

**Strategic Operational Research Plan  
2017-2018**

February 13, 2017

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**Scientific Office  
Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network**

## The Scientific Office of the Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network

The Scientific Office of the Digestive Health Strategic Clinical Network (DH SCN) was created to lead Alberta Health Services (AHS) in the promotion, adoption, and diffusion of innovation as well as the creation and use of evidence to drive decision making in digestive health. The six pillars of activity for all SCN Scientific Offices are:



The DH SCN Scientific Office consists of

**Dr. Gilaad G. Kaplan**, MD, MPH, FRCPC

Interim Scientific Director

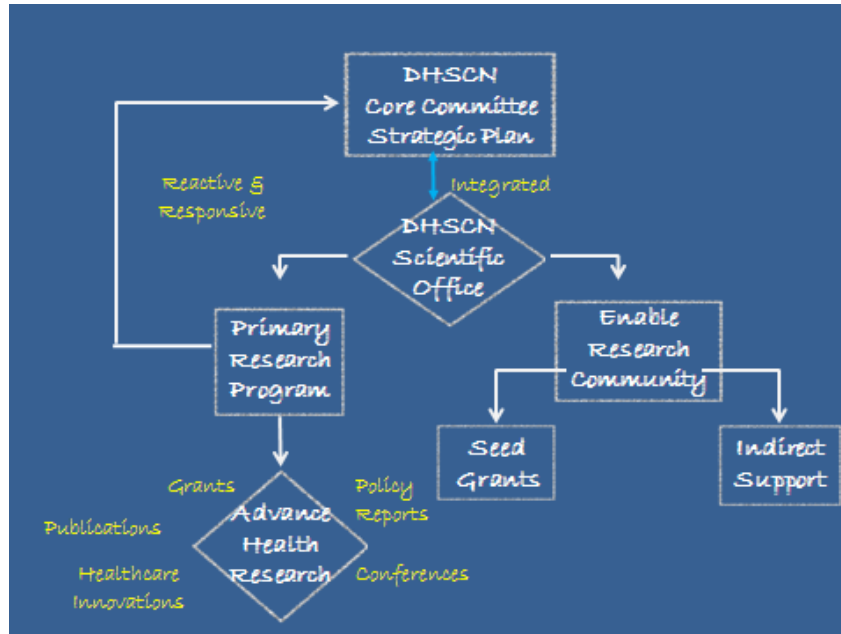
Associate Professor, Departments of Medicine and Community Health Sciences  
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Assistant Scientific Director

Research, Innovation & Analytics, AHS  
Assistant Adjunct Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine  
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As the DH SCN develops and updates its strategic priorities, this strategic plan will evolve over time. The Scientific Office will align its strategic plan with those of the DH SCN.



## ADVANCING RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE

### Engaging in High Quality Research Studies

The DH SCN Scientific Office will lead, co-lead, collaborate and support scientifically rigorous research studies in digestive health to enhance the health of Albertans. Collaborations will occur with international, national, provincial and local researchers. Cross-cutting themes of research will be endorsed by partnering with researchers in realms of care such as Primary Care and various specialties within Medicine. All endorsed research studies will fit within the established DH SCN research priorities including clinical, translational, health services, and population research.

### Obtaining Research Funding

The DH SCN Scientific Office will submit grant applications, either as Principal Investigators or as members of the investigative team, to secure funding for digestive health research that is aligned with DH SCN research priorities. The DH SCN Scientific Office will also provide letters of support for digestive health researchers who seek funding for research projects that also support the DH SCN research priorities.

Sources of funding for which grant applications can be submitted include, but are not limited to the following:

- CIHR Foundation, Special Calls, Team Grants, and Project Scheme Grants competitions.
- AIHS Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System (PRIHS).
- AIHS Knowledge-to-Action Grants.
- Strategic Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) funding opportunities through CIHR.
- Digestive health foundations or charitable organizations such as Canadian Association of Gastroenterology, Canadian Liver Foundation, and Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

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## RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

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### Mentorship: Developing Research Skills

The DH SCN Scientific Office is committed to investing in the future of digestive health research through the development of research skills. These skills may involve, but are not limited to, various methods (e.g., epidemiology, knowledge synthesis/translation, biostatistics), faculties (e.g., Nursing, Public Health, Medicine), or topics (e.g., inflammatory bowel diseases etc). Members of the DH SCN Scientific Office will supervise and mentor undergraduate students, medical students, graduate students, residents and fellows. These junior research trainees will conduct digestive health research relevant to the DH SCN and AHS.

### Provision of Research Resources

#### ***Systematic Literature Review Funding Opportunity***

The DH SCN Scientific Office will provide funds to support the development and dissemination of systematic literature reviews that address issues in digestive health relevant to Alberta. Systematic reviews prepared under this funding program will be aligned with the DH SCN strategic priorities.

#### ***Seed Grant Competition***

The DH SCN Scientific Office will administer a Seed Grant Competition which will fund clinical, health services, or population health research studies to improve the care of digestive health along the six dimensions of quality of care: acceptability, accessibility, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and safety. Research funding is also designed to enhance relationships between digestive health specialists (i.e., gastroenterologists and hepatologists) and primary care physicians. Examples of studies funded under this program include, but are not limited to, the development and implementation of clinical care pathways that improve access to care, identification of unwarranted practice variations and strategies to reduce this variation and strategies to reduce health care spending.

