
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

\$48 million for research that supports healthy families

VANCOUVER – Health Minister Margaret MacDiarmid today announced \$48 million to support the ongoing work of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR).

“Our government’s \$48-million investment in the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research is a commitment to advancing the health of B.C. families,” said MacDiarmid. “From work to improve ovarian cancer outcomes, to looking for a cure for childhood diabetes and to helping patients in remote communities better manage chronic diseases at home, the foundation supports health research that benefits thousands of families.”

In its first decade, the foundation has funded more than 1,800 research-related positions, including 1,491 researchers funded directly. These positions range from students through to well-established researchers who have created strong research programs to address critical health issues.

“We are pleased that our provincial government understands and has responded to the need for continued investment into B.C.’s health research enterprise,” said Diane Finegood, MSFHR president and CEO. “This funding will allow us to continue our support for individual researchers and projects that seek to improve our health care system.”

MSFHR also funds research teams and shared research services to support researchers across the province, supports multiple projects to address health-system challenges, and brings together British Columbia’s universities, health authorities, non-profit organizations and government for health-research planning and action. These investments have enabled B.C. to recruit and retain top health research talent, and have increased the competitiveness of B.C. researchers who in turn have brought additional health research funding into the province. Between 2001 and 2012, B.C.’s share of federal health research grants increased from 8.6 per cent to more than 14 per cent.

OvCaRe, B.C.’s ovarian cancer research team, has received support from MSFHR since its inception 10 years ago. Based at the BC Cancer Agency, Vancouver General Hospital and the University of British Columbia, OvCaRe has become a prototype of the clinically-focused multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research that MSFHR has sought to foster in B.C. Over the past 10 years, OvCaRe has become a global leader in ovarian cancer research, with ongoing projects designed to tackle the major challenges this disease presents, including a provincewide ovarian cancer prevention program and the first detailed analysis of genomes of several subtypes of this cancer.

“When I look at my own career, the OvCaRe team and many of the outstanding health research successes that have occurred in B.C. over the past 10 years it is hard to imagine how they could have happened without the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research,” said Dr. David Huntsman, co-founder and director of OvCaRe. “The announcement today is great news for B.C. as it means we will continue to contribute to a better understanding of many diseases and find solutions to both local and global health problems.”

Priority health research areas for the ministry include health services, population health, clinical and biomedical research.

MSFHR, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2011, has received more than \$360 million from the B.C. government to date. This includes more than \$323 million towards initiatives that support the MSFHR mandate, plus about \$37 million in targeted research funding from the government. Some examples of MSFHR health-research funding in action include assessing the strength of British Columbians’ immune system to the H1N1 flu virus by age group to inform the vaccine roll out in 2010, as well as researching optimal delivery timing for pregnant women suffering from hypertension.

Dr. Michael Smith was a pre-eminent B.C. scientist and internationally recognized authority on molecular biology and the use of chemically synthesized DNA fragments in genetic studies. Dr. Smith received a Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1993.

Since 2001, government has invested more than \$850 million in health research, including the Vancouver Prostate Centre, the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, six Leading Edge Endowment Fund chairs, Genome BC, and the Centre for Drug Research and Development.

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