

CIHR announces first research grants

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has approved its first complete round of grant applications. In January, \$235 million was committed to 478 research projects over the next 3 to 5 years. CIHR says the funding decisions are intended to reflect its “commitment to strong investigator-initiated research while investing in multidisciplinary and strategic research.”

Ten interdisciplinary health research team grants are worth a total of \$9 million per year for 5 years. These are multi-centre collaborations for research on the biomedical, clinical, health services and population health aspects of important medical problems. Funded projects included research into opiate addiction, autism, health of the elderly, multiple sclerosis and cancers of the breast, colon and musculoskeletal system.

Grants were also awarded for 19 “community alliances for health research” projects involving 600 researchers at more than 100 institutions in 5 countries. They are worth \$6.5 million per year for the next 3 to 5 years. Grants were awarded for research involving childhood development and injury prevention, primary and community health care, workplace health, chronic disease and mental health.

In addition, 400 operating grants were approved from 1296 applications, for a total expenditure of \$36.8 million per year for the next 3 to 5 years. Basic research was prominent, particularly investigations into cellular processes and molecular mechanisms of disease.

Competitions were held for a variety of special programs and joint initiatives. The Genomics Research Program funded both of the pilot project grants it considered, while the Canadian Blood Services/CIHR partnership in transfusion science approved 5 of 12 applications for research funding involving bacterial contamination of blood products and the immunomodulatory effects of transfusion. The CIHR/Health Canada initiative on hepatitis C funded 5 operating grants worth a total of \$420 000 per year. Meanwhile, the Regional Partnership Program is poised to award additional operating grants to researchers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, pending a final decision by provincial advisory committees. No grants were funded under the Health Canada/CIHR Medical Marijuana Research Program.

The breakdown of awards by institution tended to reflect the total number of applications submitted. The University of Toronto and its affiliates received \$33 million, followed by McGill (\$18 million), Université de Montréal (\$15 million) and the University of Calgary (\$12 million).

The CIHR reported that the number of applications increased by 10% over last year, while the number approved remained similar. The respective approval rates for new applications and renewals were 25.5% and 53.8%.

The report on this year’s grant decisions is available at www.cihr.ca — *Alison Sinclair, CMAJ*

