



Michael Smith Foundation for
Health Research

President’s Quarterly Report

Update on MSFHR activities from Dr. John Challis

July 8, 2009

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Latest MSFHR News

Board Approves MSFHR Strategic Planning Framework

Following a six-month planning process that included an internal planning stage, two Board retreats, an online survey and extensive consultation with multi-sector stakeholders (15 meetings) and with existing and potential partners (26 meetings), the MSFHR Strategic Planning Framework has been approved in principle by the MSFHR Board of Directors. This document will guide implementation planning for the Foundation's next phase of development to 2015. It will be available in hard copy and posted on the website within the next several weeks.

Recognizing the challenges of the current economic environment, the Foundation's short term priority is to maintain our core personnel and infrastructure programs as these are key to retaining and capitalizing on the health research gains realized over the past eight years. We will continue to work closely with government to obtain the \$15 million originally committed to MSFHR in the February 2009 budget, and to plan for and achieve annualized funding for the Foundation when the economy rebounds. Guided by our strategic planning framework, MSFHR will scale-up quickly when this occurs.

Thumbs-up for Redesigned MSFHR Website

On May 1, 2009, MSFHR launched a redesigned website featuring improved navigation, new content and web tools that enable website visitors to place comments and share content. A new Features section figures prominently on the home page; it highlights stories and photos on accomplishments of our awards recipients. A survey on the new site was completed recently, indicating a high level of user satisfaction.

MSFHR at a Glance 2001 – 2008

MSFHR has updated its fact sheet. *MSFHR at a Glance 2001 - 2008*, provides an overview of Foundation funding from 2001 - 2008, with graphs and other information demonstrating the positive impact of health research on our health system and economy.

MSFHR takes the lead on Swine Flu (H1N1) Research Initiative

MSFHR is supporting BC to respond to a potentially more dangerous round of the H1N1 Swine Flu next fall. Led by Chief Scientific Officer Martin Schechter, the Foundation convened a working group of researchers, the Provincial Health Services Authority, and the Ministries of Health Services and Healthy Living and Sport to explore the options. The group met in late May to review what is known and unknown about H1N1 patterns of infection and what BC absolutely needs between now and autumn 2009 to prepare for the next flu season.

Following the meeting, MSFHR solicited proposals from the BC Centre for Disease Control for priority research projects that are BC-specific (i.e., would not be done elsewhere); could be completed quickly in advance of the next flu season; and are essential for informing BC's H1N1 vaccine delivery strategy this fall. Two proposals were received on June 8, 2009. MSFHR arranged an expedited peer review by experts from outside BC that confirmed one study designed to assess levels of immunity to H1N1 among various age groups in BC met the selection criteria. Co-funded by MSFHR and the Provincial Health Services Authority, the study got underway in early July.

Record Number of Applications for 2009 Trainee Competition

At the July 2, 2009 closing date, MSFHR had received 706 applications to the Trainee Awards competition launched May 4, 2009. Overall, the distribution of applications by research theme, award category, and Institution was similar to that of previous competitions. A new category this year is the MSFHR/FRSQ Exchange for Post Doctoral Fellows – three applications were received.

MSFHR Corporate Development and Partnership Initiatives

Memorandums of Agreement to hold MSFHR awards have now been signed between MSFHR and eight BC universities and the six Health Authorities. Among other activities, MSFHR's Corporate Development and Partnership Department is researching the need for and requirements of a clinical trials platform in the province and what role MSFHR could play. The Department is also exploring opportunities for international partnerships (e.g. Queensland, Singapore) and working with current trainee partners to confirm interest in the 2009 trainee partnership program as well as the potential for expanding these partnerships to other MSFHR programs/initiatives. A Memorandum has been signed with the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada, extending the trainee partnership program to include national foundations.

MSFHR Implements Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The MSFHR Analysis and Evaluation Department (A&E) led the development of a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Foundation that incorporates the Balanced Scorecard approach and the impact categories recommended by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. A&E is revising annual and end of grant reports to streamline reporting requirements and ensure consistency across programs and with the MSFHR Framework. An engagement and review strategy has been developed and award holders will be consulted in early fall on the revised reporting forms. A&E will produce a series of reports using current data holdings from annual and end of grant reports; most should be completed by late fall.

Special Initiative Updates

Health Services & Policy Research Support Network (HSPRSN) Extends Two Award Programs; Appoints New Co-Chair

At the recommendation of the HSPRSN Steering Council, the MSFHR Board of Directors approved award term extensions and bridge funding to support recipients of Health Authority Capacity Building and Investigative Team Awards for an additional six months (October 1/09 to March 31/10). Recipients will receive award letters with details specific to their award.

