

The Department of Veterans Affairs supports a variety of clinical studies in chronic disease problems including psychiatric research; total expenditures reached \$322,000 in 1971-72. Studies in radiation biology and other life sciences important to health are conducted by the National Research Council and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

The principal voluntary agencies supporting medical research in Canada related to their special interests are: the National Cancer Institute, Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society, Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded, Canadian Mental Health Association, Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, and Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.

Research is also funded by provincial governments through various councils and foundations as well as direct research grants. The Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Research, to which the voluntary agencies are invited, provides a forum for the sharing of information and support of medical research.

The Medical Research Council (MRC) is the main channel through which the federal government provides financial support for research in the health sciences initiated and carried out in Canadian schools of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. It had existed in various administrative forms within the framework of the National Research Council since 1938 but in 1969, with the passage of the Government Organization Act, it became a departmental Crown corporation in its own right. It reports to Parliament through the Minister of National Health and Welfare but is completely separate from the Department. The Council itself is made up of a full-time president appointed by the Governor in Council, a vice-president and 20 members, drawn chiefly from the universities, who serve without remuneration for terms of up to three years. The program is administered by a small full-time secretariat of scientific and administrative personnel.

Under the terms of its legislation, the MRC has authority "to promote, assist and undertake research in the health sciences, with the exception of public health research". The latter, by statute, is the responsibility of the federal Department of National Health and Welfare. Its program is divided into three main sectors: grants, awards, and research development.

The Grants Program is by far the largest component of the MRC operation. Applications from investigators on the staff of Canadian universities and affiliated institutions are considered on three occasions each year. The basis for this consideration is peer assessment; each application is reviewed by external referees expert in the field involved and then considered by one of 17 grants committees, each composed of eight to ten senior investigators drawn from universities, government and industry. The recommendations of these committees are then forwarded to the Council and awards are approved to the extent that funds permit. Most are made on an annual basis but, where a research program of high merit has reached a stable level of expenditure, support in a specified annual amount may be provided for terms of three to five years. The grants are designed to provide for the normal operating costs of approved programs and for items of special research equipment; they may not be used for the remuneration of the investigator to whom the award is made.

The Awards Program provides support for research personnel in several categories. There are opportunities for research training of graduates of high calibre at the post-doctoral level through Fellowship and Centennial Fellowship programs and at the pre-doctoral level through a program of Studentships. These awards are all prize awards and the number of successful candidates is therefore limited. Many other research trainees, however, receive support through the operating grants to investigators who supervise their training. The MRC Associateship program provides continuing salary support for a limited number of highly qualified independent researchers working in universities and devoting at least 75% of their time to research and graduate teaching. The MRC Scholarship provides young investigators who have completed their formal research training with an opportunity to demonstrate in a university setting their potential for independent research without the necessity of, at the same time, carrying a heavy undergraduate teaching load; these awards are tenable for up to five years. Provision is also made for the exchange of information among Canadian scientists through the Visiting Professorship Program, and among Canadian scientists and their foreign colleagues by means of the Visiting Scientist Program under which Canadian investigators may spend up to one research year abroad or foreign scientists may spend periods of three to 12 months working in Canadian laboratories.