

Research Exchange



"Totality in Waterbury Reservoir, VT"
by Joel Perkins

Winter turns to Spring as we celebrate Issue IV of our Quarterly Newsletter

Spring has sprung in northern New England (NNE), marked by the rare spectacle of a total solar eclipse on April 8th —its first since 1932- as captured on our cover. This celestial event mirrors the remarkable growth and innovation within the CO-OP.

In this season's issue of the Research Exchange, we celebrate not only our historical members who founded and shaped our network but also the vibrant present advancements. As we report a significant increase in member clinic site visits, we continue our

commitment to deeper engagement across our community.

Additionally, the blossoming of new grants and a surge in accepted conference submissions underscore the vitality and innovation that characterize our NNE practice and community-based research network.

Together, let's continue to nurture the seeds of innovation and collaboration in primary care throughout this time of renewal and new beginnings.

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2023 in Review

Message from the Executive Director,
Meagan Stabler, PhD, CHES

"New London Fishing Hole" by Max Isley

As we reflect on 2023, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the strides we've made together. This past year has been one of significant achievement and growth for the CO-OP, and as your Executive Director, I am thrilled to share some of our key successes and outline our ambitious plans for the future.

In 2023, we focused heavily on strengthening internal operations and capacity building, while enhancing communication and member engagement. We expanded our leadership team, while retaining our national expert consultants Drs. Don Nease, Jack Westfall, and Connie Van Eeghen. We hosted two strategic planning retreats, where we updated our Mission, Vision, and Value statements and outlined our five-year strategic plan to guide 2024-2028 activities. Additionally, we launched our Learning Tour and practice site survey across northern New England to re-engage current members, welcome new members, and gather invaluable insights into the barriers and facilitators our members face when engaging in practice-based research (see page 7). This work reinforces our commitment to membership engagement and relationship building that underpins successful PBRNs.

With 2024 already underway, we are poised to build on last year's successes. In Spring 2024, we submitted 14 abstracts (posters, oral presentations, workshops, and a forum) to two national conferences. See page 6 to review our recent grant submission and project management activities. We are growing our fruitful collaboration with NNE CTR and the NNEST-PC, which is a new initiative between Dartmouth Health's Department of Community and Family Medicine and The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice.

We are also rolling out our five-year strategic plan that focuses on membership engagement, research support, fiscal sustainment, and policy development. The beauty of our network lies in the collective expertise and vision of its members. Your involvement in the execution of our strategic plan is not just welcomed—it's encouraged. Look out for upcoming communications inviting you to contribute towards our shared goals.

As we continue to reach new heights, it is crucial that we remember and celebrate our origins. Established in 1972, our research network has thrived thanks to the dedication of our founding members. As we approach the 45th Annual Meeting focused on "Effective and Equitable Whole-person Care", we are launching a member spotlight series to celebrate the CO-OP's pivotal figures, setting the stage for the future by honoring our past.



Meagan Stabler, PhD, CHES

Historic Member Spotlight

John Kirk, who has always been known as Jack, was born, raised, and resided in Oak Park, Illinois (on the Western border of Chicago) until going off to Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island. Jack then attended Cornell Medical School (AOA) where he entered his medical residency in Internal Medicine. While his first year of residency was attended at the University of Chicago, Jack transferred to Dartmouth to finish out his residency years. After residency, Jack was Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Preventative Medicine and was off to Iceland from 1974-1976 to serve in the US Navy.



John "Jack" Kirk, MD (He/Him)

Jack returned to the US as faculty at Dartmouth Medical School (DMS) in the Department of Community and Family Medicine (CFMed) as an Assistant Professor. Jack later became an Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Family Medicine while practicing Internal Medicine at New London Hospital (NLH) until his retirement in 2021. Jack also trained in Palliative/Hospice Care, serving as Hospice Director for our Lake Sunapee Region VNA, a nursing home in New London, and Woodlawn Care Center for many years.

Q

Can you share with us the story behind your decision to join the NNE CO-OP PCBRN (the CO-OP)?

