Community Curling Clubs are a Vehicle of Empowerment for Women in Rural Areas.

**Background**
Rural women are often placed at a disadvantage as options for meeting the burden of maintaining health and wellbeing are more limited, especially in Canadian winters.

**Participants**
52 women & girl curlers throughout rural areas in Canada studied over 4 years.

**Methodology**
Participants were invited to use cameras to capture images that reflected their views on curling (“photo-voice”). Pictures were then developed and used to generate focus group discussions.

**Emergent Themes**
- **Self-care**: Managing not only physical health, but elements of social and mental health as well, was a dominant theme both in participants’ pictures and their discussions with us.
- **Social Connection**: Participants used clubs as a venue for socialising. Curling clubs are often one of only a few, if not the only, available spaces for adults to exercise and socialise during the winter in small communities (Mair, 2009).
- **Community Care**: Often the only organised winter activity, participants viewed clubs as community hubs. Participants also clearly saw themselves as playing an essential role in working to support and sustain their clubs, through hours of volunteering, fundraising and taking on leadership positions within the clubs.

**Conclusion**
These findings provide a foundation for generating insights into the role of sport in the ‘making’ of health and wellbeing for communities in rural areas. In this case, curling represents one platform upon which women make individual and community health and wellbeing.