

CIHR announces competition for ME/CFS “catalyst grant”

Written by Administrator

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The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the federal government's health funding agency, announced a competition for a “catalyst grant” for ME/CFS. The CIHR grant would pay up to \$200k per year for 3 years.

The purpose of the grant would be to build a collaborative network of researchers and research users. The network would be national in scope and would encourage interaction between researchers and stakeholders (“clinicians, decision-makers, industry, patients, and other knowledge-users outside of the academic community”).

The announcement sets five objectives for the ME/CFS project:

- To create an interactive and coherent Canadian network in ME/CFS that will tackle, in a coordinated manner, the clinical research challenges posed by this spectrum of chronic disabling disorders.
- To develop multiple population-based patient cohorts for translational research in ME/CFS.
- To facilitate national collaboration, resource sharing, capacity building and dissemination in priority research areas.
- To provide the needed infrastructure around which to undertake therapeutic and diagnostic clinical studies in Canada. In addition, this network will set the stage for potential future international collaborations.
- To advance research uptake, training, and knowledge translation in ME/CFS across multiple disciplines with a focus on expediting knowledge uptake to mobilize and build the

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research community.

The principal applicant must be an academic researcher.

The application deadline is **April 12th**. Funding could start in August of this year.

The National ME/FM Action Network has been pressing CIHR for research funding for several years. In a [letter to the President of CIHR](#) in November 2012, we emphasized the lack of research for ME/CFS and FM and asked CIHR to develop robust research programs. We suggested a target of \$10M in dedicated funding for ME/CFS and another \$10M for FM. In later correspondence, we asked for the establishment of a separate institute because of the challenges in this area.

There has been little direct communication between CIHR and our organization over the past year. We were not consulted in any way about this announcement. Our reaction is that it is wonderful to see funds being allocated to ME/CFS research and attempts being made to build research infrastructure and dialogue. This work has to begin, it has to begin somewhere, and starting with a network is a good idea. However, we note that the objectives of this competition are extremely ambitious considering the amount of funding and the underdevelopment of the ME/CFS area. We anticipate that many challenges will be encountered. We are also concerned that the ME/CFS grant announcement uses the term “chronic fatigue syndromes” (plural) twice, suggesting that it is not focused on ME/CFS alone.

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We look forward to watching this competition evolve. It will be a learning process which will help point research in the right direction.

You can view the CIHR funding announcement [here](#) .

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