RQRD QPRN

RÉSEAU QUÉBÉCOIS DE RECHERCHE SUR LA DOULEUR

QUEBEC PAIN RESEARCH NETWORK

Membership charter

Quebec Pain Research Network

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1. Network description

1.1 Name of the network

1.1.1. The research network is officially named « QUEBEC PAIN RESEARCH NETWORK » (QPRN or The Network), translated in French as « RÉSEAU QUÉBÉCOIS DE RECHERCHE SUR LA DOULEUR » (RQRD).

1.1.2. The QPRN is one of the thematic networks of the Fonds de recherche du Québec.

1.1.3. The QPRN head office is based at the activity site of one of the current co-directors ' offices.

1.2 Mission and goals of the network

1.2.1. Mission

The mission of the QPRN is to contribute to the understanding of the neurophysiological mechanisms of pain, to prevent its chronicization, and to improve its management in order to contribute to the well-being of people living with pain and their families, through innovative, inclusive, partnership-based and intersectoral research activities and the mobilization of knowledge, while contributing to the knowledge and training of healthcare professionals.

1.2.2. Goals

The general objectives of the QPRN are:

1.2.2.1. Ensure an optimal research infrastructure to promote the development of pain research in Quebec to:

- Promote research efforts according to a defined theme, including major research directions;
- Encourage meetings, exchanges, and collaborations between QPRN researchers, with other FRQ networks, and with other researchers interested in similar themes in Quebec and elsewhere.

1.2.2.2. Develop and support platforms (e.g., technical services, cohorts) to serve the general public, people living with pain, healthcare providers, QPRN researchers, and the entire community interested in advancing knowledge about pain.

1.2.2.3. Maintain and develop collaborations between researchers, clinicians, and people living with pain.

1.2.2.4. Foster the development of the research profession with an interest in pain by recruiting early career scholars and supporting the training of students.

1.2.2.5. Foster the exchange of information with decision-making bodies in the field of health policy, university faculties, healthcare professionals, and the general public.

1.3 Description of the theme – Pain, a societal issue

Acute pain is a universal experience required for our survival, as it informs us of an injury. However, when pain persists beyond three months, it becomes an illness of its own and is then referred to as chronic pain. Impacting 1 in 5 adults and almost as many children and adolescents in Canada, chronic pain is a major socio-economic burden with annual costs estimated at $40 billion in terms of healthcare and loss of productivity. Thus, chronic pain costs more than cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, or cancer. This condition disproportionally affects women, people of diverse genders and sexuality, older populations, people living in poverty, people with mental health or substance use disorders, people with disabilities, people working in trade or transportation, veterans, Indigenous people, and some ethnic and racialized communities. It is well known that biological, psychological, and social factors interact with the nervous system and influence the pain experience. Therefore, pain management must be multimodal (combining pharmacological, physical, and psychosocial approaches) and include interdisciplinary support that considers these bio-psycho-social factors. However, recent work by Health Canada confirms that even today, chronic pain management remains suboptimal. The lack of chronic pain knowledge, prejudice, inadequate training of healthcare professionals who play a key role in chronic pain management (e.g., nurses, physicians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists), lack of fully effective pharmacological treatments, limited use of physical and psychosocial approaches and lack of equitable, consistent and timely access to a continuum of pain care and support contribute to this issue. As a result, Canadian government authorities have recently made chronic pain a societal priority.

2. Network Management

The Network values a collegial and egalitarian scientific co-direction, reflecting the diversity of our members' research approaches, with a co-director representing the preclinical affairs and a second co-director representing the clinical affairs. Working in close collaboration with an executive director, the scientific co-directors oversee all the Network's activities. These two members must meet all the conditions required for an academic researcher status (i.e., common general rules of the Fonds de recherche du Québec).

2.1 Roles and responsibilities of the network co-directors

2.1.1. Along with the Board Committee, the Management Committee, the Scientific Committee, and the Student Committee, oversee the development, updating, and implementation of the scientific program aligned with the Network's mission.

2.1.2. Provide leadership to ensure the vitality of the Network, the active participation of its members, the relevance, and the scientific quality of activities related to its mission.

2.1.3. Ensure best practices about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at all levels of activity.

2.1.4. Ensure financial management transparency and integrity in the allocation and use of the grant awarded by the Fonds de recherche du Québec and those of other partners, considering the achievement of objectives.

