

Institute of Population and Public Health
Applied Public Health Chair
Impact Case Study



Dr. Gilles Paradis

Taking out of the classroom and into the field



Research Focus

Public health has faced many challenges over the past decade, from emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, to chronic disease epidemics fuelled by environmental and societal changes, to changing demographics, to migrating populations, to rapidly-evolving information technology.

There is a need to incorporate knowledge and perspectives from a variety of disciplines to understand the complex social, biological, environmental, and behavioural factors underlying these population-wide problems and to develop solutions to address them. Many researchers, however, have never experienced the multidisciplinary nature of working in a public health setting.

Recognizing the need to encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing among public health researchers, professionals, and practitioners, Dr. Gilles Paradis, Applied Public Health Chair, launched the 4P Program in Quebec to place PhD and post-doctoral fellows in public health organizations for on-the-job training.

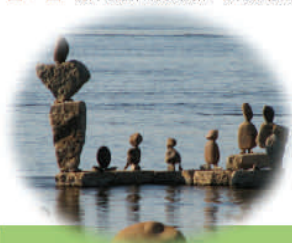
The program, which involves more than 50 university and public and population health researchers and professionals from over two dozen institutions, has not only attracted more researchers to work in these settings but also forged new research partnerships between academics, decision-makers, and practitioners that are focused on public health priorities.

Research Impact: Making a Difference

In Canada, there are few examples of applied research training programs within the formal public health structure. Many graduate programs in universities have few or no links to public health, students' research topics are frequently out of sync with public health priorities, and there is a lack of continuing training opportunities—with little training at all in knowledge-sharing or ethics in public health research.

Quebec's 4P Program (health promotion, disease prevention, and sound public policy) takes the completely opposite tack: shifting the weight of training so that fellows must spend 60-80% of their time in a public health organization rather than in a university setting.

These organizations serve as laboratories for the students, who are integrated into intervention teams and con-



duct their research under the joint supervision of a university and public health team of mentors. Their dissertations or post-doctoral research also focus on topics that are priorities of the organization itself. In addition, the fellows participate in monthly day-long seminars covering various aspects of public health research—including ethics, transdisciplinarity, networking, and knowledge translation—and intensive training sessions held off-site.

Through its ongoing work, the 4P Program is training a new generation of population and public health researchers to adapt to changing realities by giving them hands-on experience in a transdisciplinary environment where networking and partnerships are key. It has created training milieus that are directly relevant to the field of public health and the needs of health services policy-makers. This training teaches emerging researchers to apply the tools they have learned to tackle the most pressing research issues and advises them on how to manage and advance their careers in public health research through lifelong learning.

Since its inception, the 4P program has funded nearly 40 fellows from 15 disciplines. Of the 30 who have graduated since 2003, more than half now work as researchers in a public health setting and most of the others in universities where they collaborate actively with public health organizations. By greatly increasing the local capacity for public health research, the 4P program is helping to provide decision-makers and practitioners with the knowledge and information they need to tackle the increasingly complex challenges facing the field of public health in Canada.

Want to Know More?

The 4P Training Program website http://www.santepop.qc.ca/training/INDEX_E.ASP contains more information, including a downloadable brochure. The program was also featured in an editorial in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* at <http://journal.cpha.ca/index.php/cjph/article/view/1644/1828>.

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