

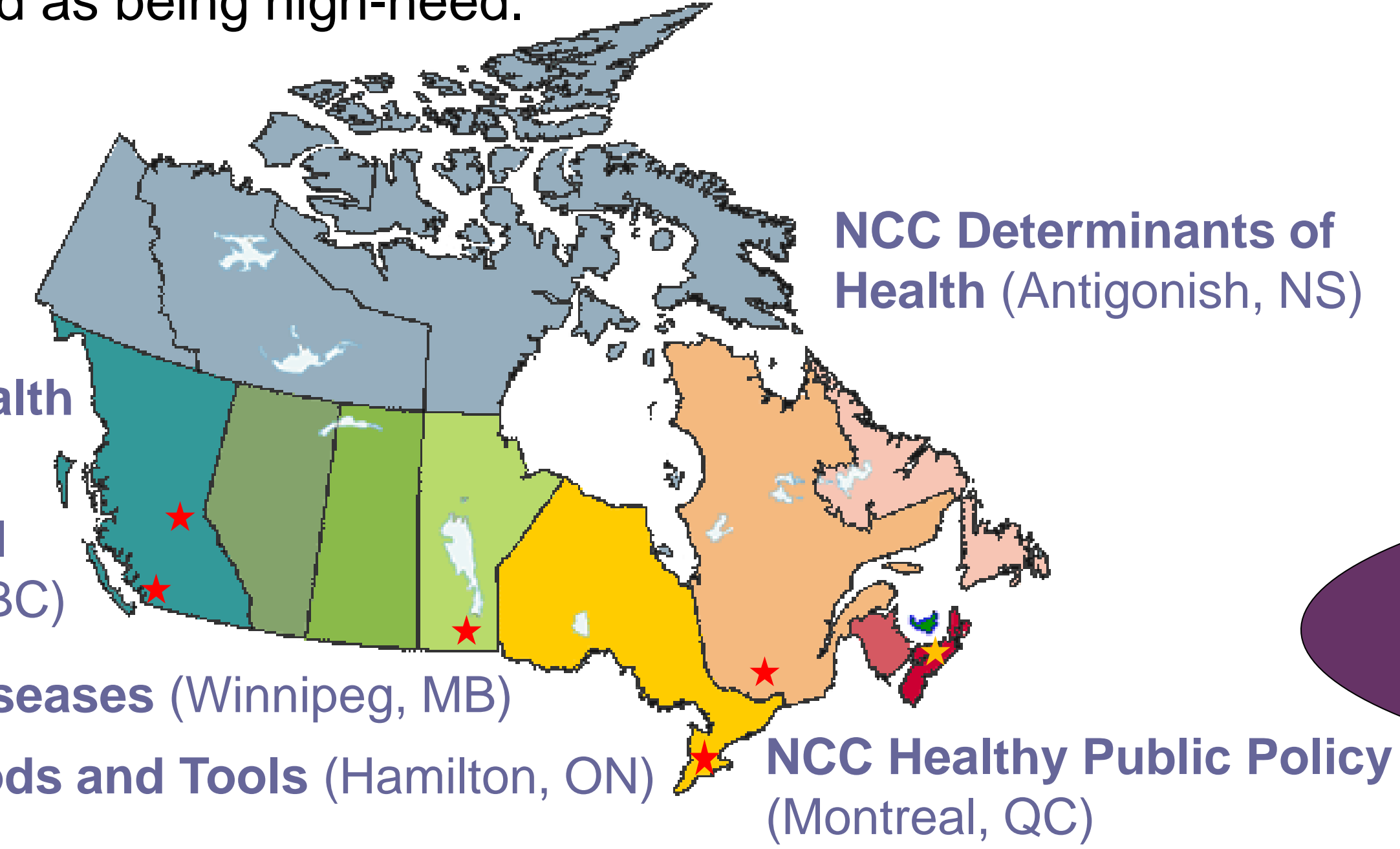
# The Information Needs of Canada's National Collaborating Centres for Public Health

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## INTRODUCTION 1

### What are the National Collaborating Centres?

Established in 2005 by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the six National Collaborating Centres (NCCs) aim to translate information for public health professionals, policy makers, and communities. Using the best available evidence, NCC staff translate and exchange the evidence into various forms, including systematic reviews, evidence reviews, and conference presentations. Each Centre focuses on a different area of Public Health identified as being high-need.