2.1.5. Be accountable for the decisions taken about the Network.

2.1.6. Maintain a strategic oversight and promote the Network at the provincial, national, and international levels.

2.1.7. Lead the funding application process for the Fonds de recherche du Québec as principal investigators.

2.2 Appointment process, term of office, and renewal of the scientific co-direction of the Network

2.2.1. The appointment of the Network's scientific co-directors must comply with the process described by the Fonds de recherche du Québec's document 'Thematic Network Management and Governance Guiding Principles'. Therefore, the choice of co-directors must follow a call for applications, the establishment of a selection committee including at least two Network members who are not part of the Board Committee, and the recommendation by the General Assembly of members. The Network must inform the Fonds de recherche du Québec of the change in the management position.

2.2.2. The choice of the scientific co-directors is determined by a secret vote of the General Assembly of members.

2.2.3. The suggested mandate of the scientific co-directors is four (4) years, renewable once.

2.2.4. Ideally, the mandates of the co-directors of preclinical and clinical affairs are at least one year apart, to facilitate the transition of matters.

2.2.5. At the end of the mandate, the Fonds de recherche du Québec recommends that each outgoing co-director, depending on availability and at the request of the new co-director, remain on the Network Board Committee for a year.

2.2.6. At the end of the mandate, it is recommended that each outgoing co-director, depending on availability and at the request of the new co-director, remain on the Network Management Committee for a few months.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Executive Director of the Network

The executive director is a highly qualified Network employee responsible for implementing scientific and strategic decisions, as well as higher-level operational management. Specifically, roles and responsibilities are:

2.3.1. Participate in strategic discussions in collaboration with the Network's scientific co-directors (e.g., setting and reviewing objectives and priorities).

2.3.2. Implement and monitor scientific progress planning.

2.3.3. Colligate deliverables and performance indicators stemming from Network activities, draft and submit progress reports as requested by the Fonds de recherche du Québec.

2.3.4. In close collaboration with the Network's scientific co-director stationed at the institution managing the grant, assist the management of the grant awarded by the Fonds de recherche du Québec or other partners, and manage the internal finance and procurement requirements.

2.3.5. Convoke and lead meetings of the Board, Management and Scientific Committees, as well as the Annual General Meeting (plan, record, monitor).

2.3.6. Monitor strategic opportunities and promote the Network at the provincial, national, and international levels.

2.3.7. Develop and maintain the Network's strategic partnerships, including the establishment of funding opportunities.

2.3.8. Provide scientific coordination to the Network's consortia.

2.3.9. Supervise all Network employees (e.g., scientific coordinator).

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities of the Scientific Coordinator of the Network

2.4.1. Participate in strategic discussions in collaboration with the Network's scientific co-directors (e.g., setting and reviewing objectives and priorities).

2.4.2. Promote the Network at the provincial, national, and international levels.

2.4.3. Manage the Network's website and social media communications in collaboration with external suppliers.

2.4.4. Manage multiple Network's programs and competitions.

2.4.5. Manage the membership and the membership renewal process.

2.4.6. Assist in the organization of the North American Pain School, the Annual General Meeting or any other major event organized by the Network.

2.4.7. Design and maintain up-to-date knowledge mobilization content resulting from members' research projects or Network activities.

3. Governance structure

3.1 Assembly of members

3.1.1. The general assembly is made up of all QPRN regular members.

3.1.2. The general assembly meets at least once a year, usually at the time of the annual scientific meeting, held during the month of January.

3.1.3. Special meetings can be convened at the request of the Management Committee or the co-directors upon written notice, at least two weeks in advance.

3.1.4. The quorum of the General Assembly is reached when 50 voting members (i.e., regular members) have voted. Decisions are made by a majority vote. Votes may take place in person or online.

3.1.5. The General Assembly receives the annual report of the QPRN Board Committee and the operating budget. The General Assembly is responsible for electing the scientific co-directors and approving the modifications to the Charter.

3.2 Board Committee

3.2.1. Mandate of the Board Committee

3.2.1.1. The Board Committee identifies the orientations, developments, strategies, and scientific and budgetary priorities of the QPRN.

3.2.1.2. It is made up of members reflecting the diversity of the universities (McGill, Montreal, Laval, Sherbrooke, and Network of UQ universities), a student representative from the Quebec Network of Junior Pain Investigators (QNJPI), a person with lived experience of pain representative of the Association québécoise de la douleur chronique (AQDC), a clinician representative of the Quebec Pain Society (QPS, SQD), and members of the QPRN Management Committee.

