



# Research Canada Update

News for Parliamentarians on Canadian Health Research

June 6, 2011

## Welcome to Ottawa!

On behalf of Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery, we would like to congratulate you on your recent win as a new or returning Member of Parliament. We welcome you to Ottawa and look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Research Canada is a national, not-for-profit, voluntary organization whose mission is to improve the health and prosperity of Canadians by championing Canada's global leadership in health research.

Health research is a shared benefit and shared responsibility. All Canadians are its steward, and as taxpayers or donors, Canadians' views on health research are important to the public policy process. Research Canada wants to make sure you are informed of their perspective on a regular basis.

Canadians believe that health research holds the promise of curing diseases, developing new drugs, improving health and health care and that it makes an important contribution to the economy.

Over the past decade, the Government of Canada has demonstrated its commitment to health research through a series of significant investments, most notably the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Canada Research Chairs Program, Genome Canada, the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCEs) and the Indirect Costs program.

The national health charities have also continued to play a vital role in raising contributions and funding research. Industry also plays a critical role in sustaining the health research enterprise in Canada.

If Canada is to realize its potential as a nation, it must invest in the research that will result in the innovations that will keep Canadians healthy and productive, and will be our competitive edge in a fast-paced global economy.

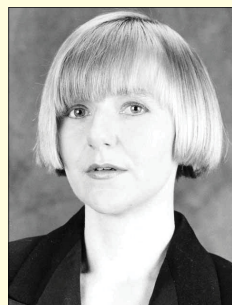
Research Canada looks forward to getting to know you and working with you to improve the health and prosperity of all of our citizens.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jacques Hendlisz  
Chair



Mr. Jacques Hendlisz



Ms. Deborah  
Gordon-El-Bihbety

Ms. Deborah Gordon-El-Bihbety  
President & CEO

## Canada Speaks!

Research Canada reaches out to Canadians on an annual basis and asks them their views on health and medical research through national public opinion polling. In January 2010, Research Canada, in partnership with five national organizations, conducted its third public opinion poll, *Canada Speaks! 2010: Canadians Go for Gold in Health and Medical Research*.

### Health and medical research is a top priority for Canadians:

**84%** say health and medical research makes an important contribution to the economy, recognizing that the economy is the most important issue facing Canadians today.

**90%** of Canadians believe basic research should be supported by government even if it brings no immediate benefit. Even in a recession, a large majority of Canadians would pay out of pocket to improve health and research capacity.

**89%** of Canadians believe that Canada should be a global leader in this area.

## About the Health Research Caucus

In 2009, Research Canada established a Health Research Caucus of parliamentarians from all political parties under the Chairmanship of Senator Wilbert Keon and Vice-Chairmanship of Ms. Marlene Jennings, Deputy House Leader for the Official opposition and a Member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grace-Lachine, and Mr. Luc Malo, Member of Parliament for Vercheres-Les Patriotes for the Bloc Quebecois.

In May 2010, Senator Wilbert Keon retired from the Senate and, to our delight, Senator Kelvin K. Ogilvie graciously agreed to take over the reins as the Caucus Chair.

Research Canada and its members are grateful for the dedication of Ms. Jennings and Mr. Malo, and for their steadfast commitment to fostering a greater understanding of health research among their peers.

With the 41st Canadian Parliament now in session, we are pleased to announce the addition of our new Vice-Chairs: Ms. Megan Leslie, MP for Halifax, and Dr. Kirsty Duncan, MP for Etobicoke North.

The Health Research Caucus was convened to provide the necessary forum to inform Members of Parliament about the importance of health research to the health and wealth of Canadians as well as the benefits of the health research industry's skilled and knowledgeable work force.



Senator Kelvin K.  
Ogilvie



Megan Leslie, MP



Kirsty Duncan, MP

## Visit your Local Health Research Institute, University Campus, Company, or Health Charity Office



Research Canada complements its Health Research Caucus initiative by making health research a “reality” for parliamentarians through personal visits by politicians to health research institutes, companies, regional health authorities, and through meetings with health charities within the Research Canada Alliance. Research Canada’s Research Institute Visit Program gives MPs an opportunity to see how we translate research efforts into practice and care that benefits patients and has beneficial implications for health care and the local community and econo-

my. Research Canada usually initiates the contact with you and works with our member institution in your riding to arrange for a tour of the facility and a presentation from eminent health researchers at the facility. Over the past many years, Research Canada has organized hundreds of these visits and looks forward to hosting you in your constituency at one of our member sites.

For more information, please contact: Ms. Janice Hall, Director of Public Affairs and Corporate Fundraising, by phone at 613-234-5129 or [jhall@rc-rc.ca](mailto:jhall@rc-rc.ca).

## Upcoming Events

### June 7 - Reception on Mental Health Research

5 pm-7 pm, Rm. 256-S, Centre Block  
RSVP to [jhall@rc-rc.ca](mailto:jhall@rc-rc.ca)

#### Guest Speakers:

##### Dr. Jeffrey Meyer

Dr. Meyer is a Canada Research Chair in neurochemistry of major depression. He is the first psychiatrist to receive the Royal College Medal Award in Medicine (in the 60-year history of the award) for his contributions in understanding monoamine dysregulation during major depressive disorder. Dr. Meyer will discuss the high prevalence and impact of clinical depression and promising new research aimed at prevention.

