

The Redesign of the CCSRI Research Portfolio

Q & A with CCSRI Director of Research Dr Christine Williams



Dr Christine Williams

Q. Why is the CCSRI research portfolio being redesigned?

A. There are several important reasons, but first and foremost it's because we want to ensure that we continue to fund excellent, innovative cancer research. Our core research program and our grant sizes haven't changed for a long time, but a number of other things have changed.

- The Canadian Cancer Society has a new nationwide strategic plan that incorporates research for the first time, highlighting the central role of research in the Society's mission. We need to make sure our research programs align with the goals of that strategic plan.
- The Canadian Cancer Research Alliance (CCRA) was formed in 2003 and has recently released a pan-Canadian strategy for cancer research, which the Society played a significant role in developing. We need to make sure our research complements that plan.
- At last count, there are 219 cancer charities in Canada, and the Canadian Cancer Society needs to differentiate itself with the high-impact research it funds.
- The Society has also been deliberately spending down reserve funds to support research for a number of years, and we need to make sure that our future research portfolio is financially sustainable but also more flexible, so we can adjust to unpredictable revenue streams and better accommodate major donors.

"We want to ensure that we continue to fund excellent, innovative cancer research."

So – the short answer is that the time is right for us to evaluate and redesign our research portfolio with the input and guidance of the research community and the Society’s leadership across the country. All of us want to make a difference in the fight against cancer. By reinvigorating our research portfolio, we hope to stimulate the Canadian public’s investment in the Society and to fund more of the critical research that will help us understand cancer and make a significant impact in that fight.

Q. *What will the redesign mean to the research community? What type of research will you fund in the future?*

A. The Society will continue to fund excellent cancer research across the three Ends (or long-term goals) of our strategic plan. These goals are reducing cancer incidence, reducing cancer mortality and improving quality of life for Canadians living with and beyond cancer. This means that the Society will continue to fund basic/fundamental research, translational research and applied cancer control research within a mix of grant programs, including investigator-initiated grant competitions. We are in the process now of working out new program details, but we would value your input. You can participate by providing your feedback through the [CCSRI online forum](#).

Q. *How is the redesign being done?*

A. In a word – consultation. One of the goals of the research redesign has been to engage both the scientific community and the Society’s divisions (who raise the

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revenue and connect us to the public) in the redesign process. For that reason, the CCSRI formed a Research Cabinet to oversee the process, composed of subcommittees of Advisory Committee on Research (ACOR) members, Society division leaders and senior staff. The Research Cabinet developed high-level goals and key priorities for the new research portfolio in the spring. The initial program ideas were developed by ACOR during the summer, then refined over the fall by working groups of expert scientists and the Society’s leadership, as well as the Research Cabinet. In November, we posted key messages and portfolio goals on the [CCSRI website](#). As the program ideas become more concrete over the winter, we will be posting those on our website as well. I hope that the research community will read these program ideas and continue to give us feedback through our interactive [online comments forum](#). It is a very iterative process and the more we can consult and engage with the broad Canadian cancer research community, the better.

Q. *When can we expect to see changes to the CCSRI research portfolio?*

A. We anticipate that we'll be announcing the finalized new research programs in the spring of 2011. At that point, a timeline for the implementation and roll-out of new programs will also be announced. In the meantime, our regular grants competition is progressing as usual, with panel meetings in January and February, and new grant announcements being made in April. Stay tuned!