3.2.1.3. The chairs of the Board Committee are the scientific co-directors of the Network.

3.2.1.4. The terms of university representatives are four years and renewable once. A second renewal is possible if the Management Committee and the Board Committee approve it.

3.2.1.5. The Board Committee may demand, by a unanimous vote, the resignation of a member deemed to act in non-compliance with the mission, objectives, and values of the QPRN.

3.2.1.6. The repeated and unmotivated absence of a member from multiple consecutive meetings duly convened may justify that the Board Committee requests a replacement.

3.3 Management Committee

3.3.1. Composition

3.3.1.1. The Management Committee is made up of the co-directors, the executive director, and the scientific coordinator.

3.3.1.2. In the event of the co-directors' incapacity, the executive director may replace them.

3.3.1.3. The chairs of the Management Committee are the scientific co-directors.

3.3.1.4. The mandate of the Management Committee members is not fixed in time.

3.3.2. Management Committee Mandate

3.3.2.1. It is responsible for the implementation of QPRN’s research policies and orientations as well as for achieving the objectives.

3.3.2.2. It ensures the transparent operation of QPRN.

3.3.2.3. It ensures the optimal use of the budget.

3.3.2.4. It analyzes scientific and financial reports of consortia, infrastructures, and technical platforms.

3.3.2.5. It periodically revises the charter.

3.3.2.6. The Management Committee meets at least once a month (often twice a month).

3.4 Scientific Committee

3.4.1. Composition

3.4.1.1. The Scientific Committee is made up of the co-directors of the QPRN, the consortia and platforms co-directors, and any additional member deemed necessary by the Committee. The members of the Committee are appointed by the scientific co-directors.

3.4.1.2. The Committee is chaired by the co-directors of the QPRN or any other member of the Committee appointed by them.

3.4.1.3. The mandate of the Committee members is generally four years, renewable once.

3.4.2. Mandate of the Scientific Committee

3.4.2.1. The Scientific Committee ensures the achievement of the QPRN scientific orientations and its various initiatives.

3.4.2.2. It promotes the implementation of scientific activities and scientific collaborations within the QPRN.

3.4.2.3. It participates in the scientific evaluation and monitoring of the QPRN consortia and technological platforms.

3.5 Student Committee

3.5.1. The Student Committee must constitute a credible voice for graduate and post-graduate students of the QPRN and serve as a privileged communication channel between the students and the QPRN Board. Its mandate is to represent QPRN student members and to participate in its mission of training, dissemination, and knowledge transfer.

3.5.2. The Quebec Network of Junior Pain Investigators (QNJPI) evolves according to its code of conduct.

3.5.3. The President or Co-Presidents of the QNJPI hold a seat on the Board Committee.

4. Members

4.1 Membership and renewal

4.1.1. The QPRN is made up of regular members, partner members, emeritus members, and student members working in the field of pain in Quebec or any other related field. Only regular members have the right to vote at the General Assembly of members and can receive and operate financial support from the QPRN.

4.1.2. Any researcher from Quebec whose research activities are directly or indirectly related to the QPRN mission and who is a member of a university department, or a recognized research institute or centre may apply to become a member.

4.1.3. Membership applications are assessed and accepted by the Management Committee based on the evaluation of their scientific potential in the QPRN.

4.1.4. The status of each member is revised every two years, and the absence of any scientific activity or contribution within the Network for two (2) years results in a change of status or terminates membership.

4.2 Membership Categories

4.2.1. **Regular member**: Researcher meeting the criteria of a university researcher, clinical researcher, or collegial researcher, as defined in the Common General Rules and working in one of the QPRN research areas. Regular member status can also be granted to a postdoctoral fellow who has just obtained a university academic position (on

presentation of evidence). Finally, a regular member must be actively involved in the scientific activities of the QPRN, including its presence at the QPRN Annual Retreat.

4.2.2. **Partner member**: Person who does not meet the criteria of a regular member, but who has the required expertise or lived experience directly or indirectly related to QPRN activities, enabling them to make an active and significant contribution. The partner members may be knowledge creators, accelerators, or users. People living with pain, decision-makers, or community representatives are just a few examples of people who could qualify as partner members.

4.2.3. **Emeritus member**: Status conferred to a retired researcher, or other person recognized by the QPRN for their exceptional achievement or services provided to the QPRN's research field.

