

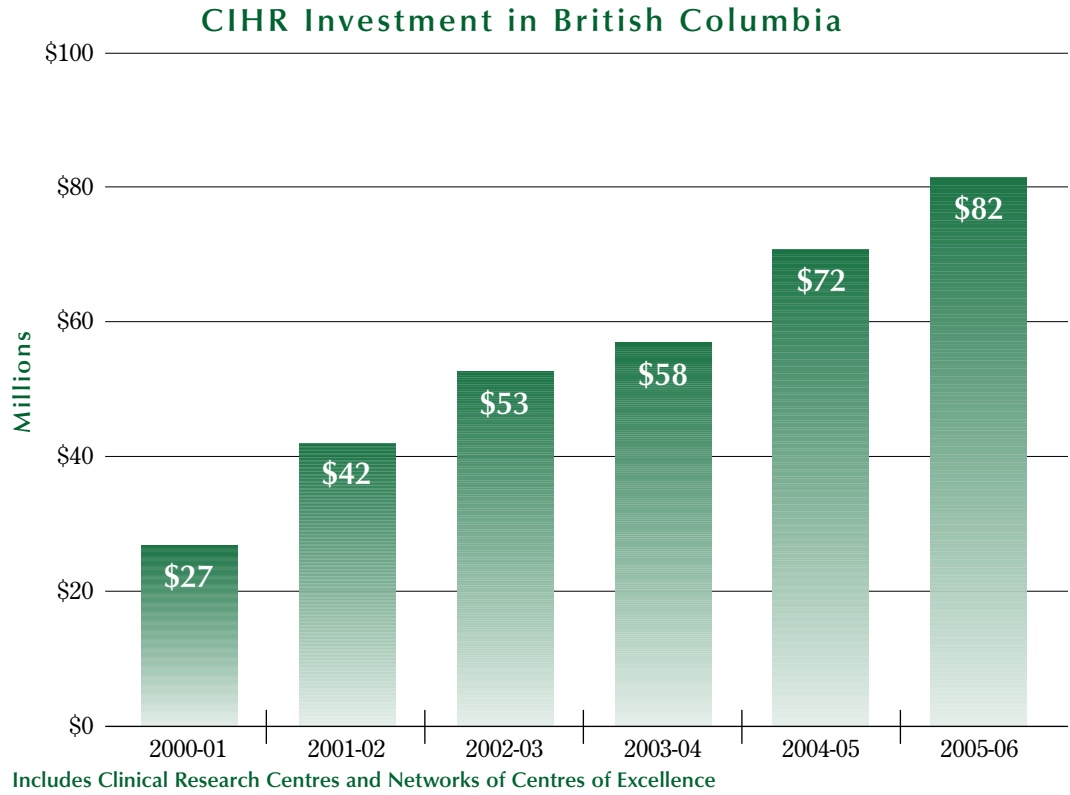
## British Columbia at a Glance

CIHR awarded approximately \$82 million in funding for health research in British Columbia in 2005-06, an increase of more than 204% from 2000-01. This funding supports more than 930 projects by principal investigators in eight funded institutions.

## About CIHR

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 catalyze its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian healthcare system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 10,000 health researchers and trainees across Canada.

## The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Supports Health Research in British Columbia



## Funding Excellence CIHR-Funded Health Research in British Columbia

Universities in British Columbia are known for their expertise and research achievements in a variety of areas. Here are some examples:

### Understanding Homeless Youth

*Dr. Mikael Jansson, University of Victoria, Victoria*

As part of a CIHR-funded survey, University of Victoria sociologist Mikael Jansson has been studying the homeless youth population in Victoria, B.C. The most common reason for living on the street is family instability, the survey found. Almost all participants reported earning money by selling drugs; most also use drugs on a weekly basis, with 75% reporting using marijuana, 45% drinking alcohol and 20% using crystal meth. Only 7% had a paying job and, while most wanted a job, lack of an address, a phone and work clothing stood in their way. The project also highlighted the inherent challenges of research involving hard-to-reach or hidden populations. Dr. Jansson and his team have followed many of the youth over the past five years, and hope to continue for another five years.