##### Dr. Pierre Blier

Dr. Blier is a world-renowned scientist and a full professor at the University of Ottawa, Department of Psychiatry and Cellular/Molecular Medicine and the recipient of the Endowed Chair in Mood Disorders Research at the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research (IMHR).

### Oct. 17- Reception and Information Exhibition on Pain Research

This event will feature guest speakers and exhibits presented by eminent scientists from across Canada.



Please visit our web site at [www.rc-rc.ca](http://www.rc-rc.ca) to view our recent publications, such as our recent **pre-budget consultation, our opinion polls, and our submission to the Federal R&D Review Panel.**

Follow us on Twitter:  
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# RESEARCH IN ACTION

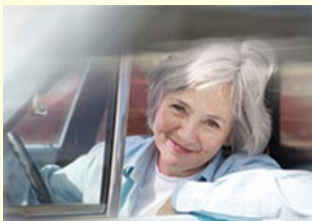
## Sharing news of Canadian health research advancements

Following are brief profiles of some of the excellent research initiatives being undertaken by members of Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery.



### Occupational therapists keep drivers on the road safer and longer

The **Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists** launched the National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers in February 2009. Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the driving population and driving is vital to their independence. Yet, older driver mortality and morbidity is on the rise. The Blueprint strives to enhance the capacity of older adults to maintain their fitness to drive and ability to drive safely for as long as possible. Find out more at [www.olderdriversafety.ca](http://www.olderdriversafety.ca)



### Immune deficiency explains why preterm babies are vulnerable to infections



Researchers led by Dr. Pascal Lavoie, at the **Child & Family Research Institute in Vancouver**, have discovered an immune deficiency that explains why preterm babies are vulnerable to infections, which can be lifethreatening and harmful to brain development with life-long effects.

The investigators analyzed cord blood from 12 babies born before 29 weeks of pregnancy and 18 who were born after a full pregnancy (40 weeks), and compared the blood cells' response to bits of bacteria.

They found that babies born before 29 weeks were low in a blood protein called p40, which helps white blood cells fight bacterial and viral infections. Find out more at: [www.cfri.ca](http://www.cfri.ca).

### “Bilingual” neurons may reveal the secrets of brain disease

A team of researchers from the **University of Montreal and McGill University** have discovered a type of “cellular bilingualism” – a phenomenon that allows a single neuron to use two different methods of communication to exchange information.

“Our work could facilitate the identification of mechanisms that disrupt the function of dopaminergic, serotonergic and cholinergic neurons in diseases such as schizophrenia, Parkinson's and depression,” wrote Dr. Louis-Eric Trudeau of the University of Montreal's Department of Pharmacology and Dr. Salah El Mestikawy, a researcher at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute and professor at McGill's Department of Psychiatry. An overview of this discovery was published in the Nature Reviews Neuroscience journal. Their results show that many neurons in the brain are able to control cerebral activity by simultaneously using two chemical messengers or neurotransmitters. Read more at: [www.douglas.qc.ca/news/1088](http://www.douglas.qc.ca/news/1088).

### Link found between Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's Disease

Researchers at the **University of British Columbia** and **Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute** have discovered the same genetic mechanism that destroys brain cells in people with Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's Disease, providing a potential new target for drugs that could forestall dementia in people with either condition. Read more at: [www.vchri.ca](http://www.vchri.ca).



### “Ottawa Ankle Rules” deliver cost savings and improved service

Dr. Ian Steill and his team based at the **Ottawa Hospital Research Institute** developed the internationally known Ottawa Ankle Rules, an evidence-based decision process that helps physicians determine whether or not an X-Ray is required on an injured ankle, resulting in significant cost savings and improved services. Find out more at: [www.ohri.ca](http://www.ohri.ca).

### Developing a vaccine for ALS

The **Pan-Provincial Vaccine Enterprise Inc. (PREVENT)** is a National Centre of Excellence for Commercialization and Research (CECR) based in Saskatoon. PREVENT has signed a licensing agreement with Amorfix Life Sciences Ltd., a biotechnology company located in Toronto, ON, for the development of a vaccine targeting amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The technology was developed by Dr. Neil Cashman, a leading neurologist at UBC. ALS, commonly known as “Lou Gehrig's Disease”, is a devastating and ultimately fatal progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Read more at: [www.prevent-cecr.ca](http://www.prevent-cecr.ca)

### Fighting childhood leukemia

Research scientist and pediatric oncologist Dr. Jason Berman, of the **IWK Health Centre** in Nova Scotia conducts research to study Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Dr. Berman is looking for answers in zebrafish – small striped fish that are remarkably similar to humans in their genetics and physiology. “Zebrafish develop blood cells in much the same way as humans,” he notes. “By studying blood-cell development in zebrafish, we hope to pinpoint the genetic changes that lead to leukemia.”

Dr. Berman is studying a number of chromosomal fusions that result in abnormal gene signals and seem to drive AML in humans. He is introducing these abnormalities into the fish to create zebrafish models of the human disease. Next he will test a host of potential anti-AML agents in these models, to identify effective new therapies. Find out more at: [www.iwk.nshealth.ca](http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca)