thereby improving the quality of life for residents and the safety of caregivers.

### Reviewing Determinants of Health

While health research has made great progress in understanding diseases and innovative new treatments, research results also point to a bigger picture – one that looks at health as being determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behaviour. Laurie Bentz’s interest in these determinants of health was the motivation for her SEARCH V project.

Laurie is a Research and Evaluation Officer and Health Promotion Facilitator with Aspen Regional Health and trained as a Registered Dietitian. She set out to investigate the relationship between income and child obesity. Her research review included accessing six online databases, numerous grey literature sources and hand-searching reference lists. From her research, she concluded that it is unclear whether income is an important contributor to child obesity.

“I was surprised at the outcome, I thought I would find a relationship,” says Laurie. “It’s important to note that my conclusion does not mean the relationship does not exist. There was a lack of consistency between studies for income and body mass index definitions, and in controlling for confounding factors. There’s a need for further research with adequate population-based samples and controls for known confounders.”

Despite finding no clear relationship between income and childhood obesity that would provide a mandate for intervention, Laurie says one of the biggest benefits of her project is that it has highlighted the determinants of health within the region. “Although the determinants of health are well-known, actually applying the determinants to practice is challenging. How do we work with community partners to address inequities in health? What role can the health system play in improving health outcomes for children? Those are the big questions we need to tackle.”

### Developing Leaders – Participant Profiles

SEARCH Canada is uniquely positioned to support and develop leaders for the next stage of health system development. Leadership development has been demonstrated as a consistent outcome of participation in SEARCH Classic for participants and their organizations. Participants come from the full range of health disciplines and include nurses, physiotherapists, nutritionists and physicians, as well as hospital, public health and government management personnel.

The following profiles outline the personal and professional experiences of individual SEARCHers, following their participation in SEARCH Classic.

### The Little Idea that Grew

Motivated by a desire to make significant improvements to family practice, Dr. Rob Wedel’s group project for SEARCH II developed the foundation for an innovative approach to primary care. “Our goal was to create a service delivery model that reflected better quality, better access and better patient and provider satisfaction.” The project, which focused on primary care in Taber, Alberta, continued on after SEARCH with funding from the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Alberta Health and Wellness and Chinook Health.



Camille Poulin (left), Aspen Regional Health, hopes her local project will benefit both those with dementia and those who care for them. Susan Gokiert (right), Westlock Continuing Care Manager, was part of the team that helped Camille choose her local project, and is helping disseminate the results.



Laurie Bentz, Aspen Regional Health, looked at the evidence on the relationship between income and child obesity as part of her SEARCH V local project.

The integrated approach to primary care developed in Taber includes a local decision-making structure, an alternative payment plan for physicians, and computerized patient records. The Taber Project turned the local clinic into a one-stop healthcare experience for patients where what they needed was assessed, prioritized and addressed by the right provider. Patient care is provided by a healthcare team. Diabetes educators, the asthma team, public health nurses and a nurse-practitioner are all co-located at the clinic. Clinic records are accessible at the Taber hospital's emergency department.

The success in Taber was revisited in the SEARCH IV "Good Health Teams" project in Pincher Creek and, eventually, across the entire Chinook Health Region. The network now includes 107 of the region's 110 family physicians and incorporates 22 clinics, rural and urban.

"We did not envision this kind of uptake when we were doing the SEARCH project," says Rob. "But the changes that began with SEARCH and the momentum that has carried on since, represent one of the most interesting and important milestones in my career. I've been in practice for 30 years. I had been involved in quality improvement projects from time to time, but never anything like this – something that changed primary care in a significant way. There was a time before SEARCH when I was thinking about giving up family practice. But I'm having so much fun and there are so many good things that I want to be part of, there's no way I'm stopping now."

### Connections Matter

Carol Connolly was intrigued by the job posting for a research officer with Alberta's Aspen Regional Health. "It said that as part of the job, Aspen would send you to SEARCH. I did some background on SEARCH and quickly realized this was a dream come true." Carol applied and won the position. Her first day on the job was also her first day as part of the SEARCH III cohort.

"My role was capacity building in evidence-based practice. People in Aspen are very receptive to new ideas – Aspen sent two people to the SEARCH V program and we will be sending another two to SEARCH VI. In fact, we had 11 applicants for the SEARCH VI positions."

