

How to engage clinicians in research

Camilla Zimmermann, MD, PhD

**Rose Family Chair in Palliative Medicine and Supportive Care
Director, Division of Palliative Medicine, University of Toronto
Head, Division of Palliative Care, University Health Network**



Should we engage clinicians in research?

- Advantages of engaging clinicians in research

- Relevant research questions
- Team building and collaboration
- Avoid burnout
- Encourages evidence-based practice



- Challenges of engaging clinicians in research

- May add to patient burden
- Multiple projects require prioritization to avoid team fatigue and confusion
- Clinicians may want to lead research without appropriate training or expertise

What prevents clinicians from doing research?

- Time*
- Expertise*
- Funding
- Interest
- Ability



Protected time for research

- Clinicians need protected time to do research
- Not all clinicians will have equal protected time (job description)
 - Job descriptions are important to delineate appropriate research time and ensure adequate coverage of patients
 - Important to hire a complement of clinicians with different job descriptions so that researchers are not responsible primarily for patient coverage and clinical teaching
- Funding for protected time may be challenging... see later
- Not all clinicians need to or even should lead research, but all should be active contributors to research



University of Toronto Dept. of Medicine Clinician Academic Job Descriptions

	Clinician-teacher	Clinician in Quality & Innovation	Clinician-educator	Clinician-investigator	Clinician-scientist
% time spent in clinical care	60-75%	60-75%	30-50%	30-50%	10-25%
% time protected for scholarly activities (not clinical/teaching)	5-20%	20-30%	~ 50%	~ 50%	70-80%
Examples of scholarship for this position description	Contributions to CPA and/or education (e.g. curriculum development)	Leads at least 1 QI-related project every 3 yrs, with evidence of impact outside local setting	CPA and/or at least 1 first- or senior-authored peer reviewed paper + 2-3 co-authored papers every 3 yrs + demonstrated impact - local, national, international	At least 1 first- or senior-authored peer reviewed paper/year every 3 yrs + other CPA showing evidence of impact outside local setting	PI on at least 1 peer reviewed grant + ≥ 2 first- or senior-authored peer reviewed papers/year every 3 years + evidence of research impact - local, national, international
Contributions to formal teaching (outside routine clinical care)	40-50 hours/yr multiple teaching levels; significant undergraduate medical education	15-30 hours per year; multiple teaching levels, supervision of trainee projects	15-30 hours per year; most participate in continuing education or faculty development and supervise trainee projects	15-30 hours per year; supervision of trainee projects, graduate teaching; member graduate thesis committee	Research supervision of trainees and graduate students and course instruction

Promoting research expertise

- Fellowships
- Graduate programs
 - Graduate program in palliative care
 - Complementary programs (pain, addiction)
- Workshops and seminars
 - E.g. PRC, EAPC-RN
- Research rotations
 - Medical students, Residents in oncology, internal medicine, anaesthesia, neurology, family medicine, etc.
- Exchanges, international training experiences
 - ESMO Fellowships for Designated Centres of Integrated Oncology and Palliative Care



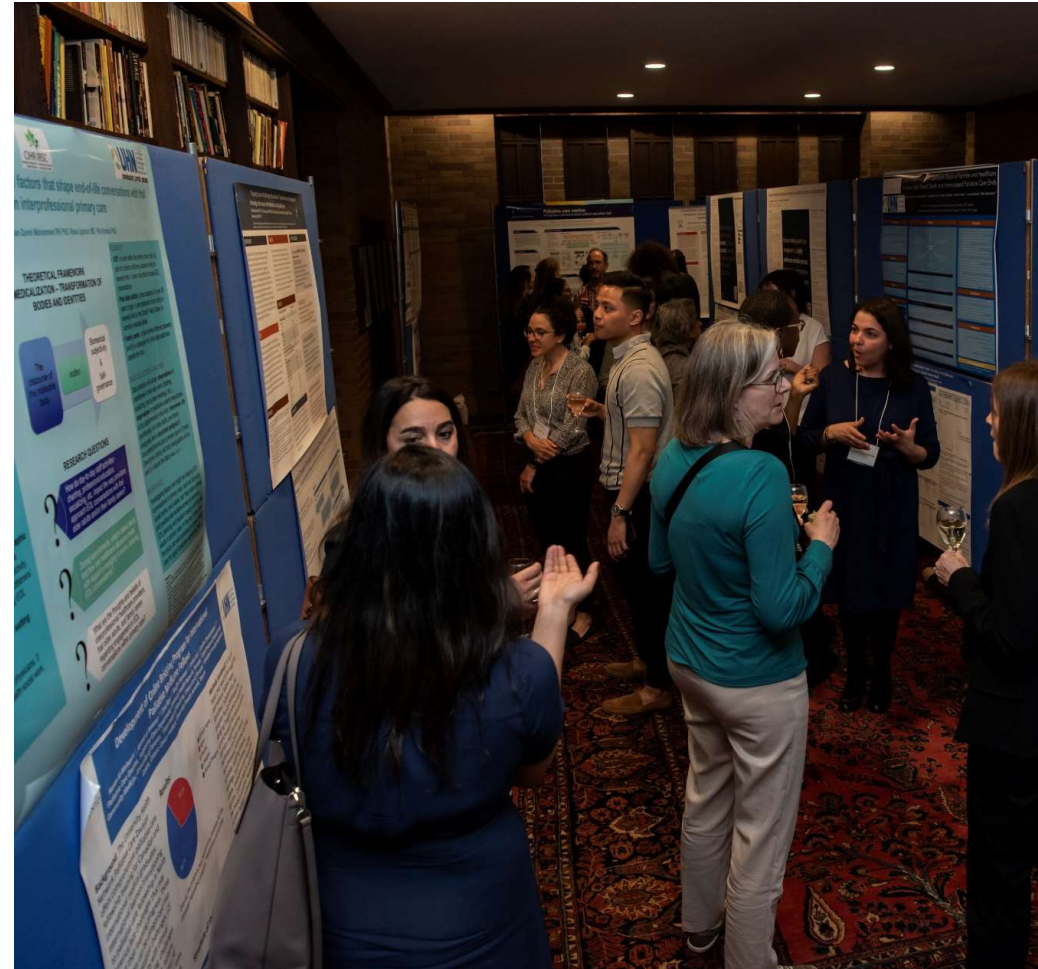
Funding strategies for clinicians

- Traditional national research grants
 - Engage clinicians as collaborators
 - Internal review of external grant submissions
 - Grant writing courses
- Internal funding initiatives
 - Seed grant program
 - Travel grants
- External opportunities
 - Smaller travel grants or seed grants through university or private organizations



Fostering an interest in research

- Start with medical students
- Undergraduate summer students
- Formal 1-3 month research rotations
- Research rounds, research development seminars, journal club
- Palliative Care Research Day on university or hospital level
- Publicize deadlines for local and international meetings



Cultivating the research mind

- Importance of mentorship
 - Mentor can be content, methodological, or strategic expert
 - Encourage **focus**
- Importance of a collaborative approach
 - Seek clinicians' input on projects
 - Offer advice for others' projects
 - Provide opportunities for input (formal rounds or periodic meetings)



Thank you!