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Laurier Canada Research Chair to fill void in healthcare system evaluation for low- and middle-income countries

WATERLOO – What happens to that file folder of personal information after a doctor's visit? In Canada, the information can be used to analyze how health programs work and to inform policies to improve health system performance. Wilfrid Laurier University's **Karen Grépin**, an associate professor of Health Sciences who was recently appointed as the **Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Global Health Policy and Evaluation** (Tier 2), would like to see these data used for the same purpose in low- and middle-income countries.

"Currently, it's very difficult to evaluate health programs in these countries because we don't know where the data's strengths and weaknesses are, what questions it's good at answering and what information can be relied upon to be evaluated, analyzed and used to inform health policies in those countries," said Grépin.

Within the last decade, there has been a dramatic shift in how health system data is collected in low- and middle-income countries. Collecting health-related information is a significant step, but there is still much that is not known about its accuracy, which means it isn't used for research. Grépin is hoping to find a way to properly validate the existing data, possibly transforming how these countries can evaluate programs and policies to learn how to improve health systems.

"This CRC appointment will not only enable me to conduct this research, but will also solidify a global health research group that will attract talent to Laurier to focus on these global health issues," said Grépin. "I also hope that internationally, by appointing a CRC in this research area, Canada is demonstrating its commitment to global health policy."

"Karen's tremendous leadership will further establish Laurier as a hub for international health sciences research," said **Robert Gordon**, vice-president: research. "Her research program will significantly contribute to the improvement of health systems globally."

Grépin's previous research has explored whether people use formal health services, especially in the context of maternal and child health programs. Through the CRC position, Grépin's research will transition to find ways to measure how people use health services and better understand how data from routine health information systems can be used to answer important questions policy makers are facing throughout the world.

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