Carol notes that a lot more people are requesting information through library services, and regional workshops on evidence-based practice are very popular. In addition, Aspen is piloting the "Aspen Learning Centre", a modified version of the SEARCH Desktop tailored to users in Aspen Regional Health by the Centre for Health Evidence.

"Aspen has done a lot of forward thinking around capacity building in evidence-based practice," says Carol. "I'm very proud of this." Carol is now Research and Evaluation Manager. Her team has one full-time and one part-time research officer – both SEARCHers – as well as a data analyst.



Carol Connolly, SEARCH III,  
Aspen Regional Health



Dr. Rob Wedel (centre), Medical Director with the Palliative Care Program, Chinook Health, participates in weekly noon hour team conferences as part of the integrated primary care initiative. These meetings vary between presentations from community services (Mental Health, Community Care, Social Services) to strategic team planning and case discussions. Seated to Dr. Wedel's right is Lisa Zubach, office Clinical Coordinator. To his left is Bonnie Donaldson, a Family Practice Nurse, and Diabetic Nurse Educator.

“SEARCH moved me into the ‘evidence world’ and expanded my knowledge base.”

“With a Master’s degree in nursing, I have experience in looking at community and population health. SEARCH moved me into the ‘evidence world’ and expanded my knowledge base. SEARCH also linked me into a network of people across the province, all of whom are focused on evidence-based practice. I think my position as a research manager in a rural region would have been difficult on my own, without the network. The SEARCH connections are invaluable.”

### Building Essential Knowledge Infrastructure

SEARCH Canada invests in the health system, by supporting faculty and health professionals, and a knowledge infrastructure. According to the review panel assessing SEARCH Canada’s operations and programs in December, it’s an approach that is paying dividends, “SEARCH is building a key component of the knowledge-based infrastructure needed for Alberta’s healthcare system to deliver effective high quality services.”

SEARCH Canada’s strategic partnership with the Centre for Health Evidence (CHE), University of Alberta, evolved from SEARCH’s use, since 1996, of state-of-the-art e-learning methods and technologies. What started with a specific need and application has been strengthened since 2001, through the exploration of mutual opportunities.

At its start, SEARCH Canada was looking for knowledge management expertise and technologies to support its educational and knowledge transfer mandate. CHE had the means to provide it, and an interest in exploring novel applications of its desktop technology. SEARCH Canada’s evolving Classic program – a two-year cycle of professional development and training in applied research and its use in decision-making – and its participants provided just such an application.

Today, the SEARCH ‘Desktop’ is an integrated internet environment that provides a sophisticated online, common ‘workspace’. This state-of-the-art electronic knowledge and communication tool provides resources for curriculum delivery, project collaboration and information access. SEARCH Canada funds development and upkeep of what has become core infrastructure to both its Classic and Custom programs; CHE provides overall knowledge, as well as management services and curriculum delivery.

In addition, the partners have realized opportunities to leverage their combined capacity and develop new applications for the knowledge desktops beyond SEARCH Canada’s traditional programs. Following are two such applications:

#### CapitalCare Best Practice Desktop

CapitalCare, Canada’s largest non-profit continuing care provider is committed to using evidence to inform care practices.



Suzanne Maisey, SEARCH III (right), CapitalCare Manager of Planning and Evaluation, and Claire-Ann Lauder, Occupational Therapist, are among those using the Best Practice Desktop within their organization.

“Ultimately, our goal is for our people to be able to find high quality, trustworthy and relevant information when they need it.”

Working with Kelly Deis, Associate Director of the Centre for Health Evidence (CHE) and the CHE team, they are turning that vision into an operational reality with the development of a best practice, online environment unique in continuing care. Today, this desktop is a key resource, supporting evidence-based practice and collaborative work, and informing key corporate initiatives and strategic goals.

Suzanne Maisey, SEARCH III, is CapitalCare’s Manager of Planning and Evaluation and the lead for the desktop project. She says her organization had a number of goals in mind when it initiated a project in 2003 to develop a customized resource to support the work of a small Corporate Best Practice Committee. Her participation in SEARCH Classic enabled her to appreciate and share a vision of the potential of the technology in this application.

“We decided to start with a small, committed group of people,” she says. “Committee members were already highly motivated and represented a wide cross section of leaders in the organization.”

