

The Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research

Serving those who serve us.



CIMVHR
Canadian Institute for Military
and Veteran Health Research

ICRSMV
L'institut canadien de recherche sur
la santé des militaires et des vétérans

Executive Summary

The Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) exists to enhance the lives of Canadian military personnel, Veterans and their families by harnessing the national capacity for research. As a network of 33 Canadian universities and over 1,000 researchers and clinicians, CIMVHR has become the hub for military and Veteran health research in Canada, and as such is requesting that the Federal Government commit \$1 million per year over 5 years to ensure the optimal health and well-being of our military, Veterans and their families.

With over 65,000 serving members in the Canadian Armed Forces, 25,000 members in the Primary Reserve Forces, over 750,000 Veterans, and all of their families, we have millions of Canadians who are impacted by the unique risks, exposures and experiences of service. These Canadians require unique standards of health protection, prevention and care. This research is wholly applicable to first responders and humanitarians who find themselves in similar situations, and advances in care are beneficial to all Canadians.

CIMVHR engages existing academic research resources, facilitates new research, increases research capacity, fosters knowledge translation, and has become the hub for 33 universities that have agreed to join forces in addressing these unique health research requirements. These 33 institutions look to CIMVHR for guidance on military and Veteran health research priorities, information on research opportunities, links to researchers, connections to engaged stakeholders, and insight into current research progress and results.

Annually, CIMVHR hosts the preeminent gathering for military and Veteran health research, and since 2010, over 1,700 stakeholders have gathered at 4 Forums to hear more than 450 research presentations for one reason – to improve the lives of military personnel, Veterans and their families.

CIMVHR has built a strong foundation and become a trusted and valuable resource. Five million dollars over 5 years would mean invaluable leveraging opportunities with engaged public and private stakeholders, resources to fund pilot research, funds to support graduate students – the future of military and Veteran health research – and the opportunity to build the team required to manage and maintain this growing national centre of excellence.

OUR VISION

The health and well-being of Canadian military personnel, Veterans and their families is maximized through world-class research resulting in evidence-informed practices, policies and programs.

OUR MISSION

To enhance the lives of Canadian military personnel, Veterans and their families by harnessing the national capacity for research.

OUR FOCUS

CIMVHR has identified four pillars on which we focus our efforts:

- I. Research
- II. Education
- III. Knowledge translation
- IV. Partnerships

I. RESEARCH

CIMVHR has developed partnerships and processes to ensure the best possible understanding of the current Canadian research landscape as it pertains to military, Veteran and family health research. As the hub, CIMVHR is able to highlight and disseminate cutting edge research, and with the active engagement and support of Veterans Affairs Canada, and the Department of National Defence, specifically the Surgeon General, Defence Research and Development Canada, and the Chief of Military Personnel, CIMVHR is able to help identify collaborations and research opportunities that directly address current research priorities. CIMVHR gathers national and international experts to focus their talents on the health needs of our national heroes.

Examples of how CIMVHR is impacting research in Canada:

Building teams

CIMVHR has linked numerous researchers and research teams to focus their efforts on military and Veteran health. For example, CIMVHR built a pan-Canadian team of concussion experts from the sports community and those focused on blast injuries in the military community. This new team is now working together to further research on traumatic brain injury in Canada. One element the team is focusing on is differentiating between traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), so that the appropriate treatment can be administered.

Supporting access to grants and study populations

To date CIMVHR has supported our researchers in obtaining over \$5 million in research grants. We have also provided access to military and Veteran study populations and data for over 30 research teams.

CIMVHR has provided pilot funding for more than 30 new pan-Canadian research teams working on priority health related research. Through established partnerships, CIMVHR is able to communicate government research priorities to the research community and conversely, bring innovative, high-impact research to the government for translation into programs, policies and treatments that impact military, Veterans and families.

Building the next generation of researchers

In May 2013, Wounded Warriors Canada presented CIMVHR with a cheque for \$400,000 to fund 10 doctoral scholarships over the next 10 years. Students will be supervised by CIMVHR researchers working on mental health issues and the challenges of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In November 2013, The Royal Canadian Legion donated \$30,000 and entrusted CIMVHR to administer a Masters Scholarship that will address the unique issues facing Veterans and their families through systematic research of the needs, over the life course, of those who have served our nation.

CIMVHR has supported numerous Masters students to gain practical placements in military and Veteran health environments, and supported medical residents who are funded by the military to find research projects related to the military.

Ensuring the applicability of the research to all Canadians

Through effective communications and publications, CIMVHR is able to ensure the relevance and applicability of the research to all others who work in similar environments, including first responders, humanitarians, and indeed all Canadians who benefit from medical and rehabilitation advances made in the military.