As the founding director of the CO-OP, I transitioned from this role in 1977 to clinical work at New London Hospital (NLH), continuing my involvement with Dartmouth Medical School and the Department of Community and Family Medicine. Although I was board-certified in internal medicine, I always considered myself a primary care clinician. Over time, my practice predominantly centered around geriatric care as I continued to care for patients I had known for many years. I retired from clinical practice in 2021 but remain active on the NLH Board of Directors. I've been deeply involved with the CO-OP to enhance rural primary care and strengthen medical systems in these communities until about five years ago.

A

Q

Could you highlight some key contributions or milestones you are particularly proud of within the CO-OP?

It is gratifying watching the growth and strength of our region's rural healthcare system, with so much credit due to the Department of Community and Family Medicine's programs, including so prominently, the CO-OP. The evolution of Dartmouth Health owes much to our department's contributions over the years, helping to bring our region's health system together.

A

"Mount Sunapee, in the Spring"
by Zoe Daudier



Q

Can you talk about a significant challenge you faced as a founding member and how you and the team overcame it? What was the lesson learned?

A

The historical lack of coordination in the healthcare system, coupled with a general disinterest in rural practice within American medicine, underscored the need to better equip clinicians for this challenge. At the time, the origins of Family Medicine as a discipline were just beginning within Dartmouth. Through collaborations at Dartmouth, a new movement began in which “Family Medicine” was added to talks between the Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics in addressing the “Rural Health Care Problem” which is where the “Dartmouth CO-OP Project” (NNE COOP PCBRN now) was born.

Q

Reflecting on the CO-OP’s journey from its founding to where it stands today, how do you feel the CO-OP has impacted its members and the broader rural northern New England community? Can you share a specific instance or story that illustrates this impact?

A

The Department of Community and Family Medicine prioritized attracting primary care clinicians to rural areas through teaching, research, and partnerships with Dartmouth medical students, residents, and trainees, a novel approach in large healthcare systems in the 1970’s. This approach not only retained clinicians in rural areas, but also encouraged trainees to return to rural practices. Collaborative clinical research in primary care bolstered unity among academic centers, rural clinical teams, and communities, enhancing the healthcare system’s cohesion. Ultimately, I think Dartmouth Health’s success stems from the department’s groundwork in the formation of the CO-OP which has made me feel so connected to my rural healthcare colleagues of northern New England over the years.

Q

As we look to the future, what are your aspirations for the CO-OP? Are there any new initiatives, projects, or areas of focus that you are excited about or think are crucial for the CO-OP’s continued growth and relevance?

A

I think there is a crucial need for the CO-OP to explore the current advancing technological innovations in medicine like AI. While increasing technology advances what we can do for many patients and illnesses, some technological advances threaten to lessen the important human element in healthcare. Will technology, including AI, overshadow the vital role of human empathy in addressing complex patient needs? Future research into patient experiences, concerns, and the impact of technological changes on primary care relationships, could be a significant area of focus for us. Ensuring providers prioritize genuine care over administrative tasks like electronic records are pivotal. We should focus on maintaining the human connection amid the rise of technology is paramount as we advance in healthcare.

Review of the 44th CO-OP Annual Meeting

This year's 44th Annual Meeting of the NNE CO-OP PCBRN was truly remarkable, with a record-breaking 133 attendees from 25 institutions across six states gathering to delve into the theme of "Revitalizing Primary Care."

The event kicked off with an engaging keynote by Dr. Kevin Grumbach from the University of California, San Francisco on Revitalizing Primary Care. Dr. Grumbach stayed for a chat with students the next morning and attended our conference to see all the great research our members presented throughout the weekend. The momentum continued with Dr. Joshua White from Gifford Medical Center leading a Saturday morning plenary and participating in one of the two enlightening panel sessions we hosted.

Our agenda was packed with over 40 speakers breaking our previous records, including 16 lightning talks, 16 oral presentations, and two workshops across Saturday and Sunday morning. This year, we hosted two panel sessions: one featured four clinicians from diverse medical professions, and the other brought together medical students and residents. Both panels delved into innovative strategies for revitalizing primary care in Northern New England, sparking lively discussions that seamlessly transitioned into our Brainstorming session.

