



## Breast Cancer In *Young Women*

### Breast Cancer in Young Women Competition Backgrounder 2014

- In September 2012, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) - Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) joined forces to convene a consultation workshop to explore research funding needs and opportunities to improve clinical outcomes and quality of life for young women with breast cancer.
- A broad range of participants, including funders, previously diagnosed young women, young women at high risk, and researchers and clinicians from many disciplines and backgrounds, came together for two days to explore strategies to address this underserved area of research. A report of the workshop was created<sup>1</sup>: [CBCF-CIHR Breast Cancer in Young Women Workshop Report](#) and the recommendations informed the development of this current strategic research initiative. Data presented at the workshop confirmed that, in Canada, most of the breast cancer research funding related to breast cancer in young women has supported research on BRCA positive breast cancer with a family history, with little research focused on sporadic forms of breast cancer in young women. This is most likely because breast cancer in this younger age group is rare, with only about 1,500 diagnoses per year. This low incidence, coupled with the relatively small and dispersed Canadian population, presents a challenge to researchers attempting to capture a large enough cohort to support statistically powered research. Workshop participants expressed enthusiasm for the idea of creating a national network/consortium to support collaborative, multidisciplinary, multi-jurisdictional, translational research designed to ensure the incorporation of research outcomes into current standards of care.
- In response to the expressed need within the breast cancer research community for strategic funding that would allow researchers from across the country and from across disciplines to come together to create a network or program of research, CBCF and CIHR-ICR each committed \$3 million to support a CBCF-CIHR funding opportunity addressing this strategic need.
- Announced in May 2013, the CBCF-CIHR Breast Cancer in Young Women Research Program competition was designed to identify and support a research program that best addressed the following objectives:
  - Develop a coordinated program of research, under a single leadership, that will overcome the geographic, numerical, and interdisciplinary challenges encountered when studying breast cancer in young women;
  - Be comprised of a minimum of three independently fundable (scientifically excellent), synergistic sub-projects;
  - Establish a team of recognized Canadian leaders in breast cancer research, spanning at least three distinct disciplines, that shows promise of true synergy in advancing toward treatment goals not attainable by any individual component;

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.cbcbf.org/central/YourDollarAtWork/Grants/Documents/2012-02-14-CBCF-CIHR-YoungWomen.pdf>



- Create a critical mass of researchers working collaboratively and synergistically at several sites to move research results more effectively towards clinical applications and interventions for young women with breast cancer;
- Harness existing research resources, including cohorts, bio-sample repositories, administrative data sets, and relevant centres of research excellence, to avoid duplication of effort, and build on current Canadian and international activities;
- Provide a detailed plan to measure the potential impact of the research program, by establishing a baseline at the outset and a comparative measure at the end of the funding period.
- The successful program would span the multiple disciplines of breast cancer research to support a holistic, “whole woman” research approach. Emphasized research areas included:
  - Prevention and risk reduction
  - Genomics and molecular oncology
  - Therapeutics
  - Survivorship and psychosocial issues
- The research community responded strongly to the competition announcement, with registered interest from more than 200 researchers, and the eventual submission in November 2013 of three research program proposals all led by top Canadian scientists and each with teams of 20 or more researchers and clinicians from across Canada.
- To determine which Program best fit the criteria of the competition, expert researchers from the U.S., the U.K., and Canada were brought to Toronto for a two- day review panel meeting. At the review, the three Program teams were given the opportunity to present their Program proposals and defend their applications from critical questioning. Based on the detailed evaluation and review, the expert panel scored the Programs and SubProjects according to the published criteria. The top scoring Program was recommended to the Board of Directors of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and the Science Council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.