




Michael Smith  
**Health  
Research BC**

# Research is **everywhere**

20

**IMPACT REPORT**

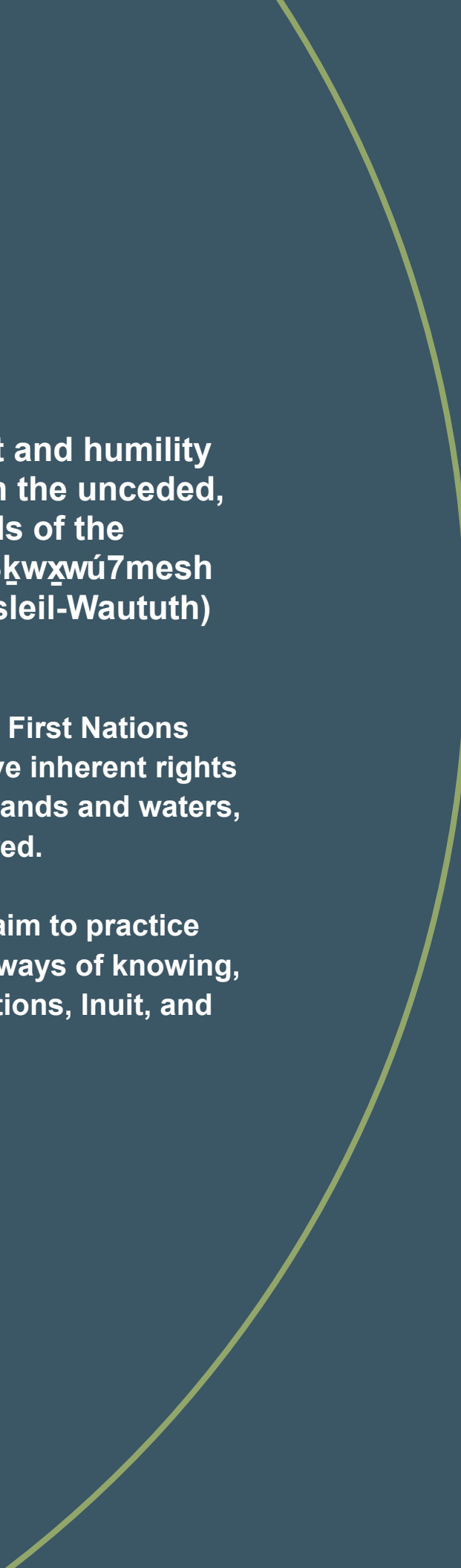
**25-26**



**We acknowledge with respect and humility that our offices are located on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy<sup>ə</sup>m (Musqueam), S<sup>k</sup>w<sup>x</sup>wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.**

**We also acknowledge the diverse First Nations across British Columbia, who have inherent rights rooted in the connection to their lands and waters, which have never been surrendered.**

**In the spirit of reconciliation, we aim to practice cultural safety, value Indigenous ways of knowing, and respect the rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.**





# Research is everywhere

It happens in rural areas as well as cities. In communities as well as labs. And it takes place every day across British Columbia.

Not only is research all around us, it is foundational to the health of people and communities. It's how we understand what keeps people well and improves the care they receive.

That doesn't happen in isolation.

Behind every innovation is a diverse health research community that drives discovery. At Health Research BC, we support that talent — through investment, partnerships, and a focus on impact — to ensure research delivers real benefits. It's what we've done for 25 years, and it's what we'll continue to do.

Looking to the future, we see new opportunities to strengthen and evolve how we support research. We're finding new ways to invest in people and ideas, to work more collaboratively, and to ensure evidence informs action.

Together, we're ensuring research delivers what matters most: better health for all.

Dr. Geoff Payne  
President & CEO  
Michael Smith Health Research BC

## **We enable discoveries that improve lives and strengthen communities**

Since 2001, we have supported more than 3,000 health researchers across BC. Those researchers in turn have launched independent programs, created life-changing innovations, and attracted hundreds of millions in additional research investment to the province.

