



Michael Smith Foundation for
Health Research

President’s Quarterly Report

Update on MSFHR activities from Dr. John Challis

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Latest MSFHR News

Message from the President and CEO

It is my pleasure to provide an update to the community on MSFHR activities since our last President's Quarterly Report in September. I would also like to take this opportunity, as we come to the end of 2009, to thank our supporters – the BC government and the healthcare and health research communities – for their continued support over the past year. No one would argue that it has been a difficult one, across the globe. The initial economic crash last fall turned out to be more far reaching than anticipated, and governments worldwide have been dealing with the fallout.

For MSFHR, it meant significant challenges over the last 12 months. Before the financial downturn MSFHR worked closely with the Government of British Columbia to develop a case for annualized funding. Due to the economic situation, we could not implement this approach in 2009. However, government confirmed its strong support for MSFHR through the allocation of \$15 million in year-end funding in April 2009, and a pledge for another \$15 million on or before April 15, 2010. Given BC's economic circumstances, this sent a clear signal that government values health research, and that it recognizes the significant role of MSFHR in building capacity for, and applying the results of, such research. We are grateful to government both for their financial support, and for their confidence in our organization.

As far as our immediate plans, the MSFHR Board, at its meeting on November 27, endorsed continuing existing awards to the extent possible within our current financial situation, while also ensuring that the Foundation has sufficient flexibility to work with government to apply research capacity for health and health system solutions. These actions, which are aligned with our Strategic Direction 2009 - 2015, are of course contingent upon receiving the \$15 million pledged to MSFHR from the Government of British Columbia on or before April 15, 2010. With direction from our Board and in consultation with the Ministry of Health Services, we are now developing a budget for fiscal 2010/11, and look forward to providing you with more details as they become available.

In the meantime, on behalf of our Board and staff, our best wishes for the holiday season. We look forward to working with you in 2010.

MSFHR Activities

The final tally: 79 new MSFHR trainees

Seven additional MSFHR trainee competition applicants were recently added to the initial list of awardees, bringing the total funded in our 2009 competition to 79. MSFHR was able to fund these additional highly ranked applicants because many of the initial awardees held other national, peer-reviewed funding, which reduced the total MSFHR commitment and freed up additional dollars.

Since 2001, MSFHR has funded more than 1,000 highly qualified graduate students (Master's & PhD) and post doctoral fellows to train on the job with leading researchers at BC universities and hospital-based research centres.

MSFHR partners support ten new trainees

MSFHR's trainee partnership program provides an opportunity for not-for-profit organizations, foundations, and other interested groups to jointly fund qualified applicants. Since 2002, 103 jointly-partnered awards have been supported through this program. We partnered with eight organizations to co-fund 10 trainees for the 2009 Trainee Award Competition. These partners, listed below, will contribute \$393,425 over the award terms.

- Canadian Cancer Society – BC & Yukon Region
- Canadian Foundation for Women's Health
- Child & Family Research Institute
- Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of Canada
- Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation
- Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)
- VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation
- WorkSafeBC

HSPRSN Steering Council endorses action on health human resource theme

The Health Services & Policy Research Support Network (HSPRSN) Steering Council met Wednesday November 18, 2009 to review recommendations for addressing the health human resources (HHR) research priority. The priority and recommendations for addressing it were derived in an extensive consultation process that included commissioning two scoping reviews. One was a literature review funded by HSPRSN to:

1. Determine the extent to which research over the last decade has addressed the impact of system and organization-level change and innovation on health human resources models related to staffing, service and practice model and deployment patterns.
2. The extent to which these HHR impacts have, in turn, influenced the key issues of staff satisfaction and behavior, addressing population and health needs and achieving better health outcomes.

A second scoping exercise jointly funded by HSPRSN and the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation focused on reviewing the literature on defining productivity within a health system context.

A key finding from both reviews: many innovations have and continue to take place in how health human resources are deployed in the health system; very few are documented or evaluated particularly with respect to their impact on health human resources and health outcomes.

Next Steps

The HSPRSN Steering Council endorsed four recommendations for action on the health human resources research theme:

- Document key innovations in health human resources deployment that have taken place in BC health authorities in the last five years to determine success factors and whether or not these innovations would be broadly applicable across the system;
- Identify key upcoming health human resource-related innovations and provide funding to assess their effects on health system efficiency and health outcomes;
- Identify knowledge gaps, and support primary research in these areas; and
- Leverage national initiatives/funding to address BC HHR research needs.

BC Nursing Health Services Research Network launched

The recently launched BC Nursing Health Services Research Network (NHSRN), part of the BC Nursing Research Initiative, is designed to link the academic, practice and policy communities and provide a mechanism for provincial planning and action.

