



Michael Smith Foundation for
Health Research

President’s Quarterly Report

Update on MSFHR activities from Dr. John Challis

September 30, 2009

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Update on Activities from Dr. John Challis

Message from the President and CEO

It is my pleasure to update you on activities of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research since our last President's Quarterly newsletter in July of this year.

In particular, I am very pleased to announce that on September 25th, we received a letter from the Honourable Kevin Falcon, Minister of Health Services, confirming an additional \$15 million funding for the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

The allocation of this funding demonstrates a strong commitment on behalf of government to BC's research community - and sends a very positive message about the importance of the Foundation's role. We have been working hard with government to secure further funding, and we are deeply grateful to them for providing it. We recognize it is no small gesture, especially in such difficult economic times.

The letter from Minister Falcon says that the additional \$15 million will be provided "prior to April 15, 2010" and emphasizes that the Foundation should not anticipate receiving additional funding from the Province of BC for the next two fiscal years (2009/10 and 2010/11).

With this confirmation of our current financial situation, MSFHR has the information it needs to make key decisions about its programs and initiatives. Over the next few weeks, we will be reviewing all our activities in light of our funding situation and in alignment with our Strategic Direction 2009-2015 document. Next steps will be communicated to the community as decisions are made.

We commit to keeping our community informed - through email updates, our website, and letters to award holders as appropriate - about any decisions that are made. We also look forward to engaging as many of you as possible in discussions - both face-to-face and online - about our activities. In the meantime, we present the following update on our activities.

MSFHR Annual General Meeting

At its 8th annual general meeting on September 25th, MSFHR welcomed Dr. Martin Taylor to his new role as Chair of the Board and paid tribute to his predecessor, Dr. Bruce Clayman. The new MSFHR Board Executive Committee includes Drs. Taylor (Chair) and Clayman (as past Chair) as well as Ms. Sue Paish (Vice-Chair), and Dr. Paul Terry (Chair, Finance Committee).

Two new members were also welcomed to our Board of Directors: Mr. Don Avison, former President of The Research Universities' Council of British Columbia, and Ms. Karimah Es Sabar, President, LifeSciences British Columbia.

The list and bios of all the MSFHR Board members is available on the website.

MSFHR Activities

MSFHR-supported researchers more competitive for national funding

The MSFHR Analysis and Evaluation team conducted an analysis of the extent to which MSFHR-funded scholars and senior scholars were more successful at receiving national funding than non-funded scholar and senior scholar applicants. The results are in: MSFHR-supported researchers are 3.88 times more likely to receive new CIHR funding. Over the five years following the start of their MSFHR award, the total average CIHR funding per researcher was \$330,000 greater for MSFHR Scholars, and \$370,000 greater for Senior Scholars (as compared to those not funded by MSFHR). Further details of the study will be posted on the MSFHR website at a later date.

Panels review highest number of trainee applicants to date

Seven hundred and six applications - the largest number ever - were submitted for MSFHR trainee awards by the deadline of July 2. Six expert panels reviewed the applications during the first two weeks of September, and at the MSFHR Board meeting on September 25th, funding was approved for more than 70 applicants. MSFHR is pleased to announce that partnership funding has made it possible to fund additional trainees. Applicants will be notified of their status in October, after which they and partner funders will be posted on our website. An event honoring successful applicants and our partners is being planned; information will be sent in the coming weeks.

New funding partnership: Canadian Foundation for Women's Health

MSFHR and the Canadian Foundation for Women's Health (CFWH) have signed an agreement to jointly fund trainees conducting research in the area of obstetrics and gynecology. CFWH and MSFHR will co-fund one or more Masters, PhD or post-doctoral students who are conducting research to better understand - and to seek cures or new treatments for - illnesses that affect reproductive health.

H1N1 research study launched

This BC Centre for Disease Control study funded by MSFHR in partnership with the Provincial Health Services Authority has been underway since July. Lab analyses of blood samples from volunteers in varying age groups began in September, with the goal of determining which age groups in BC are at greater risk of contracting H1N1 and having more severe symptoms. Results will inform the roll-out of the H1N1 vaccine strategy later this fall.

BC Nursing Research Initiative (BCNRI) updates

- A proposal to develop a BC Nursing Health Services Research Network was approved for funding effective October 15, 2009. Co-leads for the Network are: Noreen Frisch (Director, School of Nursing, University of Victoria) and Grace Michelson (Corporate Director, Academic Development, Provincial Health Services Authority).
- Nursing research facilitators have been appointed in five of six BC health authorities, with the sixth expected before the end of October. MSFHR hosted an orientation meeting for facilitators on September 29th which also was attended by the Network Co-Leaders. The session included participants working together to develop an evaluation plan for the program. The role of the facilitators is to build awareness of and support for practice-relevant health services nursing research within their health authority. As part of this, they will work together and with the Nursing Health Services Network to develop and maintain an overview of nursing health services research in the province.

Health Services and Policy Research Support Network (HSPRSN) updates

- Dr. Steven Shechter, Assistant Professor, Sauder School of Business, has replaced Dr. Adrian Levy as academic co-chair on the HSPRSN Steering Council.
- The final reports from two scoping exercises on health human resources were completed this summer. One undertaken in partnership with the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation explored the definition of health human resources productivity; a second, funded 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 working group reviewed the reports; their recommendations for developing a research funding program in this area will be presented to the HSPRSN Steering Council on October 14, 2009.

Personalized medicine project: Genome BC, PHSA, MSFHR partnership

Supported by MSFHR Programs, discussions are underway to participate in a Genomics and Personalized Medicine Demonstration Program in partnership with Genome BC and PHSA. Genome BC and PHSA would contribute the funding to support the research (\$4M in total), while MSFHR's contribution would be in-kind, through competition and post-award management.

Survey participation requested: BC Directory of Health Researchers and Trainees

MSFHR is conducting a survey of usage of the BC Directory of Health Researchers and Trainees in order to improve its functioning. Researchers, research staff and others working in the health research community are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete the survey. Participation is encouraged even from those who have not used the directory, as we are seeking information on how to make it useful to a wider audience. The directory was created in 2006 to provide an online, searchable database of health researchers currently working in BC.

MSFHR in the news

BC Medical Journal

The Foundation was acknowledged in this month's issue of the BC Medical Journal (BCMJ) for its funding of the British Columbia Clinical Genomics Network, which helps clinicians carry out research studies on unique families and patient populations by providing access to state-of-the-art genomic technologies, assisting with genetic study design and analysis, and offering advice about patient consent and ethics.

The BCMJ also featured a story on a training module for family physicians to support their efforts on the "front lines of mental health care." The cognitive-behavioural skills program mentioned in the article is based on work by the MSFHR-funded Mental Health and Addiction Services and Policy Investigative Team.

Media

News about MSFHR's funding situation appeared last month on Global TV and CKNW, and in The Province, the Victoria Times Colonist and the Vancouver Sun.