

## **Chair's Report 2023 INCAM AGM**

Greetings fellow INCAM Research Network members! In this report, I wish to communicate highlights of the past year with respect to the overall operations and governance of the research network and specifically the committees and areas of operations on which I was the lead. This has been a tremendous year of redirection, refreshment, and reaffirmation!

### **Governance, Planning and Operations**

INCAM is operating currently within a strategic plan that outlines four specific areas: Board of Directors and committee function and roles, organizational costs and revenue, hosting education and research events, and membership promotion and engagement.

Over the last year the Board continued to evaluate the agreement and relationship carefully and thoroughly between INCAM and The International Society of Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine Researchers (ISCMR) by examining the strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities inherent in the society-chapter relationship. As you know, effective January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, we are no longer a Chapter of ISCMR and INCAM will honour your membership in full until your current ISCMR membership's expiry. We look forward to novel ways of working together within our international community of researchers. When you need to renew your INCAM membership and when you are encouraging your peers and colleagues to join INCAM, memberships can be purchased on the website: [www.incamnetwork.ca](http://www.incamnetwork.ca) The full annual membership of \$75.00 (CAD) or \$37.50 for students and retirees, supports the work of the network.

Other inter-related developments included more formalized structure for board function, additional hands-on deck (respecting that this is still a working Board) for task completion including our new casual position for administrative assistance and the role of interns brought on by Directors from teaching and research institutions. In the past year interns spent many volunteer hours on symposium-related tasks and to a lesser extent on social media (twitter) communication for member resources. If you are a student member and would like to explore these opportunities or you are an educator with students that you believe would benefit from an intern experience and who could contribute to the

network operations please contact us at [incam.network@gmail.com](mailto:incam.network@gmail.com) or contact me at [d.gowan@usask.ca](mailto:d.gowan@usask.ca) if you would like to discuss.

Unfolding in the last year was perhaps the coalescence of a clearer and more simplified vision of the intended and actual value of the INCAM Research Network. It is easy to acknowledge the tremendous value in the things that we do well, including the biannual research symposium, providing funding (albeit small amounts), being present on socials and email campaigns, and providing stable leadership to meet our purpose and objectives.

What is the purpose of the INCAM Research Network? INCAM exists to serve as a collaborative and interdisciplinary research network in Canada providing infrastructure to support research on TCAIM.

The goals are to enhance communication among individuals with the common interest of integrative health research, to promote excellence in research by providing forums for both learning necessary skills and for the presentation of research, and lastly to collaborate with professional organization and other societies, including international organizations with similar goals.

It is also important to challenge ourselves as leaders to consider when and where we must commit to shoring up our weak spots. Can we be more diverse in our interdisciplinarity? Do we need more novel models for collaboration with other organizations? More collaboration among individual members? How can we provide more valuable education and skill development for our members? Do we sufficiently advance opportunities for current and future researchers to share about their work?

In a broader sense how do we successfully ride the wave of change leadership to foster and support the remarkable evolution in integrative healthcare research? Further, how do we continue to advance integrative medicine principle-informed leadership capacity building? I am deeply grateful for the mentorship that I have received from previous leaders in the INCAM network, and I appreciate the stable foundations that the network has provided over the years. Now that we are refreshed in our operations let's work together to ensure that those that follow us benefit similarly from a purpose-driven, goal-oriented organization. Let's work together to continue to build a community guided by the principles of integrative medicine: honouring healing and wellness and the importance of relationships, a

value for diversity and inclusion of all appropriate approaches, professionals, and disciplines, informed by evidence, with a deliberate focus on the whole person. Let's work together to continue to build a network of scholars and practitioners and persons with experience of illness and health to promote the principles of integrative health: the improvement of all determinants of health in our social and physical world.

My other professional role, as Associate Director in the Centre for Integrative Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Epstein has given me practice applying the principles of integrative medicine to my own growth as a learner and a leader. In my job, I get to have a ton of fun developing, promoting, and immersing myself in an interprofessional learning culture, among the University and the broader community of researchers, clinicians, practitioners, students, and patients. INCAM is an outlet for more of that joy. I think "do good work while having more fun" is an entirely reasonable goal and one that I hope we can pursue in the coming years.

