
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

PATIENTS TO BENEFIT THROUGH HEALTH INNOVATION FUNDING

VANCOUVER – The Province has allocated the \$100-million Health Innovation Fund to British Columbia's six health authorities, announced Health Minister George Abbott today.

“Innovation in our public health system is critical to improve patient access and care across British Columbia,” said Abbott. “Health professionals and administrators across the province have responded to the Health Innovation Fund with exciting pilot project proposals to improve and share best practices, restructure delivery systems and eliminate key information bottlenecks that slow patient care.”

From the \$100 million, 29 projects will receive funding worth a total of almost \$85 million, and \$15 million will be allocated towards smaller, short-term projects based on an existing funding formula used for providing funding to health authorities.

In Budget 2007, government announced the creation of a one-time \$100-million Health Innovation Fund, open to health authorities for innovative proposals to promote innovation and facilitate improvements in patient care within the public health-care system.

The Health Innovation Fund focused on three areas: Emergency Room Decongestion to improve efficiency and reduce emergency wait times; Primary Health Care services, which can improve care in the community as they can be people's first point of contact with the health system; and Pay for Performance, which uses financial incentives for health authorities to increase productivity and quality of care. Mixed funding models are used in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to deliver patient care within their publicly funded systems.

“Innovation can help drive improvements in health care and unclog patient care bottlenecks,” said Dr. Grant Innes, regional medical director of emergency services for Vancouver Coastal Health, who was involved in developing one of VCH's three proposals. “The Emergency Decongestion Pilot project will help increase efficiency in emergency departments and all other aspects of the health care system in Vancouver by improving wait times for admitted and non-admitted patients.”

In total, health authorities submitted more than 85 proposals for consideration. Health authority board chairs then reviewed and recommended to the Ministry of Finance that 29 of the projects be funded by the Health Innovation Fund.

“Our health system is facing increasing pressures and costs from an aging population, increased demands for services, and new medical technologies,” said Provincial Health Services Authority Board chair Wynne Powell. “The Health Innovation Fund projects will promote new ideas leading to long-term improvements to the delivery of health services in British Columbia, and in particular to our patients.”

In 2007/08, health funding will reach \$13.1 billion or 44 per cent of government's total budget. This includes the one-time funding available through the Health Innovation Fund. Overall health spending has grown by over 51 per cent since 2000/01, compared to a population increase of just under eight per cent over the same time period.

“New ideas and innovation will help lead to a sustainable health system – one that will be there for our children and grandchildren,” added Abbott. “In fact, the theme of a sustainable health system has been brought up by British Columbians from all walks of life through the Conversation on Health.”

Investing in innovative ideas and solutions in the health system is part of government's Pacific Leadership Agenda to improve the health of citizens and renew the public health system.

2 backgrounder(s) attached.

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