

The Housing & Health Equity Cohort (HHEC)

A longitudinal patient cohort to study health outcomes, system navigation, and equity impacts of relocation for health care

Summative overview and rationale

Having a longitudinal cohort of patients required to relocate to Vancouver for healthcare provides the opportunity for rigorous data collection to understand the intersection between housing, financial burden, cultural displacement, and health access. These valuable data reflect system pressures *and their impact on vulnerable populations*. This will allow us to track the impact of systemic changes over time (e.g., the role of affordable accommodation on health care compliance, health outcomes and system costs). This contributes to building evidence to inform more sustainable infrastructure by integrating lived experience into health system improvement.

Structure and data collection

The cohort will be inclusive of all patients who relocate to the Hotel of Hope in Vancouver. Voluntary recruitment will occur on admission, so data can be tracked from initial exposure. Data collection streams will include the following:

- Demographics and health context (age, diagnosis, home community, reason for relocation, family income)
Undertaken at enrollment
- Housing and financial burden (out of pocket costs, funding sources, debt incurred)
Collected at baseline and in 3-month intervals
- Health system navigation (number and coordination of appointments, delays, cultural needs met)
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Collected at 3-month intervals
- Health outcomes (procedure success, recovery trajectory, ER visits)
Collected at 3, 6, 12 and 24 months
- Wellbeing and experience (mental health status, cultural connection/disconnection, stress, family impact)
On discharge through survey and qualitative interviewing

- Accommodation experience (comfort, accessibility cultural safety)

Exit survey

The creation of a system feedback loop

Data collected through the Hotel of Hope will be aggregated and reported annually to the Ministry of Health, First Nations Health Authority/Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, system partners and used internally to inform iterative policy adjustments, program refinements and future infrastructure planning. With appropriate ethical safeguards, the rich dataset will also be made available to researchers with a commitment to reducing health disparities and advancing health equity.

Anticipated research themes arising from the data

These data will provide the opportunity to understand and document key themes including

- The relationship between housing stability and health outcomes
- The effectiveness of system support and navigation
- Cost savings of dedicated patient housing versus hospital bed use of hotel rental
- Impacts of culturally safe environments on Indigenous patient health and wellbeing
- Family and caregiver stress and financial burden

Funding and Benefits

Initial funding will be built into the operational budget for the Hotel of Hope to represent the key role these data will play in system improvement. It is anticipated additional funding will be secured through leveraged opportunities (such as Canadian Institutes of Health Research or Vancouver Foundation).

The proposed research cohort, supported by a secure digital platform and integrated with hospital EMRs where possible, will create real-time evidence for rural health equity policy and budgeting. It will also ensure the inclusion of patients, families and other care providers to be active participants in system change and provide the data underscoring further developments of the HH initiative.