The Board also approved a Steering Council recommendation to appoint Dr. Steven Shechter as the Council's academic co-chair for a term of two years. Dr. Shechter is an Assistant Professor in the Sauder School of Business, Operations and Logistics Division and a Faculty Affiliate of the Centre for Health Care Management at UBC. He replaces Dr. Adrian Levy, who served four years on Council, the last two as academic co-chair. Dr. Levy, an MSFHR senior scholar, recently accepted a position as Head and Chief - Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University.

HSPRSN Moves Forward on Health Human Resources Research Priority

The final reports from two commissioned scoping exercises were completed in late June. One funded in partnership with Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) focused on definitions of health human resources productivity. A second funded solely by HSPRSN reviewed the literature on research addressing innovative ways to employ existing health care providers, new models of care and new models of practice. A small working group of Steering Council members will review the reports this summer and make recommendations at the September 2009 meeting regarding the next steps for developing a research funding program in this area.

HSPRSN Partnership Program Update

Eight BC applicants requested match funding from HSPRSN to apply to the spring 2009 CIHR – Partnerships for Health System Improvement (PHSI) operating grant competition (CIHR requires match funds as a condition of award). CIHR will announce the successful applicants in September 2009. A second PHSI competition is now underway and BC applicants have until September 15, 2009 to apply to HSPRSN for the required matching funds.

BC Nursing Research Initiative Marks Progress

Revised terms of reference as well as re-appointments and new appointments to the Nursing Research Advisory Council have been approved by the MSFHR Board. The appointments will take effect in November 2009 and include the re-appointment of Dr. Lynn Stevenson and Dr. Pamela Ratner as Co Chairs for one and two year terms respectively.

BC Nursing Health Services Research Network: A funding proposal was reviewed by an external formative review panel in June. The applicants have received panel feedback and are revising the proposal to address recommendations for improvements. Funding will be awarded once the panel confirms their recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.

Nursing Health Services Research Facilitators: Each BC Health Authority has applied for and been granted funding to support a Nursing Health Services Research Facilitator. Northern Health has hired their facilitator; the remaining five Health Authorities expect to fill the position this summer.

Research Funding Programs: Four additional programs have been endorsed for development: Research Projects, Research Teams, Partnership and Commissioning. Over the summer, staff will develop guidelines, budgets and implementation timelines for these programs for review by the Nursing Research Advisory Council at the October 8, 2009 meeting.

BCHLA Evaluation Project: Preliminary Results Anticipated in September 2009

MSFHR is facilitating the evaluation of several health promotion initiatives funded by ActNow BC and implemented by members of the BC Healthy Living Alliance. The initiatives are designed to deliver activities across the province in three key areas that underlie much of the chronic disease burden in BC: healthy eating, physical activity, and living smoke-free. Conducted by MSFHR's contractor, the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, the evaluation of seven initiatives is in the data collection phase (three healthy eating initiatives, one physical activity initiative, two tobacco initiatives, and the community capacity building initiative). Preliminary findings for some of the evaluation projects will be available in September 2009, with the project on track for delivering final reports in May 2010.

HPV Vaccine Project: Researchers Invited to International Conference

Supported by MSFHR, this project involves researchers at the Vaccine Evaluation Centre at the Child & Family Research Institute and the BC Centre for Disease Control. It is designed to determine the most cost-effective way to provide immunity to the Human Papillomavirus. Recently the Ministry of Health Services provided an additional \$39,000 to support phase two of a clinical trial to monitor the effectiveness of two doses of the vaccine, as opposed to the three currently in use. The project is due for completion in 2012. The research team has been invited to present on their work at the 2009 International HPV Conference.

MSFHR People

Sue Paish welcomed as Chair of the Vancouver Board of Trade

On June 18, 2009, MSFHR Board member Sue Paish was welcomed as the new chair of the Vancouver Board of Trade. During her speech, she listed health as her top priority, followed by engaging youth and establishing a legacy for the 2010 Winter Games.

Dr. Heather McKay receives Women of Distinction Award

At the Women of Distinction Awards event held on June 3, 2009 Dr. Heather McKay received the Health and Active Living award. Dr. McKay is an MSFHR Senior Scholar and a member of the 2003 Research Unit team Musculoskeletal Research Centre: New Coordinated Applications for Bone Health.

Dr. Sam Wiseman named to "Canada's Top 40 Under 40"

MSFHR Scholar Dr. Sam Wiseman was recently named a recipient of this prestigious national award. Dr. Wiseman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery at UBC, and is located at St. Paul's Hospital. He was the first surgeon in BC to receive an MSFHR Scholar Award.

Dr. Challis elected a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences

Dr. John Challis has been elected a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and will be inducted at a ceremony in Ottawa in September. Fellows of the Academy are selected on the basis of their demonstrated leadership, creativity, distinctive competencies and commitment to advance academic health sciences.