
INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

Good health depends more and more on advances in knowledge and research. Appropriate supply and use of medical technology ensures Canadians timely access to a high-quality, sustainable, publicly funded health care system.

The Government of Canada actively supports technology and knowledge development which will enhance the long-term sustainability of the health care system and deliver improved outcomes.

What is innovation and research?

- **Invention:** Supporting the continued development of new therapies. Organizations such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Genome Canada use federal government investments for their own work in health research to develop new therapies and practices.
- **Evaluation:** Assessing the real-world effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of new technologies (including pharmaceuticals) and how health care services are best delivered is another key role in fostering innovation. Improvements to health technology assessment activities ensure that new technologies and practices are adopted and utilized appropriately, increasing the health care system's overall efficiency. The Common Drug Review and health technology assessment activities led by the Canadian Coordinating Office for Health Technology Assessment (CCOHTA) are key components of this process. The framework for Canada's comprehensive health technology strategy is developed and will be presented to Health Ministers for approval, as per the timelines of the 2003 Accord.
- **Health Infostructure:** Faster adoption of information and communications technology (ICT). While privacy concerns must be addressed, greater use of ICTs and progress on electronic health records will have tremendous benefits – improved continuity of care, improved safety and quality, and reduction of unnecessary, repeated tests or procedures. Canada Health Infoway is funded by the federal government, accelerating the development and adoption of electronic health information systems, including Electronic Health Records, across Canada.
- **Better information:** Better information on the health status and behaviours of Canadians contributes to better health policy decision making and helps measure the effectiveness of health care interventions. The Canadian Institute for Health Information, Statistics Canada and Health Canada work together to provide Canadians with information on the health care system.

.../2

Why are innovation and research important?

- Managing new technologies and treatments is critical to ensuring that our health system remains relevant to the evolving needs of Canadians. Health Ministers were directed to develop, by September 2004, a comprehensive health technology strategy which assesses the impact of new technology and provides advice on how to maximize its effective utilization in the future.
- Applied research and knowledge transfer are essential to promoting best practices in health care interventions and delivery efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The work of academic health centres is vital in developing new approaches for the collection of information and evidence needed to improve care.
- Information on health system performance is essential to improving the accessibility and quality of health care, and the overall management of health resources.

Benefits for Canadians

- Health innovation and research will enable the health system to continue to meet the changing health needs of Canadians.

Progress to Date

- Significant progress has been made in addressing the 2003 Accord commitment to better manage new technologies and treatments so that our health system remains relevant to the evolving needs of Canadians.
- Investments have already been made to expand the technology assessment capacity in Canada. As well, federal, provincial and territorial governments have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders on a comprehensive strategy for health technology which covers the full continuum of technology development, diffusion, use and replacement, with advice on how to maximize its effectiveness in the future. This Canadian Health Technology Strategy will be tabled for the approval of Health Ministers in the Fall 2004.
- Investments have been made to improve access to diagnostic services, especially in rural and remote areas, and to enhance support for state-of-the-art health research facilities.
- The Government of Canada established the Diagnostic and Medical Equipment Fund (D/MEF), by way of a third-party trust fund agreement, in March 2003.

- The Canadian Institute for Health Information's 2003 National Survey of Medical Imaging Equipment counted 148 MRI scanners in operation across Canada. This is a 400% increase in the number of MRI's since 1993. Following the release of the report, provinces and territories have publicly announced the intent to purchase an additional 27 machines. It is estimated that approximately 78 of the 175 MRI's (45%) were purchased with funds from either the 2000 Medical Equipment Fund or the 2003 Diagnostic and Medical Equipment Fund.
- Budget 2004 allocated \$100 million in additional funding to Canada Health Infoway to assess, develop and implement a high quality, real-time public health surveillance system to assist in the timely identification of infectious disease outbreaks such as SARS.
- Public health surveillance is the ongoing, systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data about a health-related event to reduce morbidity, mortality, or to improve health.