



Michael Smith Foundation for
Health Research

President's Quarterly Report

Update on MSFHR activities from Dr. Aubrey Tingle

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Latest News

Infrastructure Review prompts interim award extensions

MSFHR's Board of Directors has approved interim award extensions for infrastructure programs that have application or renewal deadlines in fall 2007 or spring 2008.

This measure is necessary for MSFHR to complete consultations and planning for changes to our infrastructure programs in response to high level recommendations from an external review panel.

These recommendations were received by our Board in February 2007. The challenge now is to transform our programs in accordance with the recommendations, while maintaining aspects that have provided value. It's a complex task that will set the direction for the Foundation over the next five to eight years. MSFHR has struck a task force and a Board-led Steering Committee to assist with the community consultations and planning process.

Preliminary recommendations are expected to come forward for approval by the MSFHR Board at its November 2007 meeting.

BC Ethics Harmonization Initiative underway

MSFHR has agreed to facilitate a BC-wide process for exploring opportunities and stakeholder interest in developing a more effective, coordinated provincial approach to ethical approval of research involving human subjects. The project was initiated at the request of provincial health research stakeholders, with the endorsement and support of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Advanced Education.

A Task Force has been struck to provide MSFHR with advice on the initiative, and a three-stage environmental scan is now underway. It includes a scan of existing mechanisms and structures across BC; a review of harmonized ethics processes and structures in other jurisdictions (provincial, national and international); and a survey of BC researchers about key barriers and concerns relating to processes for ethics review. This fall, MSFHR will convene a workshop involving representatives from key BC health research institutions and organizations to receive the results of the environmental scans, hear from expert speakers, and discuss options for a more coordinated approach to ethics approval. MSFHR will distribute a report on the outcomes of this work in spring 2008.

Nursing Research Initiative launches

The BC Ministry of Health has provided \$8 million to MSFHR to support broad health services research related to the nursing workforce and associated policy initiatives. Terms of reference were approved by the MSFHR Board for a Nursing Research Advisory Council, representative of the nursing research and practice community. Co-chaired by Dr. Lynn Stevenson, Chief of Professional Practice and Nursing at VIHA, and Dr. Pamela Ratner, MSFHR Senior Scholar and Professor of Nursing at UBC, the Council met for the first time in July to develop the vision and articulate the goals and values that will guide its work.

The Council is charged to develop recommendations regarding strategic and funding priorities to build capacity for and to undertake applied research focused on issues related to professional nursing practice environments, nursing education, nursing workforce and related service and program initiatives in the BC health system. Once formulated, the recommendations will be presented for approval by the MSFHR Board of Directors.

Regular updates on the initiative will be available on the MSFHR website, starting in September 2007.

MSFHR facilitates BCHLA project evaluation

MSFHR's growing reputation as an independent, arm's length facilitator is reflected in a new agreement with the BC Healthy Living Alliance (BCHLA) — an agreement that will see MSFHR facilitate evaluation of BCHLA-funded projects to demonstrate and quantify the impact of their initiatives. BCHLA is a provincial coalition of organizations working to improve the health of British Columbians by promoting physical activity, healthy eating and living smoke-free. Members include the BC Lung Association; the BC Pediatric Society, the BC Recreation and Parks Association; the Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division; the Canadian Diabetes Association; the Dietitians of Canada, BC Region; the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon; the Public Health Association of BC; and the Union of BC Municipalities.

BCHLA is funded through ActNow BC, a partnership-based, cross-ministry health and wellness initiative that promotes healthy living choices to improve the quality of life for all British Columbians.

MSFHR managed an RFP process to select an Evaluation Leader who will direct efforts to design and implement evaluation of BCHLA's funded projects. Following a review and recommendations by an eight-member External Expert Advisory Panel last month, MSFHR and BCHLA have confirmed the selection of the Vancouver office of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

HSPRSN issues Status Update

In June, the Health Services & Policy Research Support Network issued an update on a Task Force struck this spring to develop recommendations for future directions of HSPRSN programs. Recommendations related to program objectives and to the Health Authority Capacity Building and Investigative Teams have been referred to MSFHR to inform the Foundation's planning for closer integration between HSPRSN infrastructure programs and the MSFHR Institutional and Research Unit programs as recommended by the MSFHR Infrastructure Review. The HSPRSN Steering Council will revisit the remainder of the Task Force recommendations once the MSFHR process defines how the integration will be managed.

New member for HSPRSN Steering Council

MSFHR's Board of Directors has approved a new member of the Steering Council for HSPRSN. Dr. Steven Shechter is Assistant Professor, Sauder School of Business, Operations & Logistics Division, UBC. Dr. Shechter is also Conference Chair for this month's Operating on Health Care: An Operations Research Symposium, at UBC.

MSFHR congratulates award recipients

Six awards for Research Unit and Team Start-Up

At the end of May, MSFHR announced the successful applicants to its Research Unit and Team Start-Up Infrastructure Awards. Two groups were approved for 2007 Research Unit Awards; both have three to 10 qualified health researchers. For the 2007 Team Start-Up Awards, four applicants were approved for funding.

49 Career Investigator Awards

On June 1, MSFHR announced the 49 health researchers who have qualified for funding through its 2007 Career Investigator Awards. Twenty-four were successful in the Senior Scholar category, and 25 in the Scholar category. Eleven applicants who qualified as Senior Scholars, previously held MSFHR scholar awards.

Trainee event highlights a bright future for BC

BC's most promising health research trainees were in the spotlight on June 6. That's when MSFHR joined with BC's health research community to acknowledge the 170 graduate students and post doctoral fellows approved for funding in the 2007 Research Trainee Awards competition, at an investment of \$8.6 million. Special guests included representatives from MSFHR's funding partners, as well as Dr. Michael Smith's three adult children - Tom, Ian and Wendy Smith. View photos from the event and listen to speeches by seven award recipients.

Update on deadlines for fall competitions

- Trainee LOI - October 15, 2007
- Trainee Full - November 15, 2007
- Career LOI - October 30, 2007
- Career Full - November 30, 2007
- Team Start-up - November 15, 2007 (guidelines will be revised to reflect a new one-stage process: full application only, no preliminary application).
- Team Planning - November 15, 2007

MSFHR People

MSFHR Board Vice-Chair recognized

Congratulations to Dr. Bruce Clayman, who has been awarded the Canadian Association of University Research Administrators' Walter Hirschfeld Award for his significant contributions to Canada's research environment. A founding MSFHR board member, Dr. Clayman is currently serving as Vice-Chair.