The CO-OP Annual Meeting record-breaking didn't just stop at the speakers and attendee numbers but carried on with our networking events reaching new heights through unprecedented turnouts. Our Friday game night overtook the venue's tavern seating and spawned an impromptu second game night on Saturday. Even our traditional sunrise swim resulted in a higher-than-normal turnout this year, completed with a few snow angels before dipping into the outside pool. Perhaps the most notable record was the number of posters presented, that is 37, prompting us to consider adding a second poster session for our 2025 Annual Meeting.

As the weekend closed out, I was filled with joy to hear the positive feedback from many of our attendees praising the dynamic discussions and the seamless organization by our dedicated volunteers and staff. We look forward to exceeding the high bar set by our 2024 Annual Meeting, as planning our 2025 Annual Meeting begins. I hope you will join us on January 24-26, 2025 at the Grand Summit Hotel at Attitash in Bartlett, New Hampshire for our 45th Annual Meeting in which we explore Whole Healthcare.

- Troi Perkins, MEM, MF
Conference Director, NNE CO-OP PCBRN





Collaboration, Dissemination, Presentation

by Troi Perkins, MEM, MF
Research Consultant

The CO-OP's research momentum continues throughout the year, supporting ongoing projects across diverse topics like Primary Care Burnout and Opioid Prescribing Patterns. We've led or co-led eight grant submissions in the past 12 months and currently manage 10 active projects.

We also continue to expand our collaborations by connecting with PBRNs across the country and local entities like the Alliance of Climate and Health at Dartmouth and the NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action, in order to foster a cohesive research community.

As a result of our most recent Brainstorming Session in the 44th Annual Meeting, we are spotlighting three evolving

research workgroups:

ADHD Playbook

Dr. Brooke McLaughlin's presentation illuminated strategies for ADHD care in children, focusing on diagnosis, standard care, and educational resources for clinicians and parents about the ADHD Playbook. Contact: [Paula](#).

Climate Health

Formed after our 2023 meeting, this group explores the intersection of climate health and primary care. Initiating with a well-attended meeting right after Earth Day, we're now planning to delve deeper into potential research topics and collaborations. For additional details or to join, contact [Troi](#).

Post Fracture Osteoporosis

This group examines post-fracture osteoporosis care and the use of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program data to enhance pain management in chronic pain patients. Contact: [Paula](#).

In addition to our ongoing research, we are also excited to share a couple of our members' recent publications that exemplify the CO-OP's impactful research:

Arvind Suresh, et al. explored the [impact of COVID-19 on food insecurity in rural primary care settings](#), as detailed in Family Practice (2023).

Shaun Golding, et al. focused on [enhancing lung cancer screening in rural areas through a human-centered design](#), published in the American Journal of Medical Quality (2023).

These studies underscore our commitment to addressing critical health issues in rural communities. You can join us in creating impactful research that engages practicing clinicians in ME, NH, and VT by [submitting a research intake form](#) to us or reaching out directly to [CO-OP email](#).

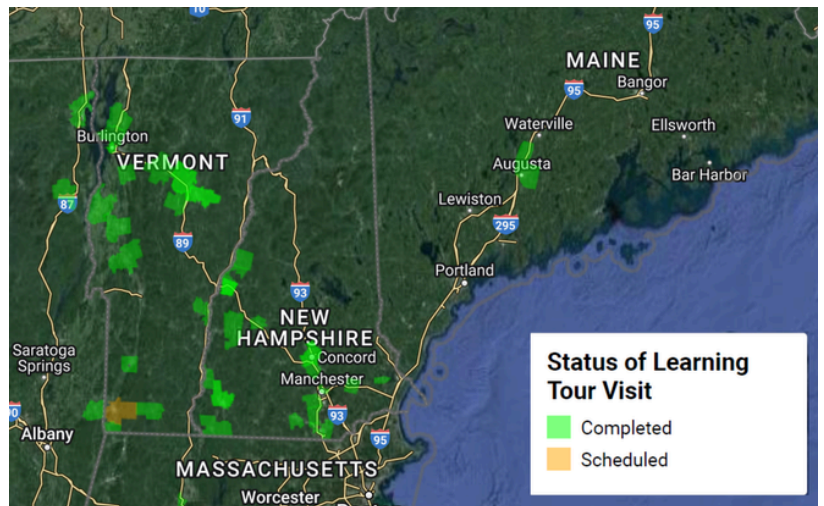
Beep, Beep! CO-OP Learning Tour Check-In Ahead!

