

Canadian SARS Research Consortium

CSRC Management Group:

- Aventis Pasteur
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Canadian Lung Association
- Canadian Network for Vaccines and Immunotherapeutics of Cancer and Chronic Viral Diseases (CANVAC)
- Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ)
- GlaxoSmithKline
- Health Canada
- Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems (MITACS)
- Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research
- Ontario Research & Development Challenge Fund (ORDCF)
- Protein Engineering Network of Centres of Excellence (PENCE)

Background: The outbreaks of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in the spring of 2003 have posed significant challenges for the world's public health system and front-line health care workers. These challenges remain with us today.

Global outbreaks of newly emerging infectious diseases seem likely to continue. New approaches are necessary to address the research essential for identifying and controlling infectious pathogens and agents that are a threat to public health, our food and water supply, and the Canadian economy.

In short, rapid response mechanisms are needed to mobilize Canada's health research community to address, in a coordinated and focused manner, specific research questions posed by emerging new pathogens. Composed of funding agencies, public sector, industry, and investigators, the Canadian SARS Research Consortium (CSRC) arose from discussions within Canada's health research community, funding agencies and industry, to develop rapid research responses that address public needs.

Mandate: CSRC will coordinate, promote and support SARS research in Canada and will develop international linkages and partnerships to control and eradicate SARS. It is a deliverables-driven network which will establish research priorities with clear objectives, coordinate funding, and facilitate integration of the funded research projects.

Operation: The CSRC will develop and coordinate the implementation of a national research agenda on SARS in five areas: diagnostics, vaccine development, therapeutics, epidemiology and databases, and public health and community impact. Components of the Consortium are a Management Group (chaired by Dr. Bhagirath Singh, Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Infection and Immunity), a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), and a Research Team. The CSRC, aided by the SAC, will facilitate collaboration among researchers and among research funders, nationally and internationally, to eliminate redundancy and encourage synergy through partnerships. It will facilitate the coordinated distribution of clinical samples, establish national research platforms, provide information and advice to the federal National Advisory Group on SARS and Public Health, and solicit participation from the biopharmaceutical industry.

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC): Co-chaired by Dr. Brett Finlay and Dr. Donald Low, the SAC will incorporate membership from the research community in the five research areas listed above. Its role is to advise the Management Group on research areas that should be supported through requests for applications (RFA), on opportunities for international collaboration and on the coordination of research programs within Canada.

The National SARS Research Team: The team will consist of researchers funded by the Consortium. It will form research action groups to address specific research areas and to identify gaps in the national research agenda.

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