

News Release

Outstanding Canadian health researchers in the spotlight

First ever CIHR-CMAJ Top Canadian Achievements in Health Research Awards

For immediate release

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Ottawa – The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) today honoured eight outstanding Canadian individuals and teams with the first ever CIHR-CMAJ Top Canadian Achievements in Health Research Awards, which recognize and celebrate Canadian health research and innovation excellence.

The winners were selected by a peer-review panel of Canadian and international experts, who looked for the discoveries and innovations that had the biggest impact on the health of people in this country and around the world.

The winners are:

- Drs. **Paul Armstrong, Robert Welsh** and **Padmaja Kaul**, of the University of Alberta, who trained ambulance crews to liaise with doctors and begin treatment of heart attack victims about one hour earlier on average, dramatically improving chances of a full recovery.
- Dr. **Adolfo de Bold**, of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, for the revolutionary discovery of hormone secretion by the human heart. This knowledge now allows physicians to control water and salt levels in the body, reducing hypertension and helping the heart recover after heart attacks.
- Drs. **Geoffrey Fong, Mary Thompson** and **David Hammond**, of the University of Waterloo, for their outstanding work with the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project in assessing the effectiveness of various programs to reduce smoking around the world.
- Dr. **Bob Litchfield**, of the University of Western Ontario, for a ground-breaking study of patients with arthritic knees, proving that knee surgery provided no extra value over physiotherapy and patient education.
- Dr. **Michel LeMay**, of the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, who developed a new way to handle heart attacks that empowers paramedics to read electrocardiograms and identifies patients with blocked heart arteries who need to be fast-tracked for angioplasty surgery – reducing mortality by 50 per cent.
- Dr. **Nizar Mahomed**, of the University Health Network in Toronto, who led a team involving some 35 hospitals that introduced new procedures for hip and knee surgery. These procedures reduced wait times, cut rehabilitation stays and dramatically improved patient outcomes.
- Dr. **Stephen Moses**, of the University of Manitoba, who demonstrated the effectiveness of male circumcision in reducing the transmission of HIV in Africa.
- Dr. **Fred Possmayer**, of the University of Western Ontario, who developed a technique to purify and sterilize lung surfactant – a substance that allows lungs to expand and breathe – so it could be used in premature babies to greatly improve their chances of survival.

“It’s no surprise to us at CIHR that Canadian health researchers perform so well and have made such a difference in the day-to-day health and wellbeing of Canadians and others worldwide,” said Dr. Alain Beaudet, President of CIHR. “It’s a great pleasure for me to see CIHR partner with the CMAJ in honouring these award winners and their achievements.”

“Canada has tremendously talented researchers and we are celebrating this talent with these awards,” said Dr. Paul Hébert, Editor-in-Chief of CMAJ. “This program is designed to highlight and promote top Canadian achievements, and to help physicians, researchers and Canadians know about these accomplishments. To work with Canada’s pre-eminent research funder is also a great partnership.”

“It’s worth noting that all the winners of this new award have placed a strong emphasis on translating their research discoveries and knowledge into innovations that have resulted in practical ways to improve health outcomes,” said Dr. Ian Graham, Vice President, Knowledge Translation at CIHR. “That’s a crucial test for health research; how can it make a difference in people’s lives.”

A second round of the Top Canadian Achievements in Health Research Awards has just been launched, with a February 1, 2010 deadline for applications. CIHR and CMAJ welcome applications from individuals or teams working as health researchers, health professionals, policy makers, or administrators. For more information on this year’s winners and the next round of awards, visit www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca or www.cmaj.ca.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada’s agency for health research. CIHR’s mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, 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 13,000 health researchers and trainees across Canada.

CMAJ showcases innovative research and ideas aimed at improving health for people in Canada and globally. It publishes original clinical research, analyses and reviews, news, practice updates and editorials. CMAJ.ca, a full-text, free open-access website, allows everyone to use the latest health information. CMAJ has an impact factor of 7.5 and its website receives over 25 million requests a year.

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