BC Nursing Research Initiative (BCNRI) to launch four new funding programs in 2010

At their November 17 meeting, the Nursing Research Advisory Council endorsed guidelines for four new funding programs: national partnerships, commissioned research, investigative research team, and research projects (syntheses, demonstration projects, pilot/seed projects, or knowledge exchange projects). Programs will support research in priority areas established by the Ministry of Health Services-funded BCNRI, which is facilitated by MSFHR.

Implementation of new programs will be phased, starting with commissioning in early 2010. All programs will be fully operational on or before October 2010.

Other Health Research News

New corporation to replace Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research

The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR) is winding down its operations by the end of this year, to be replaced in January 2010 with Alberta Innovates—Health Solutions. AHFMR is one of ten organizations to be replaced by five Alberta Innovates divisions. MSFHR Board member Dr. David Dolphin (Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia, Vancouver) and former MSFHR President and CEO Dr. Aubrey Tingle (Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver) have been appointed as inaugural members of the Health Solutions Board.

MSFHR People

MSFHR Senior Scholar named one of Canada's 100 most powerful women

Dr. Fiona Brinkman, a 2001 MSFHR Scholar and 2007 MSFHR Senior Scholar, was named to the 2009 top 100 list of Canada's Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network, a Toronto-based professional development agency. She is a professor in SFU's molecular biology and biochemistry department and a pioneer in the emerging field of pathogen bioinformatics—the use of powerful computers to study DNA and protein sequences in bacteria that cause disease. Since starting her lab at SFU in 2001, she has attracted more than \$50 million in research funds, led or coordinated 16 major collaborative research projects, and received numerous accolades including spots on Canada's Top 40 Under 40 list and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's 2002 list of the world's top 100 innovators.

MSHFR Board member Karimah Es Sabar to join the Centre for Drug Research and Development

Effective April 2010, Karimah Es Sabar will join the Centre for Drug Research and Development (CDRD) as the Senior Vice President, Business and Strategic Affairs. Since 2005, Ms. Es Sabar has been President of LifeSciences BC.

MSFHR researcher develops new way of sequencing genomes

A research team co-led by MSFHR funded Senior Scholar Steven Jones has developed a new way to sequence genomes. The researchers are using the approach to advance knowledge about what causes mountain pine beetle infestations and cancer. The development appeared in a *Genome Biology* article.

Population Data BC: Expanding data access

The Population Data BC platform - one of the MSFHR-funded Technology Methodology Programs (TMPs) - has signed information sharing agreements that will expand the breadth of population health and health services data available to Canadian researchers for approved projects. The agreements were signed between the BC Ministry of Health Services (MoHS), the BC Vital Statistics Agency, and the University of BC (through Population Data BC).

MSFHR researcher receives Jonas Salk Award

MSFHR 2007 Senior Scholar Dr. Janice Eng was awarded the Jonas Salk lifetime achievement award for research that led to the development of a rehabilitation program that can dramatically improve recovery of arm function in stroke patients. The Jonas Salk Award is presented annually to a Canadian scientist, physician or researcher who has made a new and outstanding contribution in science or medicine to prevent, alleviate, or eliminate a physical disability.

MSFHR Board member Dr. Judith Hall honoured for community service

MSFHR Board member, clinical geneticist and pediatrician Dr. Judith Hall has received a UBC Alumni Achievement Award for Outstanding Faculty Community Service. A Professor Emerita of pediatrics and medical genetics at UBC, Dr. Hall volunteers at the International Pediatric Association, the Vancouver Foundation, the Medical Research Foundation of Canada, the US and Canadian Children's Miracle Networks, Genome Canada, and the Canadian Council of Academies as well as for the MSFHR Board.

Dr. Martin Schechter honoured for work on NAOMI project

MSFHR Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Martin Schechter has received the Norman E. Zinberg Award for his work on the NAOMI Project (North American Opiate Medication Initiative), a three-year-long clinical trial that investigated the benefits of medication-assisted therapy for people with chronic opiate addictions who have not benefited from other treatments. The story appeared November 10th in the Vancouver Sun.

Study links acetaminophen and asthma risk

MSFHR 2004 Distinguished Scholar and former member of the MSFHR Research Advisory Council, Dr. Mark FitzGerald co-authored a study that links acetaminophen use and asthma. The paper, published in the journal CHEST, was an analysis of 19 studies; results indicated evidence of increased asthma risk in children and adults given acetaminophen. This story appeared on the front page of the Vancouver Sun on November 10th, and was also picked up by Reuters.