We also strengthen clinical trials and research ethics, advance priority research on urgent health issues, and expand funding opportunities through strong partnerships.

Three impact priorities guide our work:

- Advancing research talent
- Advancing clinical trials
- Advancing the use of evidence



Advancing research talent

# Research is people

Health research depends on a workforce that's diverse, adaptable, and ready to meet BC's evolving needs.

**\$36.2M**  
invested in  
research talent

<b>5,500</b> trainees supported	<b>3,325</b> researchers in training supervised by awardees	<b>547</b> highly qualified personnel employed on funded projects
<b>85%</b> of funded researchers employed in BC five years post-award		<b>19%</b> of research funding focused on regions outside the Lower Mainland

## Impact

By investing in researchers, we are investing in better health.

Our support helps BC bring new diagnostics into clinics, expand treatment options, and respond to emerging challenges. It also ensures BC remains a place where talented researchers can build careers, attract investment, and turn discovery into impact.

- **61 early-career researchers** funded to develop independent programs
- **50+ interns** placed with BC life sciences companies
- **5 biodevice innovation fellowships** committed



# Building the next generation of leaders

Early-career support is essential to a strong research system. With our investment, emerging researchers are establishing independent programs, training the next generation, and tackling pressing health challenges.

This year, we funded 61 awards that provide the foundation for long-term careers in BC.

35

Research Trainees

15

Scholars

11

Health Professional-  
Investigators



## Earlier detection for Alzheimer's disease

*Co-funded in partnership with CLEAR Foundation*

More than 500,000 Canadians live with dementia, a number expected to nearly double by 2030. Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia, can begin silently – years before symptoms appear – making early diagnosis critical.

Current tests are often expensive and require specialized labs. Dr. Michael Adachi is creating a simple and less invasive blood test to detect key Alzheimer's biomarkers.

By enabling earlier and more accessible detection, this innovation could reshape Alzheimer's care for patients and families.

Photo: Dr. Michael Adachi (right) and research student Amin Abnavi placing probes on a sensor to perform electrical testing



## Expanding treatment options for stimulant use disorder

*Co-funded in partnership with BC Centre on Substance Use and St. Paul's Foundation*

Stimulants are involved in the majority of toxic drug deaths in BC, yet treatment options remain limited.

**Dr. Paxton Bach** is leading research to develop more effective and compassionate treatment approaches. His work has already informed policy discussions and helped secure \$5 million in national funding to launch Canada's largest clinical trial on methamphetamine treatment. This is accelerating progress toward evidence-based care for a critical public health challenge.



## Connecting people with type 1 diabetes to peer support

*Co-funded in partnership with Breakthrough T1D (formerly JDRF Canada)*

Managing type 1 diabetes can be isolating, especially for those without access to support from others who understand what it's like.

**Dr. Tricia Tang** developed REACHOUT, a mobile app that connects people living with type 1 diabetes to trained peer supporters with shared lived experience. Through one-on-one chats, group discussions, and virtual meetups, the app is helping people feel less alone and more confident in managing their health.



## Supporting mental health in a changing climate

Climate change is affecting the mental health of children and youth in BC, contributing to anxiety, grief, and uncertainty about the future.

**Dr. Maya Gislason** is exploring how young people experience these impacts and how community action can strengthen resilience. Her findings are shaping community programs and informing provincial climate planning, helping to ensure that mental health is part of BC's response to climate change.



## Understanding telemedicine's impact on doctors' behaviours

Telemedicine may improve access to care, but it limits the information doctors can consider.

**Dr. Sian Tsuei** is studying when and how virtual care works best, including which conditions require in-person assessment and how continuity of care influences outcomes. This research is helping guide clinicians and policymakers on when to use telemedicine, supporting safer, more effective, and more equitable care.





# Shifting pathways beyond academia

Extending research careers into industry drives innovation and economic growth.

