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News Release

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA ANNOUNCES, \$16.5 MILLION FOR INNOVATIVE RESEARCH INTO PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE

For immediate release

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MONTREAL (September 21, 2004) - The Honourable Tony Ianno, Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Dr. Bernard Patry, Member of Parliament for Pierrefonds-Dollard, on behalf of the Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, and Dr. Alan Bernstein, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), today announced \$16.5 million in funding for the CIHR Palliative and End-of-Life Care Initiative. The announcement was made at the 15th International Congress on Care of the Terminally Ill hosted by McGill University.

"The comprehensive scope of the research being carried out makes The Palliative and End-of-Life Care Initiative a world-first. The terminally ill must be able to live with dignity, without pain, and with support for both themselves and their families," said Minister Ianno.

"The Government of Canada supports the priority given by CIHR to this innovative research that matters to all of us," added Dr. Bernard Patry. "This research complements the Government of Canada's recognition of the growing role of caregivers in our society."

CIHR's Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) launched this initiative after identifying palliative and end-of-life care as its number one priority. Eight other CIHR Institutes and eight other organizations joined this initiative as partners given their common cause in treating pain and terminal illness. CIHR partners are: Heart and Stroke Foundation; Canadian Breast Cancer Research Alliance; Alberta Cancer Board; BC Cancer Agency; CancerCare Manitoba; Health Canada; the National Ovarian Cancer Association; and National Cancer Institute of Canada.

The Palliative and End-of-Life Care Initiative is designed to create a strong research base and recognition for the field as a health-research discipline in its own right. Its vision moves beyond the traditional boundaries of cancer palliative care by including other clinical disciplines. The research projects include pain management for many types of cancer, health care services, training for palliative caregivers, early palliative care interventions and the impact of end-of-life care on the patients' families.

Here are some examples of specific research projects:

- Excellent palliative care requires excellent research. Montreal is now the only place in the world with a program designed to train Palliative Care investigators at the Ph.D. level. The training program, led by McGill University's Dr. Robin Cohen, is unique in its interdisciplinary nature, critical mass of trainees and mentors.

- A team led by Dr. Pierre Allard of the University of Ottawa is focusing on the structure, process, quality, and outcomes of end-of-life care for older persons. The team is comprised of specialists in medicine, epidemiology, nursing, psychology, and social work.
- Dr. Harold Siden of the Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia, and his team will create knowledge and evidence so that children with life-limiting conditions - and their families - get the best care possible. Its unique relationship with the only two children's hospices in North America is key to this work. The program will build on Canada's pioneering work, further enhancing Canada's reputation for leadership in children's health services.
- Malnutrition is a source of unnecessary suffering that contributes to death in many cancer patients. Dr. Vickie Baracos, Director of the Alberta Cancer Board's provincial Palliative Care Research Initiative and Professor of Oncology at the University of Alberta, leads a multi-province team that will develop nutritional intervention therapies for advanced cancer patients.
- Richard Doll of the BC Cancer Agency and Dr. Arminée Kazanjian of the University of British Columbia are leading a multi-province team that will address patients' and families' needs, beyond their purely physical needs, in order to encompass the psychological, social, cultural and spiritual factors that affect health.
- Dr. Daren Heyland of Kingston General Hospital is leading a team focussing on care in intensive care units, hospitals or home settings. They support a "family-centered" view of care in which the patients are considered as individuals belonging to a larger social structure, loosely referred to as a "family" (inclusive of partners, significant others, close friends).

This initiative has brought together researchers from various disciplines and sectors to collaborate in innovative research teams. The unique combination of expertise will allow researchers, caregivers, patients and their families, to establish new ways to address key issues of the dying.

"The scale of work and cooperation across disciplines and provinces is unique in the history of Canadian health research," said Dr. Alan Bernstein. "Canada now leads the world in palliative care research." The CIHR initiative has attracted attention from other countries, particularly the UK, and the USA's National Institutes of Health which have both expressed interest in partnership possibilities.

"We are radically changing the face of palliative care in Canada," said Dr. Phil Branton, Scientific Director of CIHR's Institute of Cancer Research and McGill University Professor of Biochemistry. "It is equally important that we keep the momentum going and attract and train new researchers to the field who will make sure that Canadians are always offered the highest quality end-of-life care."

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is the Government of Canada's agency for health research. Its objective is to excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 8,000 researchers and research teams in every province of Canada. www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Attachments:
List of Partners
Definition of Palliative Care

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Partners

Palliative and End-of-Life Care Initiative

Alberta Cancer Board

BC Cancer Agency

Canadian Breast Cancer Research Alliance

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

- Institute of Cancer Research
- Institute of Population and Public Health
- Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health
- Institute of Aging
- Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health
- Institute of Gender and Health
- Institute of Health Services and Policy Research
- Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health
- Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction

CancerCare Manitoba

Health Canada

Heart and Stroke Foundation

National Ovarian Cancer Association

National Cancer Institute of Canada

Definition of Palliative Care

Palliative care aims to improve the life of patients and families through the early identification and impeccable management of suffering associated with life-limiting illness and emphasis on the positive aspects of life, inclusive of physical, psychosocial and spiritual sources.

Palliative care is also prevention - prevention of suffering through prioritizing the diagnosis and skilful care of sources of distress throughout the course of illness and for the family into the bereavement period.

Palliative care research focuses on fundamental symptom mechanisms, as well as the experience of patient and family.