



Heather Prior
Data Analyst

MCHP INFORMS HEALTH, SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

In a five-year period, 37 percent of Manitoba's citizens were diagnosed as having a mental illness. As a result, one in 10 physician visits and one in 10 hospitalizations were related to mental illness. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (MCHP) spotted that trend using SAS®. What makes the finding important is that it highlighted the need to examine resources and program delivery throughout the Canadian province.

Business Issue

Support the development of policy, programs and services that maintain and improve the health of Manitobans.

Solution

SAS® identifies trends of diseases, service use, and quality indicators, over time, in the population.

Benefits

Findings that point to areas that need further attention to ensure the Ministry of Health has the evidence it needs to make policy decisions.

"The research done at MCHP is an integral part of how healthcare is delivered in the province," says Heather Prior, MCHP Data Analyst. "We work collaboratively with Manitoba Health on our research studies to ensure the research is targeted to the appropriate area of need and that the findings are understood."

"Using SAS, some of the things we study are disease trends, service use, and quality indicators over time in the population. Through statistical analysis, we produce findings that point to areas that need further attention – like mental health services – to ensure the Ministry of Health has the evidence it needs to make policy decisions on program delivery."

MCHP – a research unit in the Department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba – has a mission to "conduct population-based research on health services, population and public health, and the social determinants of health. MCHP develops and maintains the comprehensive population-based data repository on behalf of the Province of Manitoba for use by the local, national and international research community. MCHP promotes a collaborative environment to create, disseminate and apply its research. The work of MCHP supports the development of policy, programs and services that maintain and improve the health of Manitobans."

That's why MCHP routinely conducts data analysis with SAS. It helps answer questions such as:

- Is your prescription right for you?

- What quality indicators can be used to measure care in nursing homes?
- Do where you live and how much you earn affect how well your child does in school?

By addressing such questions, MCHP provides healthcare insights about the types of treatments various population segments are receiving, probable outcomes and trends in general. MCHP relays its findings to the Manitoba Ministry of Health and regional health authorities.

"Because we have universal healthcare, cost is not an issue that keeps patients from seeking the care they need," Prior says. "We want to ensure that everyone in the province receives the same level of care. If the system is falling short, we can identify that so that the health authorities can do something about it."

An example of how program delivery has been influenced directly by the MCHP Mental Illness report is provided by Yvonne Block, Director, Mental Health, Addictions and Agency Relations, Manitoba Health:

"Our branch has specifically used it to work in four key areas: It is informing the Provincial Suicide Prevention Strategy; we are using it as further evidence for the need for a new mental health (and addictions) data system – and this is moving along," she says. "We have used it to pull together a planning group to look at current and future needs in the area of access to psychiatrists, and we are using it as

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further evidence of the need for collaboration between mental health and primary health-care initiatives.

“What stood out for me is how all health concerns are increased when there is a mental illness diagnosis. This is a piece that I pull out frequently in briefings and meetings.”

SAS® makes astonishing discoveries

Since 1970, the MCHP has analyzed up to 20 million pieces of information every year from 65 government, health and education databases that maintain characteristics about patients, doctors and health-related issues. After analyzing the data with SAS, MCHP is able to advise the government and healthcare agencies on a variety of subjects.

MCHP has a long history of using SAS for statistical analysis. MCHP began using SAS exclusively for its data analysis in 1981. SAS at that time was more useful and efficient than other applications for managing large-scale databases. Many key applications have been converted into SAS macros and most original data resources have been redesigned to function effectively with SAS.

Charles Burchill, Manager of Program and Analysis Systems at MCHP, was nominated for the 2006 SAS Customer Value Award and received an Honorable Mention. The SAS Customer Value Award was created to honor and reward an individual for their ongoing support in his/her local SAS community.



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