Through an \$8M partnership with Mitacs and BC companies, we are creating opportunities for researchers to gain real-world experience while helping organizations access highly skilled talent.

This collaboration builds rewarding careers, strengthens local companies, and expands BC's life sciences sector.

50 <sup>+</sup> internships supported	30 <sup>+</sup> companies engaged
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**This program reduces the financial barrier for companies to access research talent that fills important skills gaps and brings fresh perspectives and energy to our work.**

Dr. Nicholas Weilinger  
Chief Scientific Officer, CereCura Nanotherapeutics





# Advancing biodevice innovation

We partnered with UBC's School of Biomedical Engineering and the Conconi Family Foundation to establish a new fellowship in biodevice innovation.

Over the next five years, the program will support up to five researchers. Their work will advance BC's leadership in biotechnology and help build a strong, connected life sciences community.

## Building better ways to fight cancer

Cancer treatments can be highly effective, but not for every patient. The reasons why are often unclear.

**Dr. Sofia Arshavsky-Graham** is developing miniature devices that replicate how tumours and immune cells interact, giving researchers a new way to study how different patients respond to treatment.

This work is helping uncover why therapies succeed or fail, and it could lead to more precise, personalized approaches to cancer care. The technology also has potential beyond cancer, with applications in organ modelling and drug discovery.

As the inaugural Health Research BC and Conconi Family Foundation BioDevice Innovation Fellow, Dr. Arshavsky-Graham is advancing this work with access to specialized infrastructure.

Photo courtesy of UBC: Dr. Sofia Arshavsky-Graham, Research Associate, UBC School of Biomedical Engineering





Advancing clinical trials

# Research is discovery

Clinical trials are how new treatments move from the lab to patients. They give people access to cutting-edge therapies and generate evidence to improve care.

We enable the work of Clinical Trials British Columbia to make our province a world-class destination for clinical research.

**\$2.0M**  
invested

**1,966**

clinical trials supported in the Clinical Trials Management System

**1,306**

research participants matched and recruited through REACH BC

## Impact

By improving coordination, reducing barriers, and investing in talent, we support a stronger clinical trials system in BC.

The result is faster access to new treatments, more opportunities to participate in research, better evidence to guide care, and a stronger economy.

- Provincial clinical trials strategy developed
- New Phase 1 trials unit launched to increase capacity
- Industry and system leaders convened to address key barriers



# Strengthening clinical research

Clinical Trials British Columbia, part of Health Research BC, stepped into an expanded role this year, leading efforts to bring greater coordination to the provincial clinical research system.

BC has a strong foundation for clinical trials, but varying processes and timelines can slow down study start-ups and limit patient opportunities.

Clinical Trials British Columbia is partnering with leaders across healthcare, academia, government, and industry to align priorities, improve collaboration, and position BC as a premier destination for clinical research.

## Roadmap for growth

There's a lot to build on when it comes to BC's clinical trials. What is needed is a clear path forward to coordinate action and create a more competitive environment.