by Paula Hudon, DNP, RN
Research Project Manager

No bumps on this road trip, just a smooth ride across our NNE region. Thank you to all the clinics and providers that have welcomed us since we launched the Learning Tour in October 2023. Our visits to 20 primary care locations enabled us to engage with over 150 clinicians, raise awareness about the CO-OP, and gather information on members' research needs and interests.

This effort also yielded 65 unique site surveys, each packed with information that steer us toward successful research opportunities in 2024 and beyond! We are always ready to hit the road, virtual or in-person, to continue learning from our network. [Invite us](#) to bring the Learning Tour to a practice location near you!

NNE CO-OP PCBRN Learning Tour Map



NNE CO-OP PCBRN MEMBER BENEFITS

STUDY RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of practices, providers, and patients

NETWORKING

Network with researchers, clinicians, administrators, organizations, and communities with similar interests

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Research support services (e.g., Institutional Review Board (IRB) consultation, proposal and manuscript, etc.)

STAFF RESOURCES

Staff resources to facilitate research and quality improvement (QI) projects across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont

BECOME A MEMBER & UPDATE YOUR PROFILE



SCAN HERE!

Upcoming Conferences



Continued Learning

The CO-OP has staff engaged in various workgroups across the Northeast as a way to increase continued learning and awareness of opportunities available through partner organizations. This helps to provide more members with additional resources and networking opportunities.

Here is a list of upcoming seminars and talks provided by those partnering organizations:

- May 1: TSLCA Inclusion Summit, Virtual (9:00-12:15 EST)
- May 3. Vermont Foodbank Hunger Action Conference: Getting to the Root of Hunger, Together, Killington, VT
- May 7-8: Dartmouth Women's Care Health Symposium, NH
- June 17-18, NAPCRG PBRN Annual Meeting, Reston, Virginia
- November 6-7, 2024 NERHA Annual Conference, Groton, CT
- November 14-15, VNPA 2024 Annual Conference, Stowe, Vermont

- **May 8, 12:10-12:55 PM**, Department of Community and Family Medicine Grand Rounds, Kramer Lecture "Trauma Informed Care for Practicing Clinicians" by Rebecca Kasper, MD, MPH, MSCP
- **May 8, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**, NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action. "Environmental Justice and Health", by Semra Aytur, PhD, MPH (Virtual)
- **May 23, 8:00 AM - 3:15 PM**, NH Health Equity Summit: Achieving Health Equity for All, Church Landing, Meredith NH
- **June 3: 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**, NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action. "Climate Informed Pediatric Care" by Cheryl Anderson, MD





At the NNE-CTR, we connect people with the tools and funding needed to make a difference in the health of our communities. Our members form a wide network of scientists, clinicians, community leaders, public health officials, patients, and more who are dedicated to developing innovative solutions to the specific public health challenges of our region. As a member of the NNE-CTR, you'll have access to all our resources, services, events, and funding opportunities. We invite you to become part of the solution. If you have ideas, goals, or even questions on health research in Maine, Vermont, or New Hampshire, this is the place for you. Our network is free to join, free to access, and free to engage. We look forward to learning with you and improving the health of our communities together.

Member Benefits

- Access to the national network of **IDeA centers** & programs
- Bi-directional **mentoring**
- **Community engagement** experts
- **Exclusive events** and **news**
- **Funding** opportunities
- **Navigation Services**
- Networking with experts across our region
- Access to NNE-CTR Core Services
- **Professional Development**
- **State-of-the-art technologies**
- And much more!

Our members are supported by our expert teams of senior faculty, staff, and students across Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. We are dedicated to helping you achieve your health and research goals.

Become a Member!

Membership is free. All NNE-CTR members have access to our services and support. [Learn more about NNE-CTR membership](#) and join today.