II. EDUCATION

A cornerstone of CIMVHR is educating the next generation. To do this, CIMVHR administers scholarship opportunities, provides access to information about research funding opportunities and offers a first-of-its-kind graduate program.

CIMVHR Graduate Level Courses

In the Fall of 2012, CIMVHR launched its first graduate level course, in the form of a webinar, at Queen's University and the Royal Military College. The webinar looks at the health related issues associated with active military personal, Veterans and their families. The course is part of an ongoing program to capitalize on the knowledge of accomplished researchers and will develop a new generation of graduate students who will further research in the field of Veteran, military and family health. This course is offered on an annual basis and is accepted for credit at all CIMVHR partner universities.

In 2014 two of the CIMVHR partner universities will offer courses on military family health needs and research specific to this population. These courses will provide another opportunity for Masters and PhD students to focus on this population and will grow the pan-Canadian cadre of researchers. Educating and training the next generation of students on the needs of this population is crucial for increasing the amount of future researchers who chose to focus their research on military members, Veterans and their families.

III. KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

Effective knowledge translation is key to the success of CIMVHR. As such, every effort is made to ensure professional, concise, timely and relevant communications activities that engage all stakeholders.

Forum – the annual conference

Starting in 2010, CIMVHR has hosted an annual "Forum" for knowledge translation, networking and collaboration. Through a rigorous abstract submission process, academic researchers apply to present their research related to military, Veterans and their families to fellow academics, government policy makers, industry executives, international counterparts, current serving military and Veterans. 2014 will mark the fifth annual Forum. Through Forum CIMVHR has engaged the national research community and international counterparts. Forum 2014, November 24 to 26 in Toronto, promises to be the largest yet and is the premiere event of its kind world-wide.

Publications

Since 2010, CIMVHR has edited a compilation of research presented at the annual Forum. In 2013, The Hill Times ranked *Beyond the Line* 7th on the Best 100 Books in Politics, Public Policy, and History in 2013.

Shaping the Future: Military and Veteran Health Research – 2011

A New Coalition for a Changing Battlefield: Military and Veteran Health Research – 2012

Beyond the Line: Military and Veteran Health Research – 2013

#7 Hill Times Best 100 Books in Politics

In January 2015, CIMVHR will launch an online, open-access journal devoted to Canadian military, Veteran and family health. This will ensure the most current evidence is always available to clinicians, policy makers, government ministries and program developers so they can use the evidence to inform their work.

IV. PARTNERSHIPS

Essential to the success of our mission to advance Military and Veteran Health Research is the ability to identify, engage with and learn from the many stakeholders committed to the health and well-being of Canada's military, Veterans and their families. CIMVHR develops partnerships with these organizations and individuals, and then connects them to each other using a hub-and-spoke model – an efficient model for networking and knowledge exchange. Partners are represented by four “spokes” of the CIMVHR Hub:

- I. Academia
- II. Military and Veterans
- III. Industry
- IV. Government and other caring Canadians

As the Hub, CIMVHR has created connections between and among stakeholders resulting in new collaborative projects, funding opportunities, the sharing of insights, the advancement of existing projects, and the identification of areas in which more work is needed.

New stakeholders are introduced to CIMVHR every day, and advancements in military and Veteran health research are emerging from an ever-growing network of committed partners.

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Conclusion

The Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research has been able to achieve incredible results in just four short years including:

- 🍁 developing a network of engaged researchers and 33 Canadian universities;
- 🍁 developing the infrastructure to support the development of the “hub” of military and Veteran health research in Canada;
- 🍁 building a first-class annual research Forum as a venue for translating knowledge about current, future and needed military and Veteran health research;
- 🍁 engaging hundreds of stakeholders from industry and philanthropic organizations;
- 🍁 developing partnerships with industry and caring Canadians willing to help fund education and research; and
- 🍁 creating international linkages with researchers and institutes in 10 countries.

These results have been made possible with support from Queen’s University, RMCC and the proceeds from the annual Forum. As CIMVHR has grown, we are increasingly presented with opportunities to advance health research for military, Veterans, their families and the Canadian population – pilot research, post-graduate education and knowledge translation opportunities. To take advantage of and foster these opportunities, CIMVHR is in need of a committed, sustainable source of funding.

The Institute is thankful for the generosity of philanthropic donations received to date, but understands that these funds are limited and not sufficient to achieve the goals of the institute.

CIMVHR requests \$1 million per year for each of the next 5 years in order to continue this important work. CIMVHR will leverage this money to ensure the development of a fully sustainable institute within the 5-year time frame.



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