



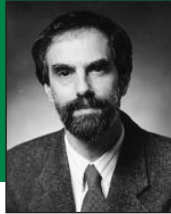
Institute of Health Services and Policy Research

IHSPR

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Message from the Scientific Director



Our first newsletter of 2003 affords an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of 2002, and to anticipate this year's exciting offerings. In 2002 a large portion of IHSPR's strategic funds were committed to training programs and career awards. Investments were also made in operating grants in research areas such as access to appropriate health services and financing of health care. Several requests for applications (RFAs) were posted to provide financial support for operating grants and research teams who work in strategic thematic areas. RFAs were posted in thematic areas such as access to health services, financing health care, mental health services, and genetic health services. We also requested grant applications in the areas of health services and policy research theories, methods, and measurement.

We are now preparing a strategic document for CIHR on the needs, gaps and opportunities of the health services and policy research community with respect to health research funding. Related to this, the CIHR Standing Committee on the Oversight of Grants and Awards Competitions (SCOGAC) has struck a working group to determine what might be done to address any equity issues in CIHR's peer review and resource allocation processes.

On other fronts, IHSPR is working to identify or create publication outlets for Canadian health services researchers. We are also in discussion with the Canadian Health Economics Research Association (CHERA) and the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) about the possibility of establishing a health services research association. Lastly, IHSPR's plans are unfolding for a fall meeting of our researcher community. The meeting will enable you - our community - to network, learn more about the Institute and its programs, provide us with feedback, and help us plan. More details will be available in the near future.

Morris Barer, Scientific Director

CIHR Peer Review and Funding of Open Grants

Analyses undertaken by IHSPR have highlighted both problems with, and opportunities to improve, CIHR programs and funding of health services and policy research. For example, significant differences in success rates across CIHR's four 'pillars' (biomedical, clinical, health systems and services, and the health of populations – including social, cultural and environmental dimensions and influences) have a direct impact on the funding available from open grants and awards competitions for health services and policy research and researchers.

An independent study by Dr. Warren Thorngate was commissioned by CIHR to better understand how group discussions and external reviews during the review process affect ratings, and to explore any differences between adjudication processes, behaviours and outcomes across peer review committees. A sample of archived applications from CIHR competitions in September 2000, March 2001, and September 2001 (n = 306) was analyzed in the study. Key observations in Dr. Thorngate's report, Mining the archives: Analyses of CIHR research grant adjudications (November 2002), are that medical review committees and health review committees differ significantly in their mean rating levels (and the variances around them), in their adjudication behaviours, and in their decision-making criteria:

- The average initial rating (i.e., before group discussion) by medical committees was 3.66; for health committees it was 3.25.
- Pairs of internal reviewers on health committees differed from each other in their initial individual ratings significantly more than did medical committee pairs.

- Medical committee consensus ratings (i.e., after group discussion) were approximately the same as the average of the two internal reviewers' initial ratings; with health committees, consensus ratings were significantly lower than the average of the two initial ratings.
- Medical committees tended to base their ratings on: reputation of the applicant; logical exposition of hypotheses and research rationale; research technique; and, provision of student apprenticeships. For health committees the key criteria were: research methodology; design and statistics; links with previous literature; timing; and, budget.

Further research is needed to reach a deeper understanding of why these differences exist, but the fact that they do exist has immediate implications for funding allocations in competitions that include medical and health peer review. IHSPR is actively contributing to CIHR activities designed to improve peer review and funding policies and procedures. The Institute's Scientific Director is part of a new working group of SCOGAC, which later this spring will make recommendations to CIHR's Governing Council.

Information on CIHR's agenda can be viewed at http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/services/funding/peer_review/thorngate_e.shtml, where you will also find a link to Dr. Thorngate's full report.

Institute Development Initiatives – Workshop Support

IHSPR "Support Grants" are available for workshops that further the Institute's understanding of research priorities in its strategic research areas, or make a compelling case for emerging new priorities areas. Eligible workshops generally involve between 10-30 individuals invited from various disciplines to address specific questions in underdeveloped research areas.

Eligible workshops would have among their objectives: reaching consensus on priority policy issues and research questions in specific areas within the general ambit of health services and policy research; the development of innovative and relevant CIHR operating grant applications; or the development of proposals for

future IHSPR strategic initiatives. Further information about IHSPR's workshop initiative is available at: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/services/funding/opportunities/institutes/2002/ihspr_rfa_app_guide_e.shtml. Information about the Institute's strategic research areas can be found in its strategic plan at: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/institutes/ihspr/index_e.shtml.

Applications for workshop support should be sent in electronic format to: Craig Larsen
clarsen@ihspr.ubc.ca
Tel: (604) 222-6874

Privacy Request For Applications

Canadians place great importance on their right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to the use of their personal information for health research and health care. IHSPR, in partnership with CIHR's Ethics Office, intends to launch an RFA in June 2003, "Competing and Compelling Values: Privacy Issues in

Health Care and Health Research." Please watch for this announcement and RFA details on our web site in May 2003.

New RFA Launch Cycle

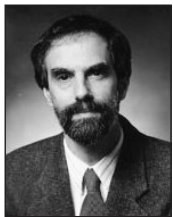
CIHR's Research Priorities and Planning Committee (RPPC) has determined that strategic RFAs will be launched on June 1 and December 1, 2003. Pre-announcements will be posted on CIHR's website one month prior to the RFA launch.

Interdisciplinary Capacity Enhancement Teams Grant Program (ICE)

SPR and its partners awarded 11 ICE Team grants in February 2003, averaging \$1 million over five years. Research topics include complementary and alternative medicine, pharmaceutical drug policy, patient safety, and e-health. ICE Team grants provide support for groups of researchers who build interdisciplinary research capacity, attract and mentor new health services and policy researchers, and make a strong commitment

to knowledge translation. We continue to approach potential funding partners in order to secure additional funding for this program, so that we may increase the number of approved projects. For information about the teams funded to date, see http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/publications/funding/decisions/2003/200210ice_e.shtml.

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