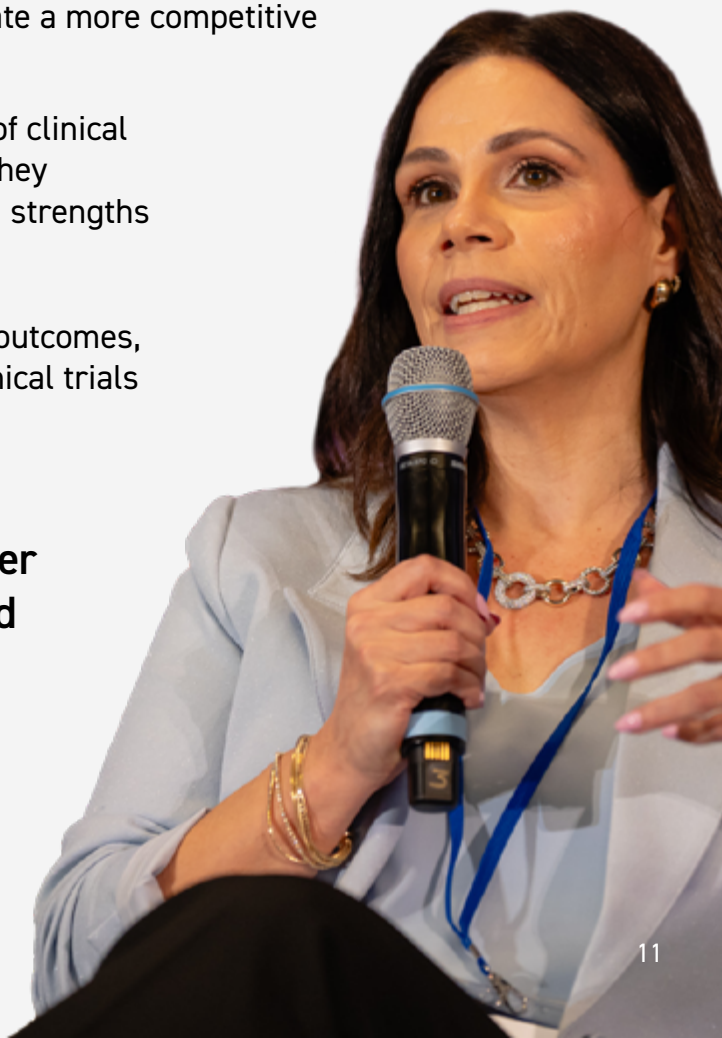
This year, we convened a provincial working group of clinical research leaders to define that direction. Together, they developed a three-year strategy building on existing strengths while identifying critical gaps.

The strategy establishes shared goals, measurable outcomes, and coordinated actions toward a more effective clinical trials system.



**This strategy brings people together around what's already working and helps us move forward in a more coordinated way.**

Alison Orth  
Director, Clinical Trials British Columbia





# ● Building momentum for clinical research



Photos clockwise from top left:

New Phase 1 clinical trials unit at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital; attendees celebrating the opening of the new Phase 1 clinical trials unit at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital; participants at the industry roundtable co-hosted by Clinical Trials British Columbia and GSK Canada

## ● Strengthening early-stage clinical trials

Early-phase clinical trials are critical to bringing new treatments to patients. But until recently, BC lacked the infrastructure to support them.

A new Phase 1 clinical trials unit at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital is changing that, enabling first-in-human studies to take place within the province. Health Research BC and Clinical Trials British Columbia partnered with Providence Health Care to establish the unit, which opened in September 2025. Health Research BC is also funding research support for Dr. John Boyd, who serves as the unit's chief medical officer.

This investment is supported by coordinated tools and services provided by Clinical Trials British Columbia to improve access, efficiency, and quality. The new unit will benefit from the REACH BC recruitment platform, the provincial clinical trials management system, and training resources.

## ● Accelerating global competitiveness

To position BC as a strong global competitor, Clinical Trials British Columbia and GSK Canada co-hosted an industry roundtable in October 2025 focused on accelerating trial efficiency.

The result: clear, shared priorities for action across four critical areas — ethics review processes, legal agreements, budget development, and provincial coordination.



# Research is **action**

Research improves health when it is used to shape policies and care.

We connect researchers with health system partners and communities to ensure evidence moves into practice where it can make a difference in people's lives.

**\$5.6M**  
invested

**494**

clinical  
guidelines  
informed  
through funded  
research

**38%**

of funded  
research includes  
people with lived  
experience

## Impact

By connecting research to real-world decisions, we are turning knowledge into better health outcomes across BC.

Our investments are helping seniors stay in their homes longer and ensuring health services reflect the needs and experiences of the people they serve.

