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## The REAL Issue

At the NSHRF we are always aware of the health research environment around us and how potential changes impact Nova Scotians. When potential changes arise, we work to engage the Nova Scotia health research enterprise.

At the beginning of February this year, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) announced its reform of the Open Suite of Programs and Peer Review Process. Reform planning began when CIHR recognized that changes were needed to enhance the way they fund health research and knowledge translation to fulfill both the broad spectrum of their mandate and sustain the Canadian health research enterprise. More information about the process can be found on CIHR's [website](#).

As part of the reform, CIHR looked to engage with the Canadian research community. We encouraged the Nova Scotia health research community to respond to CIHR's online discussion form and other options on their website. On March 27, 2012, we hosted a series of Discussion Forums between CIHR and stakeholders in the Nova Scotia health research enterprise. These sessions were intended to consider the changes CIHR has proposed to the Open Suite of Programs and to their peer review process, and how those changes might impact Nova Scotia.

Overall comments at the sessions related to the following themes:

- The need for clarification on: 1) the necessity of program and peer review reform, 2) evidence supporting the proposed design in terms of both program reform and peer review reform, and 3) objectives of the new programs.
- Concerns that the changes will result in decreases in the number of investigators receiving funding.
- Concerns of regional disparity or systematic biases that disadvantage researchers in particular career cohorts.
- A need for a piloting approach to implementation and an evaluation and monitoring plan.

In our next steps, we will be submitting a written response to the Design Discussion Document. We are also convening an Impact Analysis Group which includes representatives from across the province, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. This group will identify measures, indicators and available resources to monitor the impact of the reforms on the Maritime health research enterprise. To learn more about our next steps, please visit our website.

We encourage all members of Nova Scotia's health research enterprise to provide input, if they have yet not done so. To learn more about providing feedback, visit CIHR's website. CIHR has extended the deadline for input into the reforms until the end of April.



Krista Connell, CEO

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## NSHRF Special Initiatives and Projects

### Pan-Canadian Health Human Resources Planning Toolkit

The [Pan-Canadian Health Human Resources \(HHR\) Planning Toolkit](#) is now live! Visit this new interactive online resource where you can learn about HHR planning, discover best practice models to support your decision making or use the forum to ask questions and connect with HHR professionals from across the country. We developed that Toolkit with financial support from Health Canada. Visit the [Toolkit](#) to learn more.

## Research Programs

### Scotia Scholarship Research Trainee Funding Opportunity

The Scotia Scholarship funding opportunity is available under our Research Trainee funding program. The Scotia Scholarship is intended to provide financial support to high caliber trainees engaged in health research related academic study at Nova Scotia universities. The goal of the Scotia Scholarship is to support the development of the next generation of highly qualified health researchers and leaders in the Nova Scotia health research enterprise. The Scotia Scholarship will be offered at both the masters and doctorate levels this year.

Applicants will be evaluated based on their past academic, leadership, and research achievements. For the 2012-13 competition, each university will have a minimum [quota](#) of one (1) scholarship. Additional scholarships beyond the minimum will be based on the percentage of past NSHRF student specific funding (i.e., Student Research Award allocations between 2000 and 2010) allocated to each university.

Interested research trainees are encouraged to learn more about the funding opportunity through our [website](#) and contact their institutions for internal deadlines and processes.

### Call for Peer Reviewers

We are currently accepting nominations for the 2012 Peer Review Committees. Our Biomedical Peer Review Committee and the Health Policy, Health Services, Health Outcomes Peer Review Committee review grant applications for funding. Further information on the Peer Review Committees and the nomination process can be found on our [website](#). If you are interested, please contact us by April 6, 2012. The process subjects a researcher's scholarly ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the field. We, like the national funding agencies and others, use the peer review process to assure that the research funded meets the highest standards of excellence.

