

Information Letter/Consent Form Rural Site Visits Project

We invite you to participate in the Rural Coordination Centre of British Columbia Rural Site Visits Project. Thank you for your time and your interest.

Why? The Rural Site Visits Project is a research project being done by the Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee (JSC)ⁱ. The purpose is to connect with rural communities in BC to learn about their medical practices. The project hopes to provide the JSC with the information needed to better support these communities and their physicians.

How? We schedule an in-person interview if you are comfortable. We have a Covid Safety Plan where study team members are fully vaccinated, will wear surgical masks and bring hand sanitizer and disinfectant supplies, will conduct a health check (self-assessment) and be in compliance with up-to-date Provincial Covid-19 mandate guidelines. We can also do a virtual interview either by Zoomⁱⁱ or telephone (your choice). During the interview, you will be asked several questions regarding healthcare practices in your community. Interview questions can be viewed prior to the meeting at: <https://ruralsitevisits.rccbc.ca/project-documentation/>.

Interviews will either be conducted individually or in a group. In a group meeting, we encourage all participants to refrain from disclosing the contents of the discussion outside of the focus group; however, we cannot control what other participants do with the information discussed. Your responses will be audio-recorded. The recordings will then be typed into notes by a project team member, or a transcriptionist hired separately outside of RCCbc. You will receive a copy of the transcription to approve or delete. The notes will be written in a way so your answers will be made nameless. Finally, they will be reviewed to identify major themes affecting healthcare delivery in rural communities in BC, such as transportation or access.

Potential Risks: Some of the questions asked during the interviews may bring up emotional responses. Should you experience any discomfort relating to questions posed, please feel free to not answer those questions. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Potential Benefits: The study results will be used to support the development of policy, as well as understanding, related to rural medical practice in the province. It will assist in terms of developing networks between rural practices, in the area of recruitment and retention of health care providers and help guide rural medical support programs.

How will results of this project be shared? The results of this project will be used in publications such as JSC reports, community reports, specialized reports, and may be presented to various audiences through presentations and conferencesⁱⁱⁱ. Also, it will be used in academic publications (e.g. journal articles^{iv}). In some cases, journals require Open Access (OA) which refers to freely available, online information to academic articles. The data that will be included will remove any information that could identify you or your community and be placed online alongside the article. Once the data is made available in OA, *you will not be able to withdraw your data*.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All data collected will be made anonymous and combined so neither yourself nor your community will be identifiable. The person transcribing your audio recordings to notes will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving the recordings. The audio recording, if applicable, will be destroyed after five years. The notes will be sent to you for your approval before they are entered into our system. You may choose to edit, add, or omit any comments from the notes. If you are participating in a group interview, we encourage all participants to refrain from discussing the contents of the meeting outside of the group; however, we cannot control what other participants do with the information discussed.

Data will be retained up to five years after completion of the study on Microsoft SharePoint 365 which is a secure, cloud-based system, on Canadian servers, which is exclusively accessed by RCCbc site visits team members. The Principal Investigator will be responsible for the data a minimum of five years following publication. After five years, data will be destroyed.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact the Primary Investigator, Dr. Campbell Johnston at csj@mail.ubc.ca or Danette Dawkin, RCCbc Physician Lead/Co-Investigator at d.dawkin@alumni.ubc.ca or Dr. David Snadden, Co-Investigator at david.snadden@ubc.ca. They are all affiliated with UBC's Department of Family Practice.

Participant Support Lines: In the event you become upset or distressed prior to, during, or following this project, the following support lines are available to you:

- **Provincial Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789** (no area code required) for emotional support, information, and resources specific to mental health. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **Suicide/Distress Support Line: 1-800-784-2433** if you are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research participants: If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you can contact the Research Participant Complaint Line at the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598, or long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca, or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

For UNBC, please contact the UNBC Office of Research at 250-960-6735 or by e-mail at reb@unbc.ca.

I, by signing below, agree to participate in the Rural Site Visits interviews led by the Rural Coordination Centre of BC. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the interview. By signing below:

1. I understand my participation in this interview is completely voluntary.
2. I may withdraw from the project at any time or refuse to participate.
3. I have been given sufficient information about this project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clearly outlined above.
4. I understand if the de-identified results are published in Open Access, I am not able to withdraw my data once it has been published.
5. I give my consent to be recorded, by audio if necessary, and my words be transcribed by an external party.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

EMAIL

Would you like to receive (check all that apply):

- Site Visits updates and findings*
- Other RCCbc network opportunities, newsletters, events, programs, grants, etc. for rural, remote and Indigenous communities*

ⁱ The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) was established in 2001 and is comprised of representatives from [Doctors of BC](#), the Ministry of Health, and the provincial health authorities. The JSC advises the BC government and Doctors of BC on matters pertaining to rural medical practice. The goal of the JSC is to enhance the availability and stability of physician services in rural and remote areas of British Columbia by addressing some of the unique and difficult circumstances faced by physicians.

ⁱⁱ If you choose to meet with us via Zoom, you can choose to turn your video off during the interview.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, we recently presented the results of the first part of the Site Visits project at the BC Rural Health Research Exchange <https://youtu.be/bTofQ40Zsl0?t=12078>

^{iv} For example, you can read the findings from the first phase of the project in the *British Medical Journal Open* here <https://bmiopen.bmj.com/content/11/10/e047165>.