Evolution of a Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN): Coordinator's Reflections on Clinicians' Informal Research Training Through Engagement in Participatory Research

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BACKGROUND

The McGill Primary Health Care Research Network was developed using an **Organizational Participatory Research (OPR) approach**
- OPR blends research and action to produce knowledge that can improve organization practices through engagement of knowledge users as consultants or co-decision makers
- The Research Network is composed of family physicians, nurses, residents, managers, pharmacists, social workers, managers and researchers

AIMS

The McGill Primary Health Care Research Network aims to:
- Produce and apply knowledge from and for clinical practice to improve patient care
- Build research capacity of its members and increase the applicability of research outcomes

Through hands-on engagement in research as knowledge experts or as co-decision makers, clinicians develop research knowledge and experience
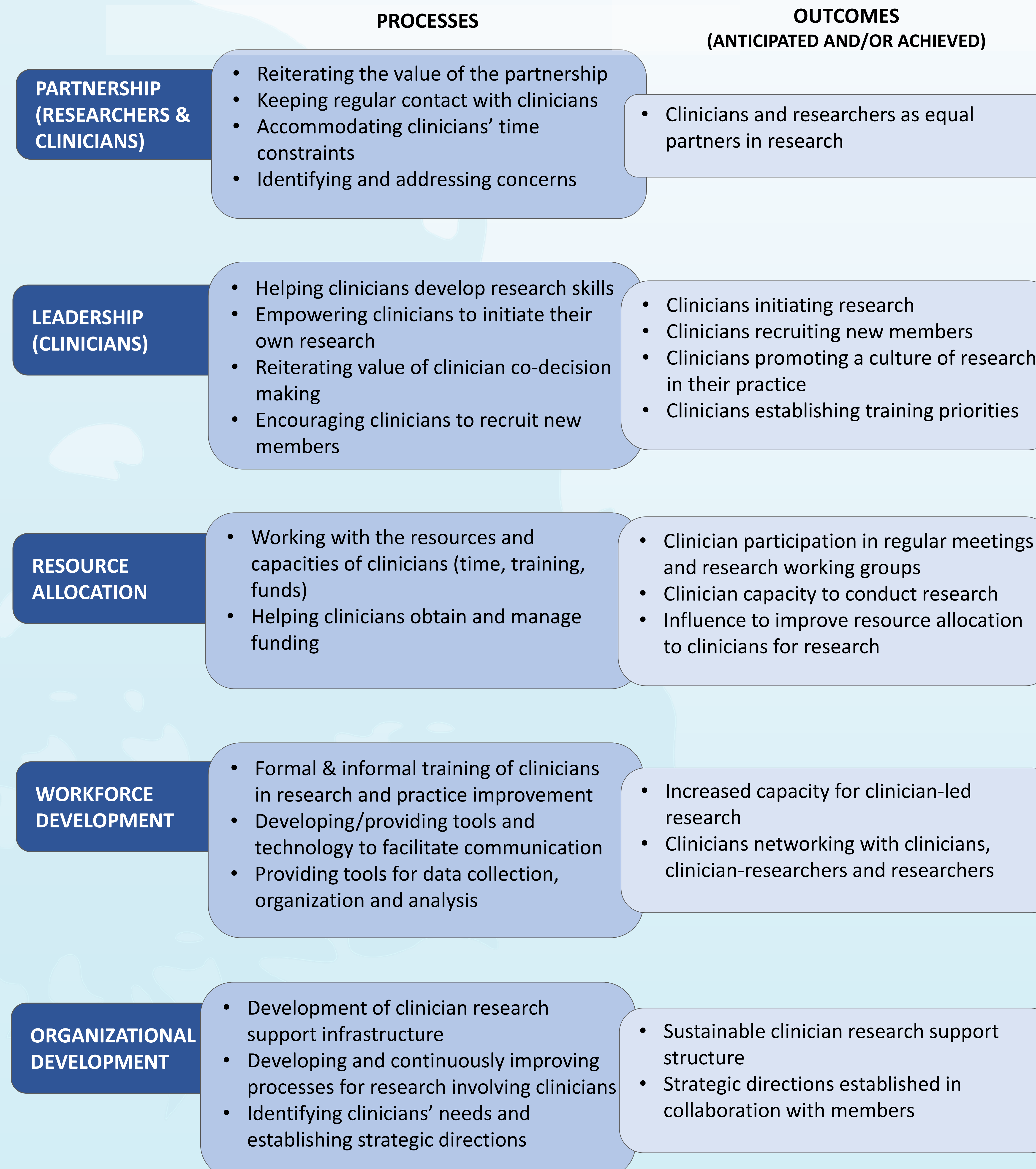
RESEARCH SUPPORT