- **\$6.3M committed** to advance research that will help seniors live healthier, more independent lives
- **5 research teams** across BC funded to bring proven seniors' care solutions into practice
- Lived experience integrated into research design, delivery, and evaluation

# Strengthening seniors' care

Despite strong evidence about what works in seniors' care, many proven innovations never reach real-world settings.

This year, we committed \$6.3 million to support teams implementing proven approaches in seniors' care. Each team works directly with health system partners to adapt, apply, and evaluate these approaches in real-time and real-world settings.

The program will help seniors age in place — to live comfortably at home, stay connected, and live healthier, more independent lives. It also supports the funded teams to learn from each other across the province, changing how people work together to tackle complex challenges.

## Preventing hospitalization for older adults

In Canada, 25% of the population aged 65 and over are considered clinically frail. Clinical frailty increases chances of hospitalizations, falls, social isolation, loneliness, and depression.

Island Health researchers are helping seniors with complex needs on Northern Vancouver Island stay safely at home and out of hospital by reducing isolation, coordinating care across partners, and addressing small practical needs that prevent crises.

The project is one of five across BC funded through the Advancing the Use of Evidence in Seniors' Home and Community Care program. The Conconi Family Foundation and a private donor are also contributing funds to support this research as part of a commitment to improving the quality of life for seniors in BC.





# Elevating lived experience in research

Research is more relevant when it reflects the experiences of the people it is meant to serve. This year, the BC SUPPORT Unit, part of Health Research BC, led two activities that demonstrate this in action.

The BC SUPPORT Unit is funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) and the BC Government as part of a national strategy to integrate people with lived experience as partners in health research — from shaping questions and co-authoring studies to translating findings into practice.

## Building a province-wide learning community

Through its eighth Putting Patients First conference, the BC SUPPORT Unit strengthened a province-wide learning community focused on integrating lived experience into health research and care. The event brought together 450 participants across Canada, showcasing outcomes from 32 BC-based projects spanning digital health, AI and equity, stroke recovery, Indigenous health research ethics, and embedded health system research.

## Showcasing BC leadership internationally

The BC SUPPORT Unit led a peer-reviewed series in the journal FACETS, co-authored with people with lived experience. Published to an international readership, the series highlighted BC's leadership in patient-oriented and equity-focused research. It reinforced learning health systems as a key strategy for improving healthcare quality and outcomes for British Columbians and informing health leaders globally.




Photo: Keynote speaker, cancer survivor, and research advocate, Sarah Greene addresses the audience at Putting Patients First 2026



# ● Embedding evidence where decisions are made

Research has the greatest impact when it is embedded within the health system.

Through our partnership with the CIHR on the Health System Impact Fellowship, we co-fund researchers to work directly within health organizations, tackling urgent challenges and generating actionable evidence.

## Maximizing time for patient care

*Co-funded in partnership with CIHR and Health Quality BC*

Family physicians are under increasing pressure, with administrative tasks taking time away from patient care.

Hayley Lawrence, supported by a Health System Impact Fellowship, highlighted how unnecessary laboratory notification processes strain clinics without improving patient outcomes.

The findings could have system-wide benefits, such as reducing provider burnout, promoting timelier, more efficient patient care, and more efficient use of resources.

Photo: Hayley Lawrence, PhD student at UBC's School of Population and Public Health





Indigenous reconciliation

# Research is self-determination



Supporting Indigenous research leadership helps advance work that better reflects the needs and priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

This leads to a more equitable system that drives better health outcomes for communities.

Through partnership with the BC Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research (BC NEIHR), we support Indigenous scholars and research personnel at multiple career stages.

Together, we are helping to build a strong, sustainable foundation for Indigenous-led health research in BC.

