

The Manitoba Youth Health Survey Experience: Provincial Collaboration for Risk Factor Surveillance

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Background: The province of Manitoba spans a large and diverse geographical area. Communities are confronted with varying barriers to health, creating a need for community-specific data on risk factors for chronic disease.

Purpose: Partners in Planning for Healthy Living (PPHL) implemented the YHS to provide community-level risk factor data to schools, school divisions and regional health authorities (RHAs) to be used for evidence-based planning.

Study/Intervention Design: PPHL and Manitoba RHAs collaborated to develop and implement a provincial, youth-focused risk factor surveillance system.

Methods: The YHS (developed and piloted by the Interlake RHA) collected data from Manitoba's youth on chronic disease risk factors (including physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco and substance use, and school connectedness). PPHL supported the administration of the YHS through in-kind human resources, financial support and member expertise.

Results: The YHS was administered to students in grades 6 to 12 in more than 400 schools across Manitoba, including First Nations, Francophone and independent schools (n = 46 919). Feedback reports were provided at the school, school division, regional and provincial levels. In addition, numerous local knowledge-exchange activities have begun since the release of these reports.

Conclusion: Risk factor surveillance activities of this scope require multilevel leadership and support from diverse partners. Working and learning together allows us to provide relevant community-level data to inform community planning. The completion of the first cycle of the YHS has identified the need to establish a sustainable province-wide risk factor surveillance system.

Keywords: surveillance, youth, chronic disease risk factors