

Working Papers on HCALM – 2014 (1): Editorial

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Welcome to this first issue of *Working Papers on Health Care Access for Linguistic Minorities!*

The Working Papers (*WP-HCALM*) is an initiative of the research group working within the *Training and Retention of Health Professionals (TRHP) Project* housed at McGill University in Montreal, funded by Health Canada. This group comprises university, college, hospital and institute-based researchers from numerous institutions in Québec, all of whom are working on various aspects of the linguistic barriers that affect access to health care services. Its goal is to promote and facilitate research on linguistic barriers that affect minority access to health and social services and to encourage the creation in Quebec of a vital and sustainable research community on these problems.

The *WP-HCALM* provides a forum for the dissemination of research by scholars from a variety of settings—local, pan-Canadian, and international. The *WP* welcomes contributions on language barriers to equitable health care services for linguistic minorities covering a wide range of topics including barriers faced by official language minority communities in Canada (French- and English-speaking communities), by First Nation, Inuit and Métis populations, and by immigrant groups, as well as barriers due to the increasing linguistic diversity of health professionals in Canada. We also welcome international case studies. Specific topics addressed include, among others, understanding the nature of language barriers in health care, documenting and evaluating the impact of such barriers, proposing ways to them, including the use of translation services and language training for health professionals, and exploring legal, ethical and other issues with consequences for policy.

The goal of the *WP-HCALM* is to make available, in a timely fashion, current theory and research relevant to scholars and policy makers from all disciplines concerned with language barriers in health care. Articles appearing in the *WP* will typically be pre-publication versions of manuscripts, unpublished thought pieces, proceedings of conferences, and the like. Publication in the *WP* will often be compatible with later publication elsewhere. The *WP* publishes material in either English or French.

Ultimately, our goal is to help researchers gain visibility for their own work and to become aware of related work ongoing across Canada and around the world.

This first issue of the *WP-HCALM* presents the proceedings of a conference held in Montreal in March 2013, organized by the TRHP and supported by funding from Health Canada. The conference was entitled *Breaking the barriers: Overcoming language and cultural barriers to the delivery of equitable health care services to linguistic minorities—Bringing together research and practice*. Its primary goal was to articulate, from multiple perspectives, the nature of this newly emerging field of study; namely, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural barriers in healthcare communication. Invitees represented a variety of complementary disciplines. Plenary and panel participants were asked to *avoid* presenting new data and instead to speculate about what their own specialty could contribute to the emergence of this new field, to help research and practice in the field become focused, sustainable and cumulative. You will find summaries of all these presentations in this first issue of the *WP-HCALM*. We hope you enjoy reading these *Proceedings* and we invite you to send comments, suggestions and, above all, ideas to be considered for future issues of the *WP*.

Finally, as members of the Conference organizing committee, we would like to take a moment to

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recognize and thank the other committee members for their invaluable help—Jim Carter (Program and Policy Advisor, Community Health and Social Services Network [CHSSN]), Estelle Chamoux (Associate Professor, Department of Biology, Bishop's University), Leif French (Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi), and Eva Kehayia (Associate Professor, School of Physical & Occupational Therapy, McGill University, and Scientific Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation [CRIR]). We also owe a very special thanks to Ms. Melissa Bahamonde, the Research Program Coordinator for the TRHP, who worked tirelessly keeping us all on track and ensuring that all the necessary arrangements were made, thereby guaranteeing the conference's success. Finally, the Conference and these Working Papers are the fruit of an evolving long-term project, the TRHP, and its associated research community, the HCALM-Network, both of which grew out of an initiative by Dr. Joanne Levesque at McGill (now Dean of Research at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue) with the help of Jim Carter, with follow-through by successive TRHP Principal Investigators, Dr. Carmen Lambert (McGill) and Dr. André Costopoulos (McGill).

Bonne lecture !