



Minister Dosanjh Announces Mental Health Research Initiative to Help Create Healthier Workplaces for Canadians

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Health research leaders call for support from workplace organizations

TORONTO, April 13 /CNW Telbec/ - The Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, and Dr. Rémi Quirion, Scientific Director of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), joined by the Honourable Michael Wilson, Special Advisor to the Health Minister on Mental Health in the Federal Government Workplace, today announced a \$3.2 million major health research initiative aimed at improving **mental health** in the workplace. The announcement was made at a Special **Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health for Leaders in Business, Labour and Science** in Toronto.

The Mental Health and the Workplace: Delivering Evidence for Action research initiative announced today will support new health research teams from across Canada to work with workplace organizations to help improve mental health in the workplace.

"Last February, I committed to a more comprehensive, more integrated approach to better deal with mental illness in the workplace" said Minister Dosanjh. "I announced the appointment of the Honourable Michael Wilson as special advisor and requested the formation of an interdepartmental task force, among other activities. This research announcement is an other important step to improve and increase our knowledge of mental health in the workplace."

"During the next decade, the World Health Organization predicts that in high-income countries such as Canada, depression will surpass heart disease to emerge as the leading cause of disability," said the Honourable Michael Wilson. "Knowing this, it is imperative that Canada's health research community work in partnership with Canada's workplace organizations to help improve and increase our knowledge in this area."

CIHR's Institutes of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA), Population and Public Health (IPPH) and Gender and Health (IGH) and their partners launched this initiative at a workshop convened in April 2004 to develop workplace mental health research priorities.

"I hope that many organizations will come to the table to support this important initiative. Their participation is key to helping to develop new knowledge relevant to mental health and the workplace and to turn that knowledge into practice," says Dr. Rémi Quirion. "By working together, CIHR- funded researchers and workplace organizations will be able to apply the new knowledge to improve policies, programs and practices and potentially prevent and treat mental illness."

The CIHR workshop was attended by more than 100 participants, representing a broad range of expertise in workplace mental health issues. About 40 per cent of the participants were researchers; the remainder was representatives of many workplace stakeholder groups including: employers, unions, insurers, health providers, professional organizations, national and provincial grant agencies and planners, community organizations, consumers groups and politicians.

The Mental Health and the Workplace: Delivering Evidence for Action research initiative is designed to create a solid base of research evidence in this area as well as:

- increase the number of health researchers trained in the area of mental

health in the workplace;

- build a coalition among workplace stakeholder groups in order to enable research in identified priority areas;
- foster the development and evaluation of innovative policy and program interventions and identification of best practices;
- facilitate access to data from public and private sector sources;
- develop and evaluate measurement tools that can be used to collect information on workers at the organizational and societal levels; and to
- facilitate the effective exchange and translation of knowledge gained from the research into the workplace, resulting in actions by stakeholders and partners.

CIHR's Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction supports research to enhance mental health, neurological health, vision, hearing, and cognitive functioning and to reduce the burden of related disorders through prevention strategies, screening, diagnosis, treatment, support systems, and palliation. Associated research will advance our understanding of human thought, emotion, behaviour, sensation (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell), perception, learning and memory. CIHR's Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH) supports research into the complex interactions (biological, social, cultural, environmental) which determine the health of individuals, communities, and global populations; and into the application of that knowledge to improve the health of both populations and individual.

The CIHR Institute of Gender and Health supports research to address how sex and gender interact with other factors that influence health to create conditions and problems that are unique, more prevalent, more serious or different with respect to risk factors or effective interventions for women and for men, girls and boys.

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 9,000 researchers and research teams in every province of Canada.

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