## Research Enterprise Development Initiatives (REDI)

### Call for applications: CONSUP- Research Team Development Award

The Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) is looking for a research team that will conduct a survey to support their initiatives on generating awareness and understanding within the university student community about the long-term value of healthy food choices and active lifestyles.

CONSUP is committed to supporting a healthy environment for students, faculty and staff at Nova Scotia's

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universities. In order to better understand the current status of student food choices, lifestyles and related issues and to support the long-term program objectives, the working group intends to identify a research team to design and conduct a benchmark survey that examines food choices, lifestyles and other health issues of undergraduate students across Nova Scotia's universities and the Nova Scotia Community College system.

This Team Development Award is intended to support the development of a research team that will apply for additional funding in order to conduct the benchmark survey. The team may choose to apply to any provincial, national, or international research funding competition that is peer reviewed. This Award will support activities related to team and proposal development.

For more information on the Award and apply, please visit our [website](#).

Applications are to be submitted by **April 5, 2012**.

## **CIHR Innovation Team Grants in Community-Based Primary Healthcare**

We are pleased to partner with CIHR for the Innovation Team Grants: Community-Based Primary Healthcare (CBPHC) funding opportunity. The CBPHC funding opportunity will provide support for teams undertaking programmatic, cross-jurisdictional and interdisciplinary research to develop, implement, evaluate and compare innovative models for chronic disease prevention and management in CBPHC and improving access to appropriate CBPHC for vulnerable populations.

You can learn more about the full funding opportunity [here](#).

### Funding

- Up to \$ 31,665,000 over five years is available through this funding opportunity to support Canada-based teams (additional funds through partners in Australia and New Zealand will available to components of the teams based in those countries).

### Important Dates

Competition: Phase 1: Letter of Intent

Application Deadline: 2012-05-01

Anticipated Notice of Decision: 2012-07-03

Funding Start Date: n/a

Competition: Phase 2: Full Application

Application Deadline: 2012-10-15

Anticipated Notice of Decision: 2013-04-01

Funding Start Date: 2013-04-01

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## Peer Review Observer Program Application Call

Interested in observing our Peer Review Committees? Want to learn more about the Peer Review process? Let us know your interest [here](#).

The program provides an opportunity for those with an interest in health research to learn about the peer review process through first-hand observation of our Peer Review Committee during their deliberations.

## Knowledge Programs

### Scientist Knowledge Translation Training Workshop

We are partnering with the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre (AHPRC) at Dalhousie University will host a two day practice-oriented Knowledge Translation (KT) training workshop in Halifax on August 27-28, 2012. The workshop will help researchers, KT professionals and educators to develop fundamental skills and competencies around creating and implementing a KT plan that will:

- Improve research impact
- Promote research utilization
- Ensure that research findings reach the appropriate audiences

The course will be instructed by Melanie Barwick, Ph.D., C.Psych, a Registered Psychologist with a primary role as a Health Systems Scientist in the Community Health Systems Resource Group and Donna Lockett, Ph.D., a knowledge broker and KT specialist, both from the Hospital for Sick Children.

To register and learn more click [here](#).

## In Profile: Nova Scotia Research

### Project Title: The Colleen Elliott Award Recipient

2011 was the first year the [Colleen Elliott Award](#) was presented to a research trainee. The Colleen Elliott Award was created to acknowledge a research trainee who demonstrates the greatest promise and potential for excellence in cancer research and to recognize and honour Colleen Elliott's contribution to supporting the advancement of the health research enterprise in Nova Scotia.

Sheri Roach is pursuing her Master of Nursing/Master of Health Administration at Dalhousie University. Her masters research project is looking at developing a evidence-based definition of a "quick death" following colorectal cancer (CRC) diagnosis, and to identify predictors of quick death, with a particular focus on socioeconomic factors. Sheri has noted that CRC is a priority health issue in Nova Scotia as the Atlantic Canada provinces have a higher rate of CRC than the rest of Canada.

