

THE TIME IS NOW

to Invest in Health Research

Why Health Research?

Health research significantly impacts the quality of life in Canada. Outstanding Canadian health research has helped us to understand diseases, discover new treatments and cures, and improve health care. Health research also drives innovation and economic prosperity. For every \$1 spent on health research, \$4.71 is generated back into the Canadian economy.¹

Health research also enables Canada to rapidly respond to pandemics and other crises, protecting the health of Canadians and our economy. In short, health research drives both health and wealth in Canada.

However...

Due to the ongoing deficiencies in sufficient and stable health research funding in Canada:

- Many of our brightest graduate students, scientists and clinician scientists have been leaving the country to become highly qualified personnel elsewhere in the world.
- Our most significant health discoveries are being translated elsewhere in the world, limiting their benefit to the Canadian economy and hampering early access to Canadians – thereby reducing health outcomes, as during the SARS-Covid pandemic.
- Due to the lack of homegrown investment in research and translation of research, Canada has become reliant on external markets and political policies to access core drugs, like vaccines, in times of crisis.
- Canada is at risk of losing its position as a world leader in public health research and education.

The Time Is Now

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There is still time to turn the tide, but federal and provincial decision-makers must act now.

With the current state of global affairs – specifically, National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding cuts in the U.S. – Canada has a unique opportunity to reclaim its standing, attract top talent, and stimulate economic growth.

Researchers from the United States and around the world are now looking for a new place to call home, where they can safely and adequately pursue their work. Over 1,200 U.S. scientists are considering relocating to Canada. We need to create efficient pan-Canadian immigration pathways and funding structures to get them here. To be effective, swift and sustainable investments are required at both the federal and provincial levels to fund meaningful health research and innovation.

Rapid Response

To quickly reignite health research in Canada, governments must:

1

Restore and increase funding to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and other Canadian funding bodies to bring Canada in line with the G7 average (2.61% of GDP²), to ensure Canada's existing health research ecosystems have the capacity necessary to welcome new global talent.

2

Rapidly adapt immigration pathways to be resource-efficient so top health researchers can enter and remain in Canada.

3

Invest heavily in existing health research training pathways, preferably at a combined Federal and provincial level, so that, in particular, Clinician Investigator Programs, MD/PhD programs can become the health leaders of the future in translational research, ensuring rapid translation from research to action. Government should engage with research institutes, universities, health authorities and teaching hospitals to establish best practices for retaining and compensating health research talent.

4

Top-up funding for Canadian-based health research projects that have been adversely impacted by the cuts to the NIH (i.e. collaborative health research projects that have stalled or been cancelled) and to mitigate the impact of tariffs.

By investing now, Canada can regain its position as a leader in healthcare and scientific discovery – while at the same time protecting our population, growing and enriching our population base and driving economic growth. It's a hat trick in terms of investment. A triple win.

The AFMC Can Help

The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) represents all 18 schools of medicine and is the voice of academic medicine in Canada. AFMC strives to achieve excellence in medical education, health research and health equity for the benefit of all Canadians.

AFMC advocates for a stronger health workforce, better funding for health research, and the integration of planetary health in medical education and healthcare delivery. To this end, the Association is currently leading the creation of a National Health Research Strategy, bringing together leaders from universities, healthcare, and the private sector.

AFMC also works to promote health literacy, raising awareness of the importance of health research and innovation in improving health outcomes for Canadians. As a national organization with strong international connections, AFMC is well positioned to serve as a bridge to other health systems, inviting collaboration with like-minded countries and industries to explore joint health research funding models.

AFMC is eager to collaborate with the federal and provincial governments to ensure Canada's health system is strong, innovative, and able to meet future challenges.

What Can Individuals Do?

Support policies that prioritize health research. Share this message with your local representatives to ensure health research gets the attention it deserves.

Together, We Can Build a Healthier Canada

For more information or to get involved, visit afmc.ca/advocacy or email us at advocacy@afmc.ca:

