



#ResearchersMatter

Dr. Judah Goldstein - EHS Research Coordinator, Jan Jensen - EHS Performance Manager, and Dr. Alix Carter - EHS Medical Director of Research

Paramedics Behind the Scenes

The sights and sounds of an ambulance racing down the street is an experience many of us can relate to. Whether it's as the unfortunate patient in the back, or pulling over to provide a clear path – emergency services are often overlooked until we can see them. But it's the work that Emergency Health Services (EHS) are doing behind the scenes that is truly underappreciated and often times unrecognized.

“One of the key ingredients that sets us apart from other programs across the country, is it is truly a collaborative effort.”

EHS in Nova Scotia is undertaking important research and the Nova Scotia EMS Research Program is led by a team that includes EHS Performance Manager, Jan Jensen, Dr. Alix Carter, the EHS Medical Director of Research and the Director of the Dalhousie University Department of Emergency Medicine, Division of EMS and Dr. Judah Goldstein, EHS Research Coordinator.

EHS researchers are actively investigating how policy, practice, system design, and paramedic training impact important research outcomes, including the experiences of front-line clinicians and EHS patients. “One of the key ingredients of our program that sets us apart from other programs across the country, is it is truly a collaborative effort,” says Alix. “It's not like the research is done at a university and at the end of it, the ambulance service is told that this project is happening.”

For over 10 years Nova Scotia has been at the forefront of EMS research in Canada and was integral in researching and producing the Canadian National EMS Research Agenda. This national project was led by Jan Jensen and a team of highly experienced EMS investigators from across Canada and was partially funded by the NSHRF. The Research Agenda identified barriers to conducting and using EMS research, and made important recommendations for the future that would in turn be implemented in Nova Scotia and across the country.

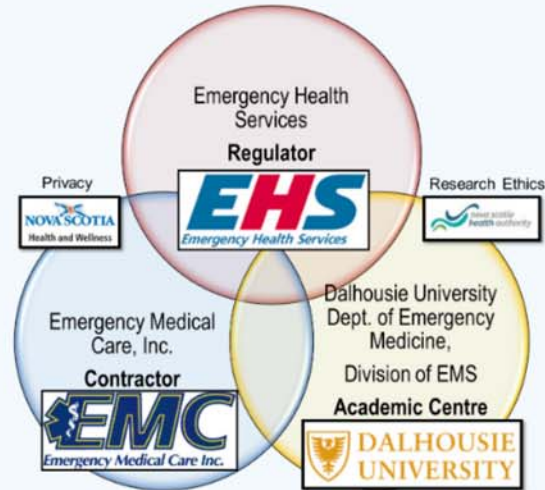


"We have taken the recommendations in the research agenda and applied them in Nova Scotia," says Jan. "It's something we have really taken to heart."

EHS also received funding from NSHRF to hire Cape Breton paramedic, Ryan Brown as a research assistant for the Research Agenda project. Brown has since gone on to complete his Master's of Public Health. "We want to take our funding and invest it in front line folks that have an interest in research," says Jan. "He is definitely one of our shining stars."

"We have taken the recommendations in the research agenda and applied them directly here in Nova Scotia"

One of the recommendations from the Canadian National EMS Research Agenda was to form a network of national EMS researchers. As a result, the Canadian EMS Research Network (CERN) was formed in 2013. This national network of over 220 members, which receives administrative support from Dalhousie University, is collaborating with and providing knowledge translation and mentorship to EMS researchers across the country.



An interesting aspect of EMS Research Program's work is related to Emergency Department (ED) offload delays. When an ambulance arrives at a hospital at a time when the ED is so busy that they can't immediately care for the patient, the paramedic crew is required to wait with the patient until they can handover care to the receiving ED clinicians. As EDs become more crowded, the downstream effects of overcrowding can be substantial and directly felt by the EMS system. Alix received a REDI Award in 2010 to study this topic, and is working with the Faculty of Engineering at Dalhousie University to model EMS offload delays and measure the impacts on a system level.

Another exciting recent development in paramedic practice has been the introduction of the delivery of palliative care. Alix is leading a large research study that includes a new EHS clinical practice guideline on how to provide direct palliative support to those in need. "It's not the traditional lights and sirens, come running in, take you to the hospital and get a definitive diagnosis and cure," says Alix. "It's now taking care of symptoms, and easing the pain. This was never part of the role that a paramedic would traditionally have."



This work is complemented by the research of Dr. Judah Goldstein, who is searching for more effective ways for paramedics to assess frailty in older EHS patients. Judah envisions that these types of assessments can lead to more tailored care and potentially to referral to alternate destinations other than the ED for those who might benefit most from community-based care.

Unlike any other service, you can call 911 twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and anywhere in the province, a paramedic will come and help you. Even when you're not in your moment of need, EHS is working behind the scenes to ensure that Nova Scotians are receiving the best possible care that is deeply rooted in research evidence.

For more information, [click here](#).



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