



Michael Smith Foundation for
Health Research

President's Quarterly Report

Update on MSHFR activities from Dr. John Challis

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Latest MSFHR News	2
Message from the President and CEO	2
MSFHR Activities	2
BC Ethics Harmonization Initiative Phase 2: Proposal due May 7, 2010	2
BC Nursing Research Initiative programs launched	2
MSFHR sponsors UBC medical student forum.....	3
MSFHR to administer cross-Canada human papillomavirus study	3
Health Services and Policy Research Support Network plans next phase	3
MSFHR focuses on partnerships.....	4
MSFHR People	4
Bill Barrable appointed CEO of SCI Solutions Network	4
Past MSFHR Research Advisory Council member receives BC Community Achievement Award.....	4
MSFHR-funded researchers receive grant from sanofi-aventis	4
MSFHR 2003 Scholar receives chair in cardiovascular disease prevention research	5
Discovery by MSFHR-funded researcher leads way for the treatment of aneurysms.....	5
MSFHR award recipients in the news.....	5
Awards for MSFHR people	5

Latest MSFHR News

Message from the President and CEO

It is my pleasure to bring you up to date on our activities since our last report in December 2009. Our biggest news, of course, was receipt of the previously-committed \$15m from the BC Government in late February. With this funding in hand, we were able to confirm continued support to our programs as follows:

- Scholars and Senior Scholar awards were extended to March 31, 2011 (or award end date, whichever is earlier).
- 2009 Trainee awards were extended for a total of 18 months guaranteed funding. (Earlier Trainee cohorts are fully funded.)
- Technology/Methodology Platforms were extended to March 31, 2011 at 70% of current award rate.
- Research Units Cohort 3 and 4 were extended to March 31, 2011 (or award end date, whichever is earlier) at 70% of current award rate.
- Team Start-up awards beginning in April 2008 were extended to March 31, 2011 at between 40-65% of the current award rate for their final year.

Unfortunately we were unable to launch renewal or new competitions during 2009/10 apart from the Trainee Awards program. However, despite the economic downturn, the BC Government has provided us with \$30 million: \$15m in 2009/10 and \$15m for 2010/11. We recognize this support as a very positive sign for the future of MSFHR as we continue to work with government to secure multi-year funding. As part of our work, we are supporting the Ministry of Health Services in the development of a provincial health research framework that encompasses capacity building as well as the application of that capacity to evaluate system-wide changes in how health care services are delivered. You will hear more about this work in the future.

In the meantime, I invite you to read on for updates on MSFHR activities and MSFHR people.

MSFHR Activities

BC Ethics Harmonization Initiative Phase 2: Proposal due May 7, 2010

In January, we issued a request for proposal (RFP) to develop a collaborative provincial human subject ethics review process in BC. The RFP was based on recommendations from a November 2007 workshop involving wide representation from BC's research ethics boards, institutional leaders and the research community. One proposal was invited from a team of BC organizations whose research ethics boards collectively conduct at least 80 percent of human subject ethics reviews in BC. The proposal is due May 7, 2010.

BC Nursing Research Initiative programs launched

Three new funding programs were launched in January through the BC Nursing Research Initiative, a research and capacity-building initiative supported by MSFHR with targeted funds from the BC Ministry of Health Services.

The Research Project program provides up to \$100,000 per year for a maximum of two years for research synthesis, research demonstration, pilot/seed research, or research knowledge exchange projects. The Investigative Team program provides up to \$200,000 per year for four years for one team of researchers and practitioners to plan, develop and implement a program of research in the BCNRI priority area of care delivery. The Partnership Research program provides up to \$100,000 as a partner contribution for applicants successful in national or international peer reviewed competitions that require match/partner funding as a condition of the award. Deadline for preliminary applications for the Research Project and Investigative Team programs was April 28th; applications are now under review. Deadlines for the Partnership Research program vary according to the partner organization deadlines.

MSFHR sponsors UBC medical student forum

On March 30 MSFHR President and CEO Dr. John Challis presented a poster award at a forum hosted by the UBC Medical Journal in partnership with the UBC Medical Undergraduate Society and the MD/PhD program. The sixth annual forum, of which MSFHR was a sponsor, coincided with release of the UBC Medical Journal's second issue. Recipient of the poster award was Gavin Tansley for his study "Diarrhea education through water purification in a northern Himalayan community."

MSFHR to administer cross-Canada human papillomavirus study

In March, MSFHR was asked by the BC Government to help administer a new human papillomavirus (HPV) long-term follow-up study to be co-funded by the Government of BC and several other provinces. The study will explore the long-term efficacy of the vaccine.

Health Services and Policy Research Support Network plans next phase

The Health Services and Policy Research Support Network (HSPRSN) Steering Council held a strategic planning session April 29th to review achievements to date and determine next steps in strengthening health services and policy research in the province. Attendees included past and present members of the Steering Council supplemented by additional representatives of the research, policy and practice communities. Participants noted and credited the HSPRSN programs for building successful partnerships of researchers and decision makers, and for developing research supports and linkages across health authorities that increased the uptake of evidence to inform practice change. They also identified ways to build on this base, with a view to creating a more robust research environment focused on health system needs. Key recommendations included creating a high level forum of health system leaders and research expertise to co-ordinate planning and resources at the provincial level, complemented by embedded and linked research capacity at the local level to assist health authorities in measuring and evaluating outcomes of policy and system change. These and other recommendations will inform both HSPRSN and MSFHR in planning future funding programs.

