



Michael Smith Foundation for  
Health Research

# President’s Quarterly Report

Update on MSFHR activities from Dr. John Challis

*December 10, 2008*

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## Latest MSFHR News

### ***MSFHR continues funding/mandate discussions with BC government***

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MSFHR continues to discuss with the BC government the details of our renewed mandate and funding for the next phase. As noted in previous updates to the community, to allow time for these discussions to run their course, new competition announcements are postponed until March 2009. However this postponement will not affect applicants' eligibility – those who would have been eligible for a fall 2008 competition will remain eligible for the next round.

Our discussions have been extremely positive, with government indicating strong support for MSFHR to continue its foundational work while expanding its scope of activities in the next phase. We look forward to engaging with the MSFHR community about the details of this work in the new year.

### ***Getting ready – MSFHR launches strategic planning process***

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In preparation for a renewed mandate, MSFHR has begun a multi-phase strategic planning process to gain additional input on future directions and activities. This involves:

- Internally, staff reviewing and evaluating current programs and initiatives as well as brainstorming on potential new areas of work (now through January 2009)
- A plenary session with staff and members of the MSFHR Research Advisory Council (December 2008)
- A preliminary Board of Directors retreat (January 2009)
- A multi-stakeholder engagement process - to discuss our renewed mandate and to learn from our stakeholder community how we can work together to address critical health and health system issues through research (March/April 2009)
- A final Board of Directors retreat (May 2009)

The outcome will be a shared vision and strategic plan to guide MSFHR in its next phase of work.

### ***Interactions hot off the press, on the website***

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The fall/winter issue of MSFHR's newsletter Interactions – with a special focus on rural and remote health research – was sent to stakeholders this week. This issue features 20 full pages of news, stories and photos – a tribute to the important work of health researchers in BC who are supported by MSFHR.

## **MSFHR people**

### ***Kathy Jang, Angela Todd***

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Two senior members of our Programs staff will be leaving the organization this month. Kathy Jang, Senior Director, Personnel, is retiring at the end of December, and Angela Todd, Senior Director, Infrastructure, is returning to Australia to be closer to her family. Both Kathy and Angela have played integral roles in the MSFHR operations, and their expertise and experience will be greatly missed. We thank them for their tremendous contribution to MSFHR as well as to BC's health research community, and wish them every success in their future endeavors.

### ***Michael Hayden***

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MSFHR congratulates Dr. Michael Hayden on being named Canada's Health Researcher of the Year by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The \$500,000 award, presented in Ottawa on November 19, recognizes outstanding commitment, innovation, creativity, achievement and leadership in health research. Dr. Hayden has received more than \$3 million in awards from MSFHR to support his research, including more than \$2 million to support a research unit focused on neurodegenerative diseases, and a provincial network focused on clinical genetics. Twenty trainees have received awards amounting to more than \$1 million to train under Dr. Hayden's supervision.

### ***Max Donelan***

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Kudos to MSFHR 2008 Scholar and SFU biomedical physiologist Dr. Max Donelan - his work on an innovative device that harvests energy from the motion of walking has been named among Time magazine's Best 50 Inventions of 2008. Dr. Donelan and his research team call their device the bionic energy harvester.

### ***Elaine Chong***

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Congratulations to Dr. Elaine Chong, recently named one of "Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100" by the Women's Executive Network. Dr. Chong was honoured in the "Future Leaders" category for women 30 years of age and younger. She received a MSFHR Post Doctoral Award in 2008 to further her research into factors underlying health service utilization patterns for cancer screening and hormone replacement use among Chinese immigrant women.

## **MSFHR Program News**

### ***Board approves parental leave for trainee award recipients***

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The MSFHR Board of Directors has approved the implementation of a six month paid parental leave policy for MSFHR-funded trainees. The leave is effective January 1, 2009. It can be taken by one parent, or, in the case that both parents are MSFHR trainees, it can be split. Award funding will be put on hold for the duration of the leave. Trainee award recipients will receive a notice with more details in the next few weeks.

### ***2008 Career Investigator and Team Start-up Awards***

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On November 4, 2008, MSFHR hosted an awards celebration event to recognize the successful applicants to the Career Investigator and the Team Start-up competitions.