#### ***Dissemination of Research Grant Opportunity Information***

Information regarding research funding opportunities relevant to digestive health researchers will be disseminated by the DH SCN Scientific Office to interested members of the DH SCN research network. Examples of grant funding opportunities are Alberta Innovates Health

Solutions (AIHS), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), AHS SCNs, foundations, societies, charitable organizations, and other funding agencies.

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## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH

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### Digestive Health Research Network

The DH SCN will invite all interested digestive health researchers in Alberta to be part of the DH SCN research network. Members of this network will be called upon for their contributions in developing the digestive health research priorities and for providing strategic direction for the DH SCN Scientific Office. With this network in place, the DH SCN Scientific Office will support collaboration and leveraging of research resources and skills in order to advance the DH SCN research priorities.

The Scientific Office of the DH SCN will support engagement, collaboration and leveraging of research resources and skills with local, national and international partners in digestive health. Potential partnering groups include, but are not limited to, Crohn's and Colitis Canada, Canadian Association of Gastroenterology, Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver (CASL), the University of Calgary Gastrointestinal Research Group (GIRG) and the University of Alberta Division of Gastroenterology.

### Facilitation of Research Linkages within AHS

AHS employs a variety of staff who provide expertise in research outside the interest or skills of the DH SCN Scientific Office. Some examples are Workforce Research and Evaluation, Health Technology Assessment, Patient and Community Engagement Research (PACER), as well as experts in Knowledge Translation and Implementation Science. The DH SCN Scientific Office will endeavour to connect researchers with interests to these resources when required.

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## KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

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### Publications in Peer-Reviewed Journals

The DH SCN Scientific Office will author or co-author and submit research manuscripts for publication consideration in peer-reviewed journals. Publication in high impact journals with a strong readership by digestive health professionals will be a priority. Upon request, the Scientific Office will also assist collaborators with authorship and submission of manuscripts for consideration of publication in peer-reviewed journals.

### Conference Presentations & Participation

The DH SCN Scientific Office will promote translation of digestive health research knowledge through presentations at various provincial, national and international digestive health conferences. Presentations at quality improvement conferences such as the AHS Quality Summit are also endorsed. In addition to presentations of original research by members of the

DH SCN Scientific Office, participation in conference organization, planning and session moderation is also supported. Through such initiatives as poster awards or sponsorship, the DH SCN will support local digestive health research symposiums (e.g., University of Calgary GIRG/GI Research Day).

### Social Media

With appropriate approval from AHS Communications and in alignment with the communication and engagement strategy of the DH SCN, the Scientific Office will use social media platforms, such as Twitter™, to support an engagement strategy which connects researchers and their research discoveries with community stakeholders in digestive health.

### AHS Strategic Communications

The DH SCN Scientific Office will share the successes of our key pillars of activity with AHS stakeholders, administrators and executive leadership, highlighting research-informed and evidence-based digestive health practice changes in Alberta. These strategic communications will serve to effectively showcase the value proposition of the DH SCN and its Scientific Office. Examples of strategic communications are annual reports, infographics, AHS DH SCN website contributions and newsletters.

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## RESEARCH PRIORITIZATION

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Every SCN must establish provincial research priorities to ensure that the results of future research work supported by the SCN provides strategic value to AHS and promotes the health of Albertans. The DH SCN Scientific Office will objectively establish research priority areas through consultation with digestive health stakeholders such as the DH SCN Executive team, the DH SCN Core Committee, digestive health clinicians, administrators for digestive care health services and with the network of researchers currently conducting digestive health research.

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## RESEARCH FACILITATION

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### Liberation of AHS Health System Data

With its direct access to many of the health care administrative databases within AHS, the DH SCN Scientific Office will provide researchers with health care data to answer digestive health research questions to ultimately improve the health of Albertans. The Scientific Office, in collaboration with AHS Analytics, will build a comprehensive digestive health data repository for quality improvement and research purposes. In the latter case, data will be released following approval from a credentialed research ethics board and execution of appropriate AHS Research Agreements.

The DH SCN will also facilitate connections and collaborations with other stakeholders in health care data liberation including AHS Analytics (previously known as DIMR), Alberta Health, and the Alberta SPOR Support Unit.

**Catalyst for Enhancing Research Skills**

Given the research expertise of the DH SCN Scientific Office, opportunities exist to enhance research skills among the larger network of researchers. Many services are offered by the DH SCN Scientific Office include:

- Consultation and support services for research design and analysis.
- Guidance in navigating AHS research policies, including the formulation of AHS Research Agreements.
- Dissemination of continuing education seminars and workshops related to research skills.
- Consultative advice for Research Ethics Board (REB) application submission.
- Review services for budget sections of research grant proposals.
- Consultative advice for accessing and utilizing health care administrative databases housed within AHS, including validation of ICD10 codes.
- Manuscript review services.

**Fostering an Evidence-Based Culture of Health Services Delivery**

Data-driven and evidence-based delivery of health care services are pivotal to AHS operations. The DH SCN Scientific Office will champion the role of research within the DH SCN and AHS. The value of research will be shared with AHS administrators, decision-makers and frontline clinicians through speaking engagements, conference presentations, newsletters, advisory committee and working group memberships.

The DH SCN Scientific Office advocates for methodologically sound and rigorous evaluation of projects supported by the DH SCN.