<p><b>\$4.5M</b></p> <p>invested in Indigenous research activities</p>	<p>Increased Indigenous research leadership</p>
<p>Stronger community connections</p>	<p>Research that reflects local priorities and knowledge systems</p>

Photo courtesy of BC NEIHR: Dr. Krista Stelkia, Director of the Centre for Collaborative Action on Indigenous Health Governance and Nominated Principal Investigator for BC NEIHR, presents at the Knowledge Exchange Forum in March 2024



# ● Centring Indigenous priorities in research

## Indigenous knowledge exchange

In March 2026, the BC NEIHR Knowledge Exchange Forum brought together scholars and community members to highlight health research grounded in relationships, culture, and community priorities. Hosted on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the event showcased how Indigenous-led approaches are reshaping research impact.

Graduate and post-doctoral scholars presented projects spanning culturally safe end-of-life care, Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer health, and ceremony-based healing.

The forum created space for knowledge sharing and connection, reinforcing the importance of Indigenous methodologies in advancing health equity.

## Amplifying urban Indigenous voices

*Co-funded in partnership with CIHR and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council*

Urban Indigenous populations make up the majority of Indigenous people in BC, yet their perspectives are often underrepresented in health research.

**Dr. Gabrielle Legault**, who is Métis, is working with urban Indigenous leaders and communities to co-develop models for health research governance, data ownership, and knowledge sharing.

This work is creating practical tools and approaches that will help make health research more inclusive, accountable, and aligned with Indigenous priorities.



Photo courtesy of BC NEIHR:  
Sara Daigle-Stevens presents at the  
BC NEIHR Knowledge Exchange Forum



## Community-led approaches to youth wellness

**Dr. Johanna Sam**, a citizen of the T̓silhqot'in Nation, is working with communities to centre Indigenous knowledge in youth wellness research.

Her work brings together language, culture, and relationships to land and waters into research that reflects the lived realities of diverse youth across BC communities, especially Indigenous youth.

This approach is informing more culturally grounded policies and programs, while supporting diverse communities to define and lead their own research priorities.

## Culturally safe mobile health screening

The BC SUPPORT Unit is funding an Indigenous-led evaluation of the Kidney Check project to ensure research success is defined by relationship, respect, and community benefit.

Delivered by the Can-SOLVE CKD Network in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority, Kidney Check brings culturally safe, mobile screening directly to communities. This evaluation will guide future program expansion while creating shared resources to advance equitable, community-led health research across BC.



Photo: Dr. Johanna Sam, Associate Professor at UBC's Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education



Equity, diversity, and inclusion

# Research is inclusion

**\$8.9M**

invested in EDI-focused research activities

Inclusive research leads to better health outcomes.

We support community-engaged approaches that dismantle systemic racism and barriers to participation. By elevating the voices of equity-deserving groups – including racialized people, women, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community – we ensure all peoples are meaningfully represented and more communities benefit from health innovation.

## Culturally tailored care for substance use disorders

**Dr. Nitasha Puri**, a physician with Fraser Health, is leading community-based research to develop a culturally resonant substance use intervention tailored specifically for South Asian men. Partnering with community organizations and care providers, her team is co-designing an approach that honours diverse cultural identities and needs.

By actively addressing barriers like stigma and language, this work builds strength-based, inclusive solutions that improve engagement and lay the foundation for more effective, equitable substance use care across BC.



## Equitable, community-based support for MAiD

*Supported by a Health Research BC Health Equity Grant in partnership with Island Health*

**Dr. Caroline Variath**, a nurse coordinator with Island Health, is leading community-engaged research to ensure individuals considering medical assistance in dying (MAiD) receive coordinated and equitable support. Partnering with healthcare providers and people with lived experience, she is co-developing practical solutions to improve awareness and strengthen support systems.

Her work builds a holistic, community-based model of care that enhances family support and connects individuals – especially those navigating complex social inequities – to vital health and social services.