### What Makes Pathogens Dangerous

*Dr. Fiona Brinkman, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby*

CIHR-supported researcher Dr. Fiona Brinkman of Simon Fraser University is working to understand how bacteria evolve and when they cross the line from harmless to pathogenic. Part of the answer lies in the concept of "genomic islands" – as bacteria evolve and mutate, they can acquire genetic

traits from other bacteria and bacterial “viruses”. Often, these traits make a bacterium more virulent. With CIHR funding, Dr. Brinkman is building improved computer software tools to analyze these islands and identify the genes causing virulence. Such research is vitally important to other researchers focused on building drugs and therapies to fight the pathogens.

### **Mapping Drug Usage in Canada**

*Dr. Steve Morgan, University of British Columbia, Vancouver*

Prescription drugs are the fastest-growing category of healthcare spending in Canada. A recent study by CIHR-funded researcher Dr. Steve Morgan at the University of British Columbia gives, for the first time, an accurate picture of how drugs are being used across Canada. The Canadian Rx Atlas highlights differences in drug use in different parts of the country and breaks down the factors that drive drug spending. The Atlas will be useful to provincial and territorial health officials across Canada as they face the complex problem of how to control rising prescription drug costs.

### **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease – No Longer a Man’s Disease**

*Dr. Susan Kennedy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver*

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the fourth leading cause of death in North America and is rapidly increasing in women. A new interdisciplinary research program is studying the reasons why and building capacity for more research in this area. Led by Dr. Susan Kennedy, researchers will address physiological differences – women have larger airways which could result in more toxins being inhaled and deposited – as well as socio-economic and environmental factors that could explain why the disease is increasing so rapidly in women. As a first step, team members, all experts in the area of respiratory diseases, are also re-examining their earlier research to see if different conclusions can be drawn if gender is considered.

### **Commercializing Improved Prostate Cancer Diagnostics**

*Dr. Marianne Sadar, B.C. Cancer Research Centre, Vancouver*

One in eight men is diagnosed with prostate cancer, making it the most frequently diagnosed cancer in men. However, current diagnosis methods are unable to determine which tumours will become life-threatening, exposing many men to unnecessary and potentially damaging radiation treatment or prostate cancer surgery. Dr. Marianne Sadar of the B.C. Cancer Research Centre in Vancouver received CIHR commercialization funding to evaluate and develop a custom microarray that analyzes the hormonal progression of prostate cancer. The tool would be able to distinguish between truly aggressive cancers and non-threatening situations – not only reducing unnecessary suffering but also relieving pressure on the healthcare system.

## **The Power of Volunteers – British Columbia Researchers Helping to Build CIHR**

CIHR volunteers, drawn from Canada’s research community, form the backbone of the organization. They ensure that only the best proposals receive funding, help set priorities and ensure CIHR meets its mandate.

### **Dr. Michael McDonald, CIHR Standing Committee on Ethics**

Dr. McDonald is Maurice Young Chair of Applied Ethics at UBC. His current research centres on the ethics of research involving humans. He is also involved in two research projects on ethical issues in transplantation, one on ethnocultural attitudes towards organ donation and the other on living anonymous kidney donation. His expertise helps CIHR in considering ethical issues raised by health research.

### **Dr. Martha MacLeod, CIHR’s Institute of Health Services and Policy Research Advisory Board**

Dr. MacLeod is an Associate Professor in the Nursing and Community Health Programs at the University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC. She teaches in the areas of nursing management/ leadership, knowledge development, qualitative research and advanced community practice. Her research is on the nature of everyday experience and practice and how professional practice and expertise may be developed or hindered within healthcare organizations, particularly those in rural and remote settings. Her wide range of practical knowledge helps the Institute formulate research priorities that answer important questions about Canada’s healthcare system.

### **Dr. Cecilia Benoit, CIHR’s Institute of Population and Public Health Advisory Board**

Dr. Benoit is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria. Her research interests span a wide range of subjects, from the relationship between gender, work and health, to midwifery and maternity care, youth in transition to adulthood, health and occupational-based stigmas, injury prevention and community-based research. Current projects include a mixed-methods study of frontline service workers’ health status and access to health services; social factors affecting the health and well-being of street-involved youth; and social determinants of the health of new mothers.