

News Release



NEW \$7.5 MILLION FUND TO ADVANCE BC'S RESEARCH INTO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ***BC teams seeking solutions to global health issue***

December 18, 2013

VANCOUVER, BC – British Columbian researchers got a boost today with the announcement of a new \$7.5 million fund to seek solutions to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, a global public health priority that currently affects up to 70,000 people in the province.

Five teams of leading-edge researchers will receive \$1.5 million, three-year grants from the new *British Columbia Alzheimer's Research Award* program. The awards will seek discovery of causes of and innovative treatments for this disease and were created by a new partnership of national and provincial funding agencies:

- Brain Canada
- Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR)
- Genome British Columbia (Genome BC)
- Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation (PARF)

At last week's international Dementia Summit in London, leaders from Canada and other G8 countries identified increased funding for research as vital to find the cause and a cure to address one of the world's largest and most expensive public health issues. By 2040, 1.4 million Canadians are projected to be affected by dementia. Discoveries by researchers funded by the new *British Columbia Alzheimer's Research Award* will contribute to the international effort to find a treatment or cure by 2025.

MSFHR initiated the creation of the partnership with \$1.5 million from the Government of British Columbia targeted to advance research in the province into biological causes and therapeutic treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

Genome BC is contributing \$1 million to advance translational or clinical research with a genomics component into direct benefits for patients.

PARF is contributing \$1.25 million for research in the province into biological causes and therapeutic treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Brain Canada will match the other partners' contributions dollar for dollar with funds from the Canada Brain Research Fund, a public-private partnership between Brain Canada and the Government of Canada.

Researchers' applications will be received, judged and funded in 2014. A Request for Applications and more information for researchers interested in applying for the grants is available on the Brain Canada website:

<http://braincanada.ca/en/MIRI>.

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The Alzheimer's disease collaboration builds upon recent work by the partners to support BC researchers in neurology. Last month, MSFHR and Genome BC contributed a total of \$600,000 to two Brain Canada grants totalling \$3 million awarded to UBC researchers (Dr. Neil Cashman and Dr. Terence Snutch) leading interprovincial teams investigating brain diseases including ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease), epilepsy and autism.

Quotes

Inez Jabalpurwala, President and CEO of Brain Canada: "We are delighted with this national-provincial partnership and that the Canada Brain Research Fund will double the investment in British Columbia to support a critically important research area."

Dr. Diane Finegood, President and CEO of MSFHR: "MSFHR is proud to have initiated this partnership to accelerate discovery by BC researchers of new approaches to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of this devastating disease. I hope that families with loved ones experiencing Alzheimer's disease are encouraged to know that highly-qualified researchers in BC are receiving more support to solve the mysteries surrounding dementia. This collaboration will build upon the nationally-recognized research already conducted in BC to find cures and treatments for this degenerative disorder."

Dr. Alan Winter, President and CEO of Genome BC: "This is a significant investment in BC in the area of Alzheimer's disease research and one made all the more impactful through this powerful partnership. A greater understanding of this disease will provide more effective treatment tools and better patient outcomes and ultimately lead to more sustainable health care in this important area."

Terry Lake, BC Minister of Health: "So many of our friends, family members and neighbours in British Columbia are currently living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Research is vital to preventing, treating and curing this global public health issue. The province is pleased to see these research funding agencies working together to build on the province's Dementia Action Plan to advance made-in-BC health research."

Dr. Lynn Beattie, President of The Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation: "This opportunity to invest in Alzheimer's disease research is extremely welcome particularly with the strong partnerships involved from British Columbia and Brain Canada. Striving to use research to make a difference ultimately to persons affected by this insidiously progressive neurodegenerative disorder is imperative and BC researchers can make a difference."

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About Brain Canada

Brain Canada is a national, charitable organization with the vision to understand the brain, in health and illness, to improve lives and achieve societal impact. Brain Canada is achieving its vision by:

- Increasing the scale and scope of funding to accelerate the pace of Canadian brain research;
- Creating a collective commitment to brain research across the public, private and voluntary sectors;
- Delivering transformative, original and outstanding research programs.

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The Canada Brain Research Fund is a public-private partnership designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada has committed to raising \$100 million from private and non-governmental sources, which will be matched by Government on a 1:1 basis. The Fund was announced in federal budget 2011, which proposed to “allocate up to \$100 million to establish the Canada Brain Research Fund, which will support the very best Canadian neuroscience, fostering collaborative research and accelerating the pace of discovery, in order to improve the health and quality of life of Canadians who suffer from brain disorders.” For more information about Brain Canada and the Canada Brain Research Fund: www.braincanada.ca.

About Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) harnesses the power of health research to improve the health of British Columbians and their health system. It does this by building BC’s capacity for world-class research by funding the best scientists; coordinating the sharing of health research resources across the province; and bringing people together for health research planning and action. MSFHR is a Partner in the new nationwide research initiative, Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging (CCNA). Learn more at www.msfhr.org.

About Genome British Columbia

Genome British Columbia is a catalyst for the life sciences cluster on Canada’s West Coast, and manages a cumulative portfolio of over \$625M in research projects and science and technology platforms. Working with governments, academia and industry across sectors such as forestry, fisheries, agriculture, environment, bioenergy, mining and human health, the goal of the organization is to generate social and economic benefits for British Columbia and Canada. Genome BC is supported by the Province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada through Genome Canada and Western Economic Diversification Canada and more than 300 international public and private co-funding partners. www.genomebc.ca

About Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation

The mission of the Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation (PARF) is to eradicate Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. PARF is endeavoring to do this as the result of a grant from the Government of British Columbia and donations from private individuals. PARF will support scientists whose aim is to achieve this objective. PARF will assist universities, hospitals and other qualified British Columbia institutions to recruit investigators who will devote their efforts to eradicating Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.

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Facts Sheet: Alzheimer's disease

- Alzheimer's disease is a specific, and most common, form of dementia named after the German psychiatrist who identified the disease in 1906. It is a progressive degeneration of brain cells that causes a decline in cognitive ability, loss of memory, and mood and emotional disorders.
- There are more than 70,000 British Columbians currently living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia and almost 10,000 of those individuals are under the age of 65.
- Winston Churchill, Rita Hayworth, Ronald Regan, Rosa Parks and Norman Rockwell are some famous people believed to have had Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.
- The disease is not a normal part of brain aging, but is the result of protein plaques and fibrous tangles in the brain making it difficult for nerve cells to communicate with each other.
- Genetics is a risk factor. Your chances of developing Alzheimer's doubles or triples if you have a parent or sibling who has the disease. Other risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, head injuries and lifestyle choices such as smoking and diets high in saturated fats.
- The impact of dementia on Canadians, their health, quality of life and finances is expected to grow dramatically in the coming decades:
 - The number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will double in 20 years, from 747,000 in 2011 to 1.4 million in 2031
 - The economic cost will jump nearly 10 times from \$33 billion (2011) to \$293 billion (2031)
 - There is also tremendous social cost on patient's quality of life and the impact on their families.
- Doctors use a global deterioration scale to measure the seven stages of the disease, from no-or-mild memory lapses, to late-stage Alzheimer's disease where patients have severe cognitive impairment and memory loss, limited vocabulary and lose the ability to move, eat or use the bathroom independently, needing 24-hour care.

More information about the disease is available from HealthLinkBC at:
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/major/hw136623.html>