## Advancing equity through targeted research support

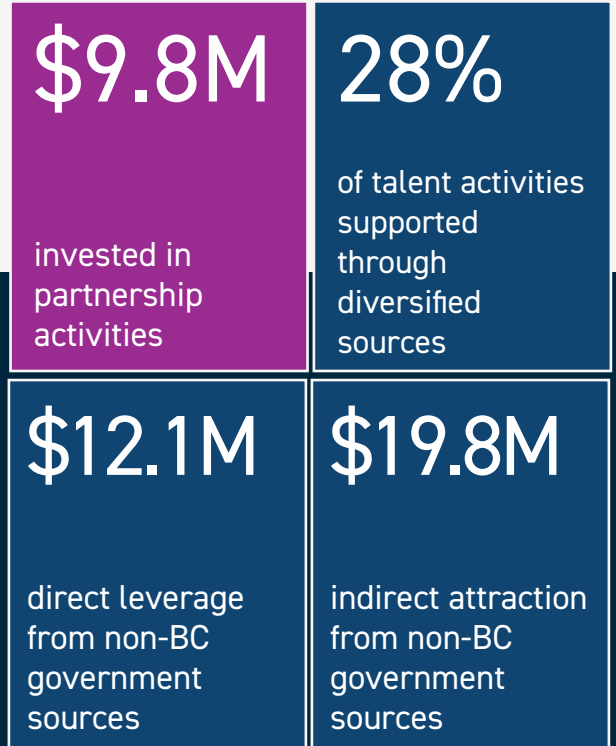
In partnership with Island Health, we funded four Health Equity Grants to help research teams build the skills and collaborations needed to dismantle health disparities. These projects are designed to directly improve outcomes and access to care for equity-deserving groups across the region.



Partnerships

# Research is collaboration

Together with our partners, we co-invest to expand funding opportunities, connect researchers with communities and collaborators across the province, and accelerate impact.



## Accelerating innovation

We partnered with Genome BC and federal and industry co-funders to advance research that will respond to public health emergencies.

Four projects based at Canada’s Immuno-Engineering and Biomanufacturing Hub will address critical gaps and strengthen BC’s biomedical innovation ecosystem.

Our investments helped the research teams attract additional matching funds.

The result: at least \$1.6M in new funding coming to BC over the three-year award period.

## Advancing research in neurogenerative diseases

Neurodegenerative diseases are among the most pressing health challenges affecting older adults in Canada. Through a new partnership, we are supporting interdisciplinary teams to tackle complex questions in Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease. This investment brings researchers together around shared challenges, strengthening BC’s capacity for world-class brain research.

This funding opportunity is made possible by the Canada Brain Research Fund, an innovative arrangement between the Government of Canada (through Health Canada) and the Brain Canada Foundation, in partnership with:

- Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon, Branch Out Neurological Foundation, CLEAR Foundation, Parkinson Society BC, The Patrick & Dulcie Lenox Endowment, Pacific Parkinson’s Research Institute



# Transforming health together

Partnerships amplify impact and make research stronger.

We work with public, non-profit, and private organizations that share our commitment to better health across British Columbia.

This year, we collaborated with partner organizations to co-fund 97 new awards. This includes early-career support, match funding, life sciences internships, and partnerships with federal funders.

Thank you to our partners for investing in BC's health research talent.





Engagement

# Research is **connected**

Through ongoing engagement with researchers, partners, and the public, we help build awareness of how research improves care, strengthens systems, and supports better health outcomes.

<b>197,708</b>	<b>438,228</b>
website visitors	website pageviews
<b>22,418</b>	<b>1.8M</b>
social media followers	social media impressions
<b>5,251</b>	<b>26</b>
newsletter subscribers	research impact stories



Photo: Patient partner Sherri Mytopher (right), and Health Research BC Project Coordinator Shelly Sharma at Putting Patients First 2026



# Research is everywhere

As we look ahead, our role remains clear: to enable the researchers, partners, and communities who make innovation possible. By investing in talent, catalyzing solutions, and mobilizing action, we will continue to shape a healthier future for BC.

● **Substance use**  
Developing community-informed harm reduction tools that support long-term recovery

● **Rural health**  
Positioning rural communities as leaders in healthcare excellence

● **Climate health**  