Sheri's research has three main goals:

- To identify socioeconomic factors that play a role in quick death following CRC diagnosis such as income, education, race, rural/urban residence, and whether they live alone or with someone;

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- To broaden the foundation for informed decision making available to health care providers by allowing them to more effectively assess patients' risks and incorporate palliative care in a timely manner; and
- To create a definition of "quick death" after CRC diagnosis that is consistent and meaningful in Nova Scotia.

Sheri hopes that her research results will contribute in two ways. "First, I am hoping that by creating an algorithm, health care providers will be able to use to predict whether a client is at risk of dying quickly, and ensure those clients and families are offered the best possible care and support," said Sheri. "Second, I envision that if this research can identify groups who might typically be at higher risk, we could eventually use those identifiers to flag people earlier in the disease process when active treatment would be more appropriate than palliative care."

This research project will also provide a springboard for further investigation into inequities in access to palliative care programs and support planning and decision making around palliative care delivery. There is also may be the potential for further research into the identification of individuals with CRC earlier in their illness trajectory based on predictors identified in Sheri's research project.

On receiving the Colleen Elliott Award Sheri said it was an honour, "this award is named for a woman who encompassed so many things that I aspire to be: a caring nurse, an expert in her field, an advocate, a leader in both health care and the community, and a beacon of optimism and spirit for those around her."

Since receiving the award, Sheri said the exposure has been very beneficial for her research career. "I have had the opportunity to meet and learn from experienced researchers with diverse backgrounds and interests," said Sheri. "These conversations have greatly improved my understanding of potential next steps I can take as a developing researcher."

Sheri will be using the funding from the award to broaden her understanding of research methods, colorectal cancer, and palliative care in Nova Scotia. She will do this by participating in a number of workshops, seminars, and other opportunities. She is also hoping to present her research at a national conference.



Sheri Roach receiving the Colleen Elliott Award from Brendan Elliott, Colleen's son.

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## Other News

### Thinking of Conducting a Systematic Review?

Are you thinking of conducting a systematic review? Do you have an idea for a systematic review but aren't sure how to refine your question? Are you interested in finding out more about what's involved in conducting a systematic review from colleagues who are currently working on reviews or who have completed reviews in the past?

On May 4, 2012 you can learn more about conducting a systematic review at the first in a series of informal networking sessions. The sessions will be jointly hosted by the Nova Scotia Cochrane Resource Centre and the Research Methods Unit (RMU) of Capital Health, the IWK Health Centre, and Dalhousie University. To learn more click [here](#).

### Provide feedback on CIHR's Proposed Changes to Open Suite of Programs and Enhancements to the Peer Review Process

On February 9, CIHR opened its feedback period to its proposed changes to the Open Suite of Programs and enhancements to the peer review process. We are encouraging everyone within the health research enterprise to get involved and share feedback. CIHR has extended the deadline for input into the reform until the end of April. The Design Discussion Document can be found on the CIHR [website](#) along with more information regarding the process and how you can be involved.

### CIHR Institute of Aging Web Consultation

The Institute of Aging of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has the mandate to support research and build research capacity in the field of aging. The Institute of Aging is currently embarking on a strategic planning process to define priorities in research on aging and knowledge translation for the next five years (2013-2018).

To this end, and as first step in this process, the Institute of Aging has launched a web-based survey targeting a broad array of organizations and stakeholders: the Institute of Aging is seeking their input on the opportunities and challenges of an aging population, eliciting opinions and diverse points of view on the priority research areas in the coming years.

We encourage you to participate in this short (10-15 minutes) survey of four open-ended questions. Please respond [here](#).

## Did You Know?

Looking for a colleague, possible collaborator, or expert source of information? Take a look through the [Nova Scotia Directory of Health Researchers](#), available online at the NSHRF website.

If you are a Nova Scotian researcher working in a discipline either directly or indirectly related to health, please take a minute to add your name to the directory through your [Canadian Common CV](#).

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