

# Knowledge Translation



## Closing the Gap

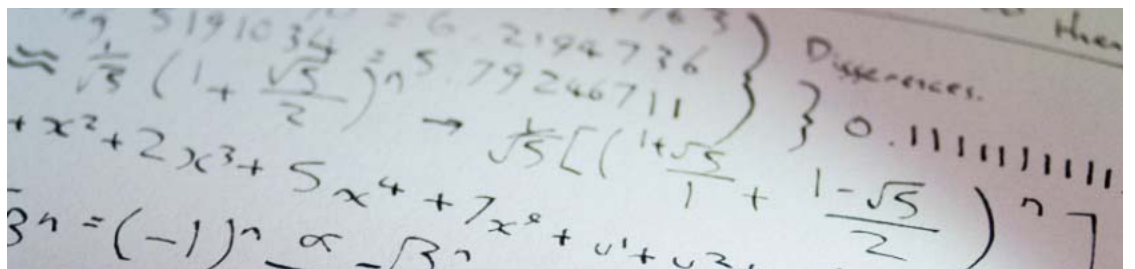
Research evidence, no matter how compelling, will never fully contribute to improved health and a strengthened economy unless new findings are translated into products, practice and policy in a timely and efficient manner. CIHR is working with researchers and our stakeholders to close the gap between what we know and what we do.

Knowledge translation (KT) plays an important role in the mandate of CIHR and is integral to the research process. KT is about making users aware of new knowledge and helping them use it to improve the health of Canadians and the health-care system. For example, research teams have been synthesizing recent health research information to pinpoint the findings that, when put into practice, are likely to have an impact on improving the health of Canadians. Similarly, other teams were already at work with decision- and policy-makers in taking high-impact research evidence and using it to change health-care practices. Other KT activities have focused on partnership building, engaging the public and helping researchers commercialize the results of their work.

## KT Activities

### So much research, so many contradictory results

Canadians are bombarded with more health studies than any time in history, but contradictory research can leave many people, including doctors, unsure what to believe. CIHR is providing funding to support the Canadian Cochrane Network, which is part of an international organization that reviews and synthesizes health research on different topics to draw conclusions about what is known. As one example, pediatricians in wealthy countries often prefer to give children with diarrhea fluids intravenously rather than orally, which results in increased trauma for children and higher health-care costs. A Canadian Cochrane review of data from 18 clinical trials has revealed that, in fact, oral re-hydration therapy – drinking a rehydration solution – is just as effective as intravenous treatment. Another review of existing research determined that acupuncture can help to relieve chronic neck pain.



## 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 health-care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 11,000 health researchers and trainees across Canada.

## Making a difference

CIHR's approach to moving research into action can make a difference. For example Dr. Stanley Zlotkin (recent winner of the CIHR National/International Knowledge Translation Award) developed Sprinkles – a dry, tasteless, single-serving packet that is inexpensive to manufacture and easy to distribute. Sprinkles includes a mix of iron, vitamins C, D and A, and zinc and is a vital tool in the fight against child malnutrition. Through the Sprinkles Global Health Initiative, Dr. Zlotkin is ensuring that children in rural areas of the developing world, those who are ultra-poor and other vulnerable children are receiving Sprinkles. The health impact of the program has been demonstrated in many countries, including Bangladesh and Mongolia. Another example of moving research into action is the partnership between CIHR and the provincial and territorial deputy ministers of health to examine and synthesize the research evidence around benchmarks for acceptable wait times. The results of this collaboration formed key input into the provincial agreement on wait time benchmarks.

## When does knowledge become action?

In the past year, CIHR awarded a number of grants designed to encourage joint projects between researchers and policy-makers focusing on taking knowledge gained from previous research to shape new policies and practices. In one project, CIHR-supported researcher Dr. Roland Grad of McGill University is working with partner Dr. Bernard Marlow of the College of Family Physicians of Canada to find the most effective way to inform doctors of new clinical research so that they can incorporate it into their daily work. In another project, CIHR-supported researcher Dr. Steve Manske from the University of Waterloo and Maureen Murphy from the City of Ottawa are working together to encourage Ontario high schools and public health units to adopt findings from a large-scale survey of students and teachers on smoking and physical activity.

## Encouraging science literacy

CIHR's responsibility for KT also involves efforts to raise public awareness of health research. In the past year, CIHR has launched a successful program known as Café Scientifique. The program puts researchers together with the public in an informal setting, such as a café or pub, to discuss a particular health research subject. In the past year, topics have included obesity and aging. Researchers are not allowed to use slides, must limit their talk to 10 minutes and are encouraged to speak at a level appropriate to a non-researcher audience. Interesting topics, intriguing research and lively debates in an accessible, non-threatening venue – all of these elements contribute to an effective and popular public outreach tool.

## Helping get the story out

Improving science literacy and public understanding of science also involves helping give journalists the tools and information they need to produce balanced and insightful reporting on complex subjects. In the past year, CIHR launched a new series of journalist workshops in response to interest from health and science reporters looking for new story ideas and background for complex research topics. Survey results from the workshops indicated journalists appreciated the chance to learn more about these fields and found it a good source of story ideas.