## **BC Nursing Research Initiative (BCNRI) Update**

### ***Provincial meetings kick start nursing research network***

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Over the last two months, MSFHR held five meetings across the province – in Prince George, Kelowna, New Westminster, Vancouver and Victoria – to kick start planning for a provincial Nursing Health Services Research Network. The network is one of several initiatives approved for implementation through the MSFHR-sponsored BC Nursing Research Initiative, which is funded with an \$8 million grant from the Ministry of Health Services. A report on the five meetings and draft guidelines for network funding will be presented to the BCNRI Nursing Research Advisory Committee in January.

### ***Research database work underway***

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It's not easy to find out who is doing what in nursing health services research in BC. That's why BCNRI is exploring options for developing and maintaining a database on grant-funded and non-grant-funded research taking place in BC universities and health authorities. A survey was conducted in November to determine potential database contents, and a working group is analyzing the results and recommending next steps.

### ***Health authority nursing research facilitators***

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The BCNRI will also support a nursing research facilitator position in each health authority to build awareness of, and to support, practice-relevant health services nursing research. Facilitators will be responsible for developing and maintaining a research inventory and celebrating nursing health services research in their health authority. They will also work with the Nursing Health Services Research Network to develop an overall picture of research activities in the province and assist researchers in developing contacts and research activities. Guidelines for the position will be ready by February.

## **HSPRSN update**

### ***Two new members welcomed to HSPRSN steering council***

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The MSFHR Board of Directors approved two new appointments to the Health Services and Policy Research Support Network (HSPRSN) steering council. They are Dr. Owen Heisler, Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for the Vancouver Island Health Authority, and Dr. Morris Barer, Director, Centre for Health Services and Policy Research and Professor, School of Population and Public Health, UBC. The steering council plans and develops recommendations for the MSFHR Board on the development, implementation and evaluation of funding programs to achieve the aims of the Network.

### ***Request for proposals issued***

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MSFHR has issued a Request for Proposals to support planning for research to address health human resources research – a priority approved for funding through the HSPRSN. Proposals are requested from health researchers or organizations to undertake a literature review and synthesis to determine what knowledge and research capacity currently exists in relation to three health human resource priority themes (ways to better employ existing providers, development of new models of staffing, and development of new models of care). Deadline for RFP submissions: 4:00 pm, January 5, 2009.

## **Acknowledging our supporters**

### ***Reflections and heartfelt thanks***

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I wanted to offer a few personal perspectives after just six months at the helm of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research. First and foremost, I must thank Aubrey Tingle for the extraordinary foundation that he established for the renewed health research enterprise in BC. I have come to realize the great spirit of enthusiasm that he engendered amongst a very broad cross section of stakeholders, Board and staff, and the crucial relationships that he helped to establish with our key partner, the Government of British Columbia.

I have learned and seen first-hand that MSFHR has terrific working relationships across many Government Ministries and in particular with the Ministry of Health Services. On behalf of our Board and staff, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Government of British Columbia for its consistent and strong support during challenging times.

Coming here from Ontario, I already knew something of the powerhouse of scientific expertise that exists in BC. Over the past months I have been able to appreciate more fully the efforts already underway and the future opportunities for linking research to translational outcomes that will benefit our health care system and enhance healthcare delivery and its effectiveness across the province.

I've met with leaders of the Health Authorities, Universities, hospitals and Research Institutes and begun to establish linkages within the private sector and business communities. Each of these groups has a stake in the success of MSFHR, and we look forward to consulting further with each of these groups as part of our strategic planning process. Together, we will build a new MSFHR that is forward looking and strategic in predicting and responding to the needs of government and our communities. We will continue to initiate research programs but will also sustain excellent research,

whether that be through Nobel prize caliber investigation, in the spirit of Michael Smith, through a better way to deliver a diagnostic or treatment paradigm or through a new intra- or inter provincial network or platform that helps us conduct research more collaboratively and efficiently.

We are excited by the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. We welcome your ideas, input and help as we embark on our strategic planning, with a lens towards 2015. From all of us at MSFHR, our best wishes for the holiday season and many thanks indeed for your continued support.

John Challis  
President and CEO  
Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research