4.2.4. **Student member**: Person enrolled in a graduate or post-graduate training program at a Québec university or a person who qualifies as a post-doctoral fellow, as described by the Common General Rules, and who is training at a Québec university supervised by a regular member of the QPRN.

4.3 Privileges and responsibilities of members

4.3.1. Regular members must:

- Actively participate in scientific meetings such as the Annual Scientific Retreat;
- Contribute to committees, consortia, platforms, and/or to the development of the QPRN.

4.3.2. Regular members are part of the General Assembly of members and have the right to vote. Depending on the availability, they have access to grants, scholarships, and services provided by the QPRN. Other types of members can participate in the General Assembly of members, but do not have the right to vote.

4.3.3. Student and post-doctoral members must be QNJPI members in good standing to be eligible for QPRN support programs. Registration implies mentioning the regular member who is supervising the student.

4.3.4. Partner members have the same obligations and privileges as regular members in the QPRN governance and are actively involved in QPRN activities. Through a close collaboration with a regular member, they may benefit from financial support from the QPRN.

4.3.5. All QPRN members, regardless of status:

- Receive QPRN communications;
- Contribute to QPRN vitality;
- Commit to collaborate in the QPRN's planning and evaluation activities by providing the information requested by the QPRN;
- Acknowledge QPRN's contribution in their publications and communications when they receive financial or other support from the QPRN;
- Commit to respect the policies of the Fonds de recherche du Québec (e.g., Policy for the responsible conduct of research, Open access policy).

5. Funding rules

5.1 Funding criteria

5.1.1. Any request for financial support by the QPRN will be evaluated by a committee of peers formed for this purpose.

5.1.2. Support requests will be evaluated according to the scientific criteria in effect at the Fonds de recherche du Québec and according to the following criteria, inherent to the very concept of the Network:

- Predictable potential for scientific productivity;
- Reasonable demonstration of the effort to obtain subsidies from other available sources;
- Financial contribution of the community or the researcher to the project;
- Interdisciplinary and multicentric collaboration.

5.2 Special considerations

5.2.1. Some special considerations are applicable beyond mere scientific excellence to achieve all of the QPRN's objectives:

- Support the emerging sectors designated by the QPRN;
- Support sectors or objectives designated as priorities by the QPRN;
- Ensure continuity in the long-term objectives of the QPRN;
- Helping early career researchers at the beginning of their careers.

5.3 Rules and procedures for granting

5.3.1. Grants endorsed by the QPRN are subject to financial availability and the rules permitted by the grants that the QPRN obtains from the Fonds de recherche du Québec and QPRN partners.

5.4 Progress reports

5.4.1. Any grant of funds implies on the recipient's part the implicit acceptance to produce a final scientific report, or any progress report required, as well as to mention the financial support of the QPRN in all publications of research work made possible through this support, all interviews, all scientific or general public presentations.

5.4.2. These reports are submitted to the Management Committee.

5.4.3. These reports are also used to assess the scientific performance of the teams and the QPRN.

5.5 General rules

5.5.1. A grant obtained through QPRN constitutes by right a grant known as "obtained by committee of Peers".

5.5.2. The intellectual property of the discoveries belongs to the responsible researchers, each subject to the rules of the institution where they are employed.

5.5.3. Any amount awarded by the QPRN should be spent within the QPRN's fiscal year. A single request to extend the use of funds can be made to the Management Committee. Any amount not spent beyond this one-year period (if granted) must be returned to the QPRN.

5.5.4. Responsibility for monitoring compliance with good research conduct rules (financial management, ethics rules, etc.) is assigned to the institution to which the researcher is attached.

5.5.5. All publications resulting from this QPRN-funded project must be made immediately open access and distributed under an open license per the Fonds de recherche du Québec Open Access Policy 2022. It is possible to publish in a journal offering immediate open access or to make the accepted version of your article available on your institutional repository. As an adherent of Plan S, the Fonds de recherche du Québec does not support the "hybrid" publication model (journals offering both paid and free options). However, transformative journals are accepted under certain conditions. To find out for which journals open-access publication costs can be covered by a QPRN grant, please consult this tool.

6. Conflict resolution

The only appeal mechanism provided at QPRN at any time is a written complaint to the QPRN co-directors to be taken into consideration at the next regular meeting of the Management and/or Board Committee.