

January 30, 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Re: Future of Research in Canada

We expect that this letter, like most letters, will be screened by your staff. We request that the key contents of this letter be brought to your personal attention.

Please allow us to introduce ourselves. Frank Naus is the Vice President Research at Hamilton Health Sciences and has 25 years of experience working in research in the private and hospital sector. Salim Yusuf is the Chief Scientist at Hamilton Health Sciences, a recipient of the Order of Canada, Gairdner Wightman award winner, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, named as Canada's most influential scientist, and until recently the President of the World Heart Federation.

We write this letter to express our concerns for the serious state of health research in Canada. As leaders working in a Canadian academic, research-intensive, university and hospital, we strongly urge our government to consider two strategies to galvanize health research in Canada.

First, there is a dire and immediate need to increase government investment in the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), Canada's premier research funding agency. This is necessary in order to strengthen Canadian science, improve the health of our people, and enhance the economy.

The second strategy is to develop an organization, either within CIHR or within two linked organizations (as was done successfully in the UK over a decade ago), to fund two broad areas of health research. One focused on basic and fundamental science and the other focused on clinical, applied, and population sciences, with a minimum of one billion dollars in funding for each component or strategic area. Both increasing funding and transforming the current structure and organization of research funding is needed in Canada if we are to remain internationally competitive.

Canadian researchers have made significant impact both within our country and on a global stage, participating and leading international consortia for research. The resulting studies are often published as high impact articles in major scientific journals. The dedication to pursue development, gain new knowledge, and translate this new knowledge into practice and government policy has lead Canadian researchers to be extraordinarily creative and innovative. Unfortunately, the funding environment forced us for many years to work with severely constrained financial resources. Compared to other OECD countries, Canada is last in government research funding and has shown a decline in real funding (after adjusting for inflation) in the last 15 years.

Continued cutbacks or tightening of funding is detrimental to research across Canada as highly skilled investigators conducting leading edge studies, running laboratories, and employing staff, are unable to sustain or further develop important areas of research for the betterment of the health of the people of our country and the world.

However, increased funding by itself is not enough. It needs to be coupled with organizational and structural transformation that is strategic and that will support generating and testing ideas that are fundamental (both from basic sciences and population sciences). These ideas then need to be translated into the improved health of patients in hospitals and people in the general population (clinical, population and applied sciences).

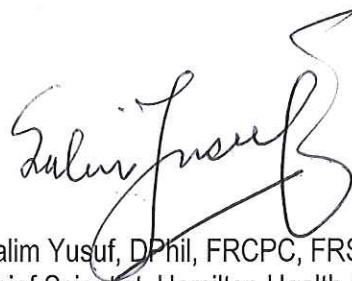
While CIHR was originally created with a vision that was transformative and in theory was meant to achieve moving ideas from the 'bench' to the 'clinic' and to the 'population', it was never able to achieve this as due to funding restrictions. In particular, there was little support for clinical or population sciences (at present less than one third of the modest and shrinking CIHR funding is devoted to the 3 pillars that are related to research in people or populations). Until **both** an increase in overall funding and its balanced distribution is achieved, Canada will not benefit from the advances of the full range of research approaches, nor will it lead to appropriate improvements in health and our economy.

We are truly proud and honoured to be Canadians and by working in the field of health research with many world-renowned investigators at Hamilton Health Sciences and McMaster University and our collaborators in over 80 countries in all inhabited continents of the world, we and our colleagues have contributed to improving the health of Canadians and citizens of the world. We respectfully request that our government seriously consider our proposals that are essential to restoring Canada's rightful place as global leaders of health research.

Sincerely yours,



Frank Naus, MSc, MBA, DBA
Vice President, Research
Hamilton Health Sciences



Salim Yusuf, DPhil, FRCPC, FRSC, O.C.
Chief Scientist, Hamilton Health Sciences
Distinguished University Professor of Medicine
McMaster University
Immediate Past President, the World Heart Federation.

cc: Hon. William F. Morneau
Minister of Finance (Canada)
Local MPs