Since then, the organization has twice evaluated those with access to the Best Practice Desktop, which is consistently rated as a valuable tool that supports their work. “Ultimately, our goal is for our people to be able to find high quality, trustworthy and relevant information when they need it.”

The Best Practice Desktop streamlines the evidence gathering and assessment process in a number of ways. It ensures easy access to practice-relevant information and resources, increases employees’ skill in navigating and using information sources through online training, shortens the time spent searching for evidence, and reduces the time spent assessing the quality of resources by providing pre-assessed resources. The result is an increased quality of evidence available to support and inform decision making and more individuals across the organization with an increased capacity to choose, assess and use that evidence.

Today, 82 employees from CapitalCare, including best practice leaders, educators and managers, administrators, recreational therapists, pharmacists and nurses – have individual accounts or access to group accounts for the desktop. Access is also provided to other interested staff through a group account, accessible at a number of computer kiosks throughout CapitalCare sites. Those with individual licensed access have the added benefit of being able to install and use the desktop resources at home to support their own professional development.

“Most telling, in the last year, there has been no need for me to push use of the Best Practice Desktop,” says Suzanne. “It has become normal practice and is being viewed by our staff as an indispensable resource.”

### Continuing Care Desktop: Supporting Awareness of New Continuing Care Health Standards

Desktop technology and knowledge management expertise is also helping facilitate awareness and training efforts around implementation of the Alberta government’s new Continuing Care health standards.

Alberta Health and Wellness released new Continuing Care standards in 2006, after months of feedback from continuing care residents and their families, industry stakeholders, facility operators and regional health authorities. These standards lay the groundwork for a higher quality of life and healthcare for all Albertans receiving continuing care services in home, community and facility-based settings.

In partnership with CHE, SEARCH Canada received a grant to customize and roll out a Continuing Care Desktop over three years as one component of a larger Alberta government strategy to implement the health standards. This desktop provides access to the standards; evidence, activities and other resources related to the standards; and know-how needed to support Alberta Health and Wellness and the regions’ awareness and training efforts.

“We are fortunate to have the combined experience of SEARCH Canada and the Centre for Health Evidence working for us on this initiative,” says Vivien Lai, Senior Manager, Continuing Care Policy, Alberta Health and Wellness. “Their success in knowledge transfer is well known, and will allow us to create a legacy for Continuing Care as Alberta leads the way in investing in their people for improved health.”

Since initiating the project last April, the CHE/SEARCH team, led by Kelly Deis, has customized a virtual learning environment, and assembled, developed and adapted evidence, orientation and learning support materials for the standards. The team has also delivered intensive stakeholder support, material and technical advice, orienting more than 400 ‘educator champions’ in over 40 workshops, delivered across the province. Some 2,000 Continuing Care employees from regions and provider organizations have already signed on to access the resources.

“Progress to date has exceeded our expectations,” says Tom Mill, Executive Director of Policy, Alberta Health and Wellness. “I believe this approach to learning is the way of the future and will fundamentally change how things are done. Learning primarily through face-to-face interactions is no longer feasible or fiscally responsible. This tool will create a dialogue among our workers that can only improve outcomes for our clients.”

Once fully implemented, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 continuing care staff at all levels, will have access to resources supporting awareness, understanding and application of the new continuing care health service standards. Additionally, the project will lead to a valuable network of champions and managers, filling a key role in working with staff to apply the standards, building on SEARCH Canada’s unique approach to community-based learning, and extensive experience in building and supporting networks within Alberta’s health system over the past decade.

“Progress to date has exceeded our expectations.”

# Celebrating ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Ruth Grant Kalischuk, SEARCH Faculty from the University of Lethbridge, worked with staff from the Taber Medical Clinic to conceptualize, write and submit an article on the Taber project to a peer reviewed journal. This article has since been accepted for publication: Wedel, R., Grant Kalischuk, R., Patterson, E., & Brown, S. (in press). Turning vision into reality: Successful integration of primary healthcare in Taber, Canada. Healthcare Policy.
- Dr. Robert Hayward, SEARCH Faculty, University of Alberta, was appointed Assistant Dean of Health Informatics, a new division of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry. He will remain Director of CHE and also become Director of Information Programs (Department of Medicine), while continuing his practice in Internal Medicine.
- Christine Thompson, Program Manager, SEARCH Custom, completed her Masters Degree in Science with the University of Alberta's Centre for Health Promotion Studies.