The Research Network provides support for clinician-initiated research as needed:
- Development of research protocol
- Composition of research team
- Ethics and funding applications
- Research support (i.e. training, tools, research assistants)
- Data collection and analysis
- Knowledge translation (i.e. manuscripts, posters and presentations)

PBRN EVALUATION METHODS

- A summer bursary nursing student (ZS) conducted a qualitative descriptive study of OPR processes and outcomes with thematic analysis conducted using the Capacity Building (CB) Framework (New South Wales Health Department, 2001)
- Sources of data included coordinator diaries, email correspondence between the coordinator and members, and meeting minutes

PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF OPR IN MCGILL PBRN

	PROCESSES	OUTCOMES (ANTICIPATED AND/OR ACHIEVED)
PARTNERSHIP (RESEARCHERS & CLINICIANS)	• Reiterating the value of the partnership • Keeping regular contact with clinicians • Accommodating clinicians' time constraints • Identifying and addressing concerns	• Clinicians and researchers as equal partners in research
LEADERSHIP (CLINICIANS)	• Helping clinicians develop research skills • Empowering clinicians to initiate their own research • Reiterating value of clinician co-decision making • Encouraging clinicians to recruit new members	• Clinicians initiating research • Clinicians recruiting new members • Clinicians promoting a culture of research in their practice • Clinicians establishing training priorities
RESOURCE ALLOCATION	• Working with the resources and capacities of clinicians (time, training, funds) • Helping clinicians obtain and manage funding	• Clinician participation in regular meetings and research working groups • Clinician capacity to conduct research • Influence to improve resource allocation to clinicians for research
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	• Formal & informal training of clinicians in research and practice improvement • Developing/providing tools and technology to facilitate communication • Providing tools for data collection, organization and analysis	• Increased capacity for clinician-led research • Clinicians networking with clinicians, clinician-researchers and researchers
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	• Development of clinician research support infrastructure • Developing and continuously improving processes for research involving clinicians • Identifying clinicians' needs and establishing strategic directions	• Sustainable clinician research support structure • Strategic directions established in collaboration with members

REFLECTION

Through participation in clinician-led research, clinicians:
- Acquire knowledge and experience regarding research techniques and processes
- Gain confidence in their capacity to initiate research
- Develop greater enthusiasm toward investigating, with increased scientific rigor, a topic in which they are interested
- Are more invested in the research (compared to researcher-led projects) and thus facilitate knowledge translation
- Construct networks with colleagues around common interests, generating enthusiasm and facilitating research team formation and knowledge translation

Clinicians identified the following challenges regarding involvement in research:
- Clinicians may not be remunerated for the time they spend involved in research, therefore investment of time in a project varies largely according to their personal interest, motivation and sense of capacity (confidence).
- Clinicians often experience communication overload resulting in poorer transmission of information and a decrease in communication frequency.

Recommendations:
- *Reflect upon and reiterate the value of research for clinicians*: Clinicians' interest in research varies from person to person the. Its value for them should be reflected upon repeatedly.
- *Develop strategies to improve receptiveness toward research*: Clinicians may be more receptive if:
  - Feasibility is demonstrated or they have success stories to draw from
  - Support is provided so clinicians' investment of time is lessened, and
  - Research is integrated to a greater extent in their daily practice (i.e. as continuous quality improvement through practice facilitation, rather than as 'Research')
- *Maintain regular face-to-face contact with clinicians*: Regular face-to-face contact (meetings and site visits) can renew enthusiasm toward research and facilitates recruitment of new members
- *Ensure each meeting has value and a clear purpose*: Reflect on the purpose of the meeting and ensure that the value of what may be gained outweighs the time invested for everyone involved