
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

\$100M INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH PAYS HEALTHY DIVIDEND

VANCOUVER – A record 170 graduate students and post-doctoral fellows receiving funding to train with the province’s best health researchers were recognized today as part of a massive injection of \$100 million to further energize B.C.’s growing health research sector, announced Health Minister George Abbott.

The funding will support innovation and leadership in health research, while creating competitive advantages for the province. The trainees will be conducting research projects across the spectrum of health research, including prevention of hip fractures, new methods for cancer diagnosis and better understanding of brain physiology.

“By creating opportunities for health researchers, we are investing in the future of our health system,” said Abbott. “We have fulfilled our commitment from the throne speech in 2005 to provide \$70 million this year in addition to the \$30 million provided last year to support the amazing work of the Michael Smith Foundation (MSFHR). This funding will help maintain B.C.’s position as a world leader in disease and illness prevention and will ensure the best health-care outcomes for patients today and for generations to come.”

Abbott made the announcement at Vancouver General Hospital, where he was joined by Dr. Aubrey Tingle of the foundation to congratulate the B.C.-based health research trainees who successfully competed for foundation funding for 2006. The Research Trainee program is one of several funding programs designed to attract, retain and train the best and brightest health researchers and promote research excellence in B.C. MSFHR will provide \$7.4 million over three years toward this group of research trainees, bringing its total commitment to trainees over the past five years to \$31 million.

“The Province’s continued commitment to the foundation reflects a genuine success story for everyone working and training within British Columbia’s health research community,” said Dr. Tingle. “This investment allows the foundation to support the very best researchers and trainees and provide the environment for them to excel. In turn, B.C.’s health research community is demonstrating significant increased competitiveness for national and international funding.”

Added to the provincial government's \$30 million last year, this new funding will provide MSFHR with \$100 million to support its activities from 2006 to 2009. The funding will be used to make B.C. attractive to and supportive of health researchers by:

- Providing salary support to recruit and retain the best and brightest health researchers working in biomedical, clinical, health services and population health research;
- Supporting the training of promising graduate students and post-doctoral fellows preparing for careers in health research;

- Funding human and program infrastructure for teams of researchers, and for B.C. universities and teaching hospitals; and
- Building critical mass by bringing researchers together across the province to network and work together across broad research themes.

Earlier this week, Premier Gordon Campbell announced \$15 million for the Pacific Alzheimer Research Foundation to support new research aimed at eliminating Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The Province has invested more than one billion dollars in research and innovation since 2001, including significant investments to improve treatments and seek cures for major health-care challenges such as depression and spinal cord injuries.

2 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Marisa Adair
Communications Director
Ministry of Health
250 952-1887
250 920-8500 (cell)

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