

## **Engage Pre-CAHR Team Meeting - May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

*Report prepared by Shayna Skakoon-Sparling*



The 2019 Engage Team meeting took place in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan as an ancillary event to the annual CAHR meeting. The morning consisted of presentations including sub-committee and sub-study updates, trainee presentations, a two-part presentation from the Data Analysis Committee (DAC), and a presentation from PHAC. After lunch, attendees took part in break-out sessions split into three topics: biomedical prevention and treatment, sexual behaviour, and social and community determinants.

## Part 1 – Questions and Answers during the Morning Presentations



### 1. Questions for Daniel Grace’s presentation on the CBS Qualitative sub-Study

Daniel Grace delivered a presentation on the preliminary results of his qualitative work exploring the reactions of MSM to the Canadian Blood Services (CBS) blood deferral policies. Daniel was asked if there is any synergy around KTE messages regarding the blood ban, that is, is any connection being made with the work that is happening with the ACB communities around the blood deferral. An audience member raised the point that MSM can stop having sex with other guys, but cannot stop being who they are racially.

Daniel noted that the focus of this work was on MSM. They did learn from participants that there is a call for greater equity overall; there are many grounds that people feel they should not be discriminated upon and being MSM is one of them. But the current trajectory towards just reducing the duration is not addressing issues of discrimination and injustice. Daniel reasserted that our goal is to help make the policy catch up to the science. Equity informed policy is scientifically-based.

Daniel would like to note that this pre-CAHR discussion was really helpful in the process of revising the first manuscript from this CBS research. The final paper reflects some of the important issues discussed at this meeting, including limitations to this study. For example, we note: “An important limitation of our research is our specific focus on the exclusion of men based on same-sex sexual practice over other possible exclusion criteria. While this focus was helpful to complete the initial objectives of our study, we do believe that it is important to consider other intersectional grounds of GBM exclusion for donating blood—recognizing the heterogeneity of this group and that some GBM may continue to find blood donation policies inequitable because they are excluded for other reasons, such as those related to country of birth. Further analysis is also necessary to robustly account for how sex-based deferral policies may be negatively perceived by trans and non-binary people as well as the multiple reasons why some GBM may continue to find blood donation policies highly problematic in and beyond the GBM-specific deferral” (Grace et al. 2019: 11-12).

For a copy of the published paper in *BMC Public Health* please see: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7123-4>

For a copy of an op-ed on this subject written by Nathan Lachowsky and Daniel Grace, please see: <https://www.straight.com/life/1253231/nathan-lachowsky-and-daniel-grace-canadian-blood-services-should-screen-behaviour-not>

**Note:** Everett Blackwell volunteered to provide the Engage Team with more information about another research project that may have additional cross-sectional data related to the CBS policies.

## 2. Questions for Ann Burchell's presentation on the Engage HPV sub-study

Ann Burchell and Catharine Chambers delivered a presentation of preliminary results of their work aimed at exploring HPV (prevalence, vaccine uptake, etc.) among MSM. Ann was asked a question about Engage following low and high risk guys for the cohort and whether this would impact their approach in the sub-study. Ann answered that this issue still needs attention, regardless of HIV risk because what is considered high risk for HIV is very different from high risk for HPV.

## 3. Questions for Shayna's Presentation on DARs and Concept Sheets (DAC presentation – part 1)

Shayna Skakoon-Sparling delivered a presentation on the process for requesting data from Engage, outlining the concept sheet and data analysis request (DAR) form. (A brief summary of this presentation is available online and includes links to download the above-mentioned forms: <https://www.engage-men.ca/resource/data-analysis>) A question was raised about how Engage data can be requested for policy implementation or a community program. The current concept sheet and DAR system are set up with research (manuscripts or presentations) in mind, but may not be suitable for practical use of this data to inform action. A new form, or updates to the concept sheet form may be necessary to make this process more community friendly.

## 4. Notes from the discussion around Paul, Herak, and Syed's DAC presentation (part 2)

Paul, Herak, and Syed delivered a presentation about the respondent driven sampling technique used in the Engage study and the development of the Engage data analysis guidelines. It was noted that, as we develop the analysis guidelines for working with Engage data, we should include a supplement with some tips about the strengths and limitations of the methodologies (e.g., assumptions) that can be included when manuscripts are produced.

We may also need to make team members/collaborators aware of the fact that receiving data or results from the Engage data analyses team and data managers may take some time (even a month or two), as they may have many projects requiring their attention at a time. Requesters should also consider the time at which they submit a request (e.g., a request for manuscript data close the CAHR abstract deadlines will have a longer wait). At some point St. Michael's may become another site where team members can access the data to conduct their own analyses and this may help alleviate some of the pressure on the analysis team in Toronto.