- The SEARCH Canada/David Thompson Health Region (DTHR) team of: Scott Oddie (RDA, Red Deer College), Darrel Melvin, (Regional Manager, Respiratory Therapy, DTHR), Roberta Dubois, (Manager, Respiratory Therapy, DTHR), Robert Hayward (Lead Faculty, Choosing Theme, University of Alberta), Sandy Doze (SEARCH I, Regional Health Research Officer, DTHR), Carolyn Trumper (SEARCH V, Knowledge Services, DTHR), Steven Clelland (SEARCH II, Research and Evaluation Coordinator, DTHR) and Christine Thompson (Program Manager, SEARCH Custom) – had their abstract accepted by the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation for Research Use Week. Team representatives presented their submission, "Building Evidence Literacy Capacity within a Regional Health Authority: Bridging the Gap between Evidence and Practice," November 8 in Prince George as part of a theme-based roundtable discussion.



Greg Duchscherer

- Greg Duchscherer, SEARCH V participant, was nominated for a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Knowledge Translation Award. The award "honours and supports teams or organizations that make an outstanding contribution to the health of Canadians or to the health system through exemplary knowledge translation." The Institute of Health Economics submitted the nomination with the support of SEARCH Custom to recognize the knowledge translation activities associated with Greg's SEARCH Classic local project. Greg and his partners were also accepted to deliver a panel discussion on the collaborative aspects of the project and the contribution of each partner at the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies (CADTH) Symposium in April 2007.
- Marie-Josée Paquin, SEARCH V participant, completed a study on teleoncology as part of her participation in SEARCH Classic to assist the Alberta Cancer Board in the development of its telehealth initiative. The project was presented last August by Dr. David Hailey, Institute for Health Economics, in Brisbane, Australia, and published in December in the supplement issue of the Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare. Dr. Hailey was also invited to present the outcomes of the project in June 2007 to the 4th Health Technology Assessment International Annual Meeting in Barcelona.
- SEARCH Canada was honoured in 2006 to be nominated by one of its valued members – Capital Health – for the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation's 2006 Health Services Research Advancement Award.



# Supporting OTHERS

During 2006, SEARCH Faculty and staff helped plan a number of provincial and national opportunities for capacity building and lesson sharing:

- Network Leadership Summit III (July 2007)
- Alberta Public Health Association, Public Health Summer School (August 2007)
- ARECCI Research Ethics Conference Planning (May 2008)

... provided experience and support to others' initiatives:

- Steering Committee and Working Groups of the Alberta Research Ethics Community Consensus Initiative, Phase III/AHFMR
- Alberta Mental Health Research Partnership Committee and Regional Sub Group
- Alberta Rural Health Technology Assessment Demonstration Project/Institute of Health Economics, Palliser Health Region
- The HTA Ambassador Program/Institute of Health Economics
- Chinook Research Support Committee
- Palliser Research Committee
- Calgary Decision Support Task Force
- Edmonton Success by Six Council of Partners
- Southern Alberta Child and Youth Health Network
- Calgary Change and Communications Committee
- Alberta Health Continuing Care Standards Implementation Steering Committee
- Linking knowledge brokers working with the Canmore-based PEAK project with Calgary Health Region Quality consultants
- Providing strategic planning support for the Calgary Health Region's rural health portfolio related to research, evaluation and decision support

... and accepted invitations to deliver a number of external presentations:

- National Collaborating Centres for Public Health Summer Workshop (Toronto)
- Health Research Methods Conference (Calgary)
- Annual Conference of the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health (Ottawa)
- Continuing Care Best Practice conference (Calgary)
- Celebration of Public Health Partnerships Conference (Edmonton)
- CHSRF National Forum on Knowledge Transfer and Exchange (Vancouver)
- Dreambuilders' Conference (Edmonton)
- People and Progress Conference (Edmonton)
- Strengthening the Bond: Collaborating for Optimal Patient Care (Banff)
- 4th Annual Health and Nursing Research Conference (Red Deer)
- 4th Biennial Rural Health Conference: From Research to Practice (Kananaskis)

“SEARCH is building a key component of the knowledge-based infrastructure needed for Alberta's health care system to deliver effective high quality services.”

# Financials

## SEARCH Canada Statement of Financial Position

March 31	2007	2006
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash	\$ 209,995	\$ 147,989
Temporary investments	535,799	466,308
Receivables	27,022	60,082
Prepays	89,964	20,178
	<u>862,780</u>	<u>694,557</u>
Accrued benefit asset	19,507	-
Capital assets	<u>86,858</u>	<u>91,575</u>
	<u>\$ 969,145</u>	<u>\$ 786,132</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current		
Payables and accruals	\$ 103,023	\$ 198,302
Deferred revenue	51,434	70,000
Current lease incentive	4,926	4,926
	<u>159,383</u>	<u>273,228</u>
Long term lease incentive	<u>7,388</u>	<u>12,314</u>
	<u>166,771</u>	<u>285,542</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Invested in capital assets	86,858	91,575
Internally restricted	404,239	-
Unrestricted	<u>311,277</u>	<u>409,015</u>
	<u>802,374</u>	<u>500,590</u>
	<u>\$ 969,145</u>	<u>\$ 786,132</u>

“The changes that began with SEARCH and the momentum that has carried on since, represent one of the most interesting and important milestones in my career.”

“The SEARCH  
connections are  
invaluable.”

## SEARCH Canada Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31	2007	2006
<b>Revenues</b>		
Grant	\$ 2,586,252	\$ 2,720,000
Project funding	576,682	68,738
Investments	28,334	20,392
	<u>3,191,268</u>	<u>2,809,130</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Program delivery	593,429	586,048
Faculty	293,010	441,989
Knowledge services	307,961	348,419
Innovation and development	305,850	222,846
Research	162,849	28,489
Project costs	548,616	63,164
Corporate administration	677,769	617,585
	<u>2,889,484</u>	<u>2,308,540</u>
<b>Excess of revenues over expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 301,784</b>	<b>\$ 500,590</b>

Audited financial statements are available upon request to SEARCH Canada. Please call us at 780.423.5377, email us at [info@searchca.net](mailto:info@searchca.net), or write us a SEARCH Canada, #943, 9925-109 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J8 to have a copy mailed to you free of charge.

## SEARCH Canada Staff

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Director of Communications

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Lorraine Reny  
Executive Assistant, Board and CEO

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Ron Schlegelmilch  
Manager, Learning Support, Continuing Care Initiative

Cindy Shropshire  
Administrative Coordinator, SEARCH Custom

Wendy Spraggins  
Program Coordinator, SEARCH Classic

Christine Thompson  
Program Manager, SEARCH Custom

Kirby Wright  
Senior Consultant

## SEARCH Faculty

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Lead, Creating Theme  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary

Robert S.A. Hayward MD, MPH, FRCPC  
Lead, Choosing Theme  
Department of Medicine, University of Alberta

Sharon J. Matthias, MSc, MBA  
Lead, Using Theme  
Matthias Inc.: Designing the Future

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Calgary Health Research Portfolio  
Calgary Health Region

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Knowledge into Action (K2A) Department  
Calgary Health Research, Calgary Health Region

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences  
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Trish Reay, PhD  
School of Business, University of Alberta

Duncan Saunders, MBBCH, PhD  
School of Public Health, University of Alberta

Saskatchewan Faculty :  
Glenn Donnelly, RN, ENC (c), PhD  
College of Nursing  
University of Saskatchewan

## Board Members

Chair:

Jean Graham  
David Thompson Health Region

Vice-Chair

Patricia Pelton  
Health Care Consultant

## Members:

Mr. Neil Bowker  
SUNcast Polytech Inc.

Dr. Michael Clinton  
Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

Professor Bob Hinings  
School of Business, University of Alberta

Jo-Anne Lubin  
Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research

Marianne Stewart  
Capital Health

Lloyd Sutherland  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary

Ron Woodward  
Red Deer College



SEARCH Canada's Board Members (standing, from l to r): Lloyd Sutherland, Michael Clinton, Ron Woodward, Neil Bowker, Bob Hinings, Marianne Stewart, Jo-Anne Lubin (seated, l to r): Jean Graham, Patricia Pelton.



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