### **Communication Committee**

This committee has done a great deal of great work this past year. Our presence on twitter aids in communicating with members about events, celebrating the achievement of our members, promoting the network to potential members, and connects other organizations with similar goals and their events and people to our community. We are proud of the newsletters that have gone out this year – they could be more frequent and more regular, but we have enjoyed celebrating our members and their achievements, notifying members of current events, and integrating the newsletter with INCAMs socials and INCAM members socials to interconnect resources. The committee maintains a YouTube Channel that serves to archive and curate INCAM resources such as the amazing presentations featured in our two virtual symposia in these pandemic times and personal stories from our leadership team about their involvement with the research network. Lastly, this committee has spearheaded the development and the launch of the new INCAM website. Visit here at [www.incamnetwork.ca](http://www.incamnetwork.ca) While some of the pages are still under construction, we are able to welcome new members to join our network via the website, share about our past and current leadership team,

archive and curate past and up-coming materials and resources for members, and integrate the technologies and media available to us to foster a refreshed INCAM research network. We are likely just scratching the surface of what can be done via “communication” to serve our purpose and goals as a network. Please consider lending your vision, your time, and creative skills. Email your expression of interest to [incam.network@gmail.com](mailto:incam.network@gmail.com) or contact me at [d.gowan@usask.ca](mailto:d.gowan@usask.ca) if you would like to discuss.

### **Symposium Planning Committee:**

One of the highlights of the past year was the successful 12th INCAM Symposium and 2nd Virtual Research Meeting of the INCAM Research Network. View the published abstract of the 2022 INCAM Research Symposium. Journal of Complementary and Integrative Medicine. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jcim-2022-0363>

There were many highlights including high caliber keynotes, experiential sessions, oral and poster presentations. Also, the international participation and contributions with workshop facilitators, research presenters and attendees from around the globe was a plus for a national network with worldwide reach.

The diversity of topics was broad and rich across every session type – from the keynotes to the posters. The sponsors were generous and engaged and we are grateful for the financial support of the Dr. Rogers Prize, the Massage Therapist Association of Saskatchewan, the Centre for Integrative Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, and CANDJ, the official journal of the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors.

The public sessions are available for viewing here:

<https://event.fourwaves.com/incam2022/pages/756d92e9-a440-4b68-855b-2305c418b7f8>

There were 101 Registrants in total. Only 15 of the 53 full symposium delegates completed the Post-Symposium Survey.

Selected Symposium Survey Responses:

100 % of responses (15) rated the content of the symposium as either good or excellent.

The applicability of the Symposium programs and topics was rated as “satisfactory” or “good” or “excellent” with most responses as “good”.

Pre-event organization was rated as satisfactory, good, or excellent with the most common response as “good”.

Ratings of the registration and notification process ranged from “poor” to “excellent” with 1 response of “poor” and the most common response as “good”.

The survey question garnering the most responses of “poor” was the question of rating the opportunities for networking. Responses included “poor”, “satisfactory” and “good”.

Regarding the virtual platform all respondents rated the platform as satisfactory, good, or excellent with the most responses rating the platform as good or excellent.

Respondents appreciated “the respectful exchange of ideas”, “diversity, quality, and facilitation” and thought that the experiential breaks were “a nice feature” or “perhaps too long”.

Several respondents shared that while scheduling the symposium over four days and at different times of days is understandable and appropriate to accommodate different time zones nationally and internationally it does present challenges for scheduling attendance. Several respondents articulated both understanding of the value of virtual events and a simultaneous desire for in person connection and learning.

The symposium planning committee will carefully review suggestions for future symposia and ask for your help in making it happen for the 2024! Please lend your vision, expertise, connections, and time to this important function of the network to help in planning. Email [incam.network@gmail.com](mailto:incam.network@gmail.com) or me at [d.gowan@usask.ca](mailto:d.gowan@usask.ca) if you would like to discuss.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Chair over the past year. It is a pleasure to work toward a future where integrative medicine and healthcare research excels in providing new and important knowledge and integrative health is a reality for every Canadian.

Respectfully submitted,

Donelda Gowan, PhD

Past-Chair, INCAM Research Network