

NEWS RELEASE

Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the BC Academic Health Science Network unite to drive discovery and innovation in BC's vibrant health research system

The new organization, Michael Smith Health Research BC, will strengthen health research capacity and capability across the province

Vancouver, BC, October 13, 2021 — The boards of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) and the BC Academic Health Science Network (BC AHSN) have signed an agreement to join forces to create a new organization, Michael Smith Health Research BC, to support the growth and evolution of BC's health research system and life sciences sector.

The new organization is being announced on the 28th anniversary of Dr. Michael Smith's Nobel Prize in chemistry for creating one of the foundational tools of genetic engineering, which has helped develop new diagnostic tests and treatments for genetic diseases.

"A healthy province with a resilient economy requires a strong health system underpinned by scientific evidence and knowledge generated by health research. Michael Smith Health Research BC will help deliver on that and benefit British Columbians," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. "Bringing together two strong organizations with track records of excellence will help advance new life-saving technologies and therapeutics with input from patients and the public, create jobs for BC-based companies, and support a thriving economy fuelled by world-class innovation in health research."

The new organization will strengthen BC's vibrant health research system by supporting the people, institutions and activities that generate and use research-based knowledge to promote, restore and maintain the health of British Columbians.

"Michael Smith Health Research BC will build on MSFHR's legacy of talent development and research capacity building, and BC AHSN's focus on innovation and learning in the health system and communities," said Dr. Elinor Wilson, board chair of the new organization and former board chair of MSFHR.

“The province will see increased mobilization of partners, expertise and resources—including important platforms such as Clinical Trials BC, the BC SUPPORT Unit and Research Ethics BC, and a strong suite of funding competitions—through this collaboration,” said Dr. Charles Jago, former board chair of BC AHSN.

Dr. Bev Holmes will take on the role of president and CEO. “Together, we are stronger than the sum of our parts, and I am thrilled to be leading this exciting new journey,” Dr. Holmes said. “I look forward to working with our existing partners and forging new alliances to strengthen BC’s health research system, grow patient-oriented research, and expand support to talented researchers across the province to deliver scientific evidence for breakthroughs that will ultimately improve the health of British Columbians.”

Dr. Stirling Bryan, chief scientific officer, also emphasized the importance of a partnership approach: “The founding organizations have fostered trusted relationships with many key stakeholders, including patients and the public, government, health authorities, academic institutions, industry and community partners, and we will continue to strengthen those, develop new ones and work towards a more equitable, diverse and inclusive research system,” Dr. Bryan said.

For more information about Michael Smith Health Research BC visit: www.healthresearchbc.ca.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Julia White
Director, Communications
Michael Smith Health Research BC
jwhite@healthresearchbc.ca | 604.828.2766