The Health Research Data Repository

“What is the Health Research Data Repository?”

Based within the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta, the HRDR is a secure and confidential virtual environment created to support health related research projects, to support collaboration across research disciplines, to house health research data and meta-data throughout their life-cycle, and to promote the secondary use and re-purposing of health research data. The HRDR also has a mandate to promote and offer educational opportunities regarding research data management best practices. The mission of the Health Research Data Repository (HRDR) is to stimulate both qualitative and quantitative health related research while building a collaborative culture of respect relating to data management and confidentiality.

The Importance of sound Data Management

The Canadian Research Data Strategy Working Group released a 2011 report, Mapping the Data Landscape: Report of the 2011 Canadian Research Data Summit in which it was stated: “Canada invests billions of dollars in research each year, research that produces huge amounts of data. These data hold virtually unlimited potential to be re-used in innovative ways – by industry, policy makers, researchers and citizens. As the volume of research data grows exponentially, so must the efforts to ensure that they are preserved, accessible, and understandable. For research data to be available for future use, long-term preservation must be a goal at the time data are created”.

The TCPS 2 - Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans states: “In addition to the security measures researchers implement to protect data, safeguards put in place at the institutional or organizational level also provide important protection. These data security safeguards should include adequate physical, administrative and technical measures, and should address the full lifecycle of information. This includes institutional or organizational safeguards for information while it is currently in use by researchers, and for any long-term retention of information” (Article 5.4 Explanatory Text).


Health Research Data Repository (HRDR) overview, February 2014
How can the Health Research Data Repository help my research project?

The HRDR provides:

- **A secure and confidential environment** for housing and managing sensitive research data, allowing research teams to safely and securely work with data across the lifecycle of their projects while meeting security requirements imposed by grant funding agencies, institutions, and data stewards

- **Secure remote access** to your research allowing for research teams to securely access their data at any time and from anywhere. Research collaboration is promoted through these remote access components as they allow geographically distant researchers, and those with specialized knowledge and/or skillsets to collaborate securely and safely

- **Access to a regular suite of analytic software**, including SPSS, Stata, SAS, Microsoft Access (including Excel and Access), Nvivo, and StatTransfer. Additional software packages are assessed and implemented on a case by case basis

- **Data management guidance** for research teams on topics that include, but are not limited to, folder and file structures, naming conventions, file versioning, data entry and processing, and metadata capture and retention

- **Educational opportunities** in the form of presentations and workshops to its users relating to key topics in the area of research data management best practices in an effort to help build a sustainable culture of respect relating to sound research data management

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**Health Research Data Repository: Current Status (December 2013)**

- Operational phase commenced January 2013
- Working group established to support overall infrastructure and daily operational activities
- Working Policies & Procedures revised and finalized
- Software currently available within the HRDR includes: **Microsoft Office** (including Excel and Access), **SPSS, STATA, SAS, Nvivo, MPlus**, and **StatTransfer**
- Current approved users include over **90 researchers spanning twenty-five research projects**
- Approved users accessing and supporting research projects housed within the HRDR include **researchers at local, national, and international** (U.S., Germany, Spain, & Denmark) institutions
- Presentations given at both local (**U of A 2013 Campus Data Summit**) and international (**IAASSIST 2013, Cologne, Germany; and Open Repositories 2013, PEI, Canada**) conferences
- Delivery of educational sessions in progress; first HRDR brown bag presentation offered January 2013

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