MSFHR focuses on partnerships

MSFHR's increased focus on developing partnerships has resulted in three new agreements in the last few months:

We will be partnering with Shad Valley, whose mandate is to identify outstanding talent in high school and encourage students to consider fields of study at university that will increase Canada's innovation capacity. Our partnership focuses on Shad Valley's UBC program, in which 54 students will gather for four weeks this summer to be mentored by leading health researchers.

We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Women's Health Research Institute, which will co-fund up to four successful trainee applicants - whose research aligns with the WHRI mandate - in a future competition.

We have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Queensland University of Technology, Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, Queensland, Australia. This agreement will support the exchange of two applicants for postdoctoral research training; each postdoctoral award will be a maximum of \$50,000 over two or three years.

MSFHR People

Bill Barrable appointed CEO of SCI Solutions Network

MSFHR Board member Bill Barrable is the new CEO of the SCI Solutions Network effective January 1, 2010. The SCI Solutions Network is a collaboration of people with spinal cord injuries, researchers and service providers committed to addressing priority needs and generating solutions for people with spinal cord injuries.

Past MSFHR Research Advisory Council member receives BC Community Achievement Award

Dr. Cecilia Benoit, a past member of the MSFHR Research Advisory Council and a co-leader of the MSFHR-funded Women's Health Research Network, was named a recipient of a BC Community Achievement Award by Premier Gordon Campbell and Keith Mitchell, chair of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation. Dr. Benoit is a scientist at the Centre for Addictions Research of BC and a professor of sociology at the University of Victoria.

MSFHR-funded researchers receive grant from sanofi-aventis

The Genetic Pathology Evaluation Centre (GPEC), led by MSFHR-funded researchers Drs. Blake Gilks, David Huntsman and Torsten Nielsen, received an unrestricted grant of \$250,000 from sanofi-aventis that will be used to develop personalized approaches to cancer treatment.

MSFHR 2003 Scholar receives chair in cardiovascular disease prevention research

Dr. Scott Lear is the inaugural recipient of the \$4.6 million endowed Pfizer/Heart and Stroke Foundation Chair in Cardiovascular Prevention Research based at SFU and St. Paul's Hospital. Funding for the chair was established through a partnership with Pfizer Canada Inc., St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon, SFU, and an anonymous donor. In addition to holding an MSFHR scholar award, Dr. Lear was also the academic lead for an HSPRSN-funded investigative team exploring use of telehealth in chronic disease management.

Discovery by MSFHR-funded researcher leads way for the treatment of aneurysms

A study led by MSFHR 2003 Scholar Dr. David Granville may lead to new treatment options for abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA) – a potentially fatal disease that currently has no pharmacological treatments. The study reveals a novel therapeutic target for AAA that could have a major impact on the treatment of this disease. Several patents have been filed relating to Dr. Granville's research, sparking the formation of spin-off company viDA Therapeutics (www.vidatherapeutics.com), an early-stage biotechnology company spearheaded by MSFHR Board member Alistair Duncan, now its President and CEO.

MSFHR award recipients in the news

- 2008 MSFHR Scholar Dr. Catharine Winstanley was quoted in a recent MSNBC article on gambling and addictions. Dr. Winstanley, an assistant professor at UBC, conducts research on the biological basis of addiction and impulse control. [Read the MSNBC article.](#)
- MSFHR 2004 Senior Scholar Dr. Weihong Song has published a study that shows contrary to previous studies, marijuana does not appear to improve memory or reverse effects of Alzheimer's disease. [Read the Vancouver Sun story.](#)
- MSFHR-funded researchers Drs. Robert Hogg, Viviane Lima and Julio Montaner were involved in a study that shows people being treated for HIV are less likely now to develop drug-resistant infections. The researchers attributed the success to a new highly active antiretroviral therapy, known as HAART — usually a combination of three anti-retroviral drugs that are taken to suppress HIV infection. [Read the CBC news story.](#)

Awards for MSFHR people

- Dr. Tim Murphy (2002 Senior Scholar) and Dr. Stanley Floresco (2002 Scholar & 2008 Senior Scholar) each received a UBC Killam Research Prize for outstanding research and scholarly contributions.
- Dr. Michael Hayden (co-leader of the BC Clinical Genomics Network) received premier UBC research award the Jacob Biely Prize.
- MSFHR-funded researchers Drs. Marco Marra, Rob Holt, and Steven Jones, received the Genome BC Award for Scientific Excellence at the LifeSciences BC Awards gala on April 14th.
- Also receiving a LifeSciences award – for leadership – was MSFHR Board member Don Avison.
- Two MSFHR Trainees received awards at the Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute's Celebrate Research Week: 2008 Trainee Jennifer Davis received the VCHRI Top Graduating Student award, and 2009 Trainee David McVea received a poster award.