## RATIONALE 2

### Why study their information needs?

- Public health issues at forefront of health care in Canada and affect everyone
- NCC staff come from a wide variety of backgrounds with very different search skills; only some NCCs have ready access to a librarian
- Finding public health evidence is notoriously difficult
- NCCs need to plan for how best to manage information access for staff, which includes hiring new staff with requisite skills and providing ongoing training
- Librarians needs to better understand information needs of staff involved in 'knowledge translation' (KT)
- Librarians are relatively new additions to NCC staff (except in the case of NCCMT) and staff may not yet be familiar with their expertise

## METHODS 3

- Semi-structured phone interviews with five Scientific Directors (or designates) between Jan – Apr 2011
- Online questionnaire sent to relevant NCC staff in April 2011, consisting of 41 questions on information use and needs

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS 4

18 respondents (78.54% response rate)

### Locating Information

- Respondents equally comfortable searching for information or asking for assistance from a librarian
- Journal databases and library websites are the first place people go to start a search; little awareness of specialized sites (e.g., Trip, HealthEvidence, DARE)
- 54% say a lack of awareness on resources available in public health is an impediment to use of information resources
- 62% find searching for information challenging

*"I've done a Master's degree so I know how to search that stuff. Most of the people that work here have either a BA or an MA or a PhD so we're all quite familiar with how to search and gather evidence"*

### Searching & Time

- Participants consider themselves **effective** but not **efficient** searchers
- 92% say time is major barrier to using information resources
- 44% of respondents will give up looking for information after 15-20 minutes

*"I think because of time constraints I try to get information quickly, and so might not be thorough in accessing all info sources"*

### Training

- 6% of participants have never received training on searching for and evaluating information; 38% have received one workshop
- Training preferred in workshops or learned on own time

*"Training related to searching is available – I just have to make time to arrange it. Searching is a skill and the more you practice the better you get at it. I have limited time to practice."*

### Accessing a Librarian

- 64% have access to a librarian; 14% have no access; 21% are unsure
- 70% consult with a librarian less than once a week

## IMPLICATIONS 5

### Implications for Librarians

- Librarians must place a stronger focus on strengthening relationships with NCC staff and ensure that the Centres are aware of the range of services and support that librarians can provide
- Librarians should be prepared to provide on-call contract service to NCCs without ready access to a librarian
- Librarians could assist NCCs to provide clarity around what librarians can contribute to the "best evidence" process
- Librarians can assist NCCs by providing training (via hands-on workshops or asynchronous tutorials) on a continuous basis to target new staff, allow for different schedules, and to constantly refresh and refine searching skills
- Librarians can assist NCCs in developing a standard search protocol for staff to follow; this will ensure consistency across projects and NCCs
- Offer to assist NCCs to create one general listserv on Public Health news in Canada that can be distributed to NCC staff and outsiders

### Broader Implications

- Invest more effort at the university level to raise awareness of resources besides Medline or PubMed (e.g., Trip, HealthEvidence, Scopus)
- Improve promotion of grey literature repositories and search engines – respondents indicated many topics in Public Health are lacking scientific evidence
- Offer training, searching assistance, and reference in a variety of formats and intensities to accommodate the different educational backgrounds of public health professionals working in specialized organizations
- Librarians working in specialized organizations (especially those seeking 'best evidence') will need to actively promote their services and skills; many researchers/scientists/staff may not see the benefit of consulting a librarian

### Next Steps

- Individual and collective consultation with NCCs

This research was supported by the University of Saskatchewan Library

