Practice-Based Learning & Research Landscape

Learning Health Systems and PBLRNs

A Learning Health System (LHS) collects information from practice and research and feeds it back to organizations and providers to enable continuous learning and improvement.

A Practice-Based Learning and Research Network (PBLRN) is a large group of primary care providers and organizations who share electronic practice data to a common database for health research and quality improvement. Members of a PBLRN collaborate in research, knowledge exchange, and solution-finding.

Ontario-Based Networks and Partnerships: INSPIRE-PHC and POPLAR

Innovations Strengthening Primary Health Care through Research (INSPIRE-PHC)

INSPIRE-PHC is a research and policy partnership that studies and supports new reforms, such as OHTs and virtual care. Its mission is to improve access to primary health care and integrate care across sectors. It is one of the member research centres of the Ontario SPOR Support Unit.

INSPIRE-PHC has strong patient engagement, works with policy and system leaders and hosts educational and capacity-building events. They are funded to support applied health care research that is informed and influenced by policymakers, patients, and other key stakeholders.

The Primary Care Ontario Practice-Based Learning and Research Network (POPLAR)

POPLAR is a PBLRN and it is a network of seven regional PBLRNs across Ontario.

POPLAR is building a province-wide data platform that will securely collect and de-identify practice data from millions of patient records and tens of millions of encounters from across Ontario. Over 1,000 family practices are already contributing data from over 1.8 million patients. POPLAR is also building dashboards and tools to support meaningful use of this data for Quality Improvement. The Ministry of Health is the primary funder with additional support from the OSSU and Ontario's Academic Departments of Family Medicine.

Federal Networks and Partnerships: CPCSSN, SPOR, PCRN

Canadian Primary Care Sentinel and Surveillance Network (CPCSSN)

CPCSSN is a partnership of primary care research networks across Canada. POPLAR and its seven member networks are all members of CPCSSN.

CPCSSN members collaborate in research, disease surveillance, and quality improvement.

Strategy for Patient Oriented Research (SPOR)

SPOR is a program of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). CIHR is Canada's federal funding agency for health research.

SPOR builds capacity for patient-oriented research and helps bring research findings to health care practice. It does this by directly funding research, providing training and access to data, and building partnerships among patients, providers, researchers, funders, and stakeholders.
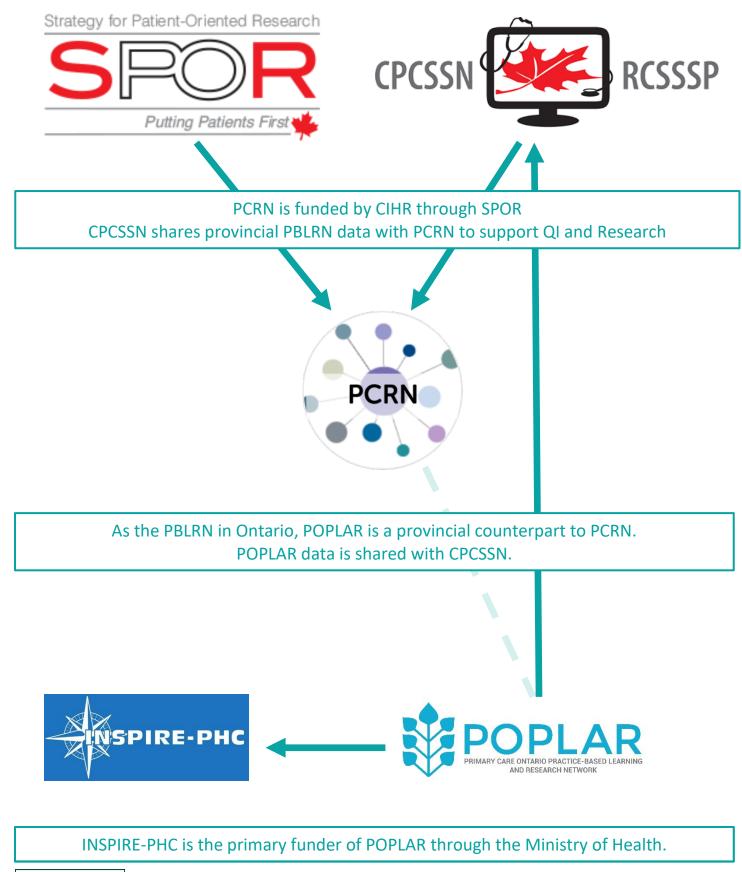
Primary Care Research Network (PCRN)

PCRN is a SPOR network funded by CIHR until April 2026. It is the successor to the SPOR Primary and Integrated Health Care Innovations Network (SPOR PICHIN).

PCRN will establish and grow provincial and territorial primary care PBRLNs and information systems. PCRN is also supporting several research projects to spread and scale innovations in PHC across the country.

POPLAR is an example of what each province will be creating within PCRN.

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PCRN is funded by CIHR through SPOR
CPCSSN shares provincial PBLRN data with PCRN to support QI and Research

As the PBLRN in Ontario, POPLAR is a provincial counterpart to PCRN.
POPLAR data is shared with CPCSSN.

INSPIRE-PHC is the primary funder of POPLAR through the Ministry of Health.

OSSU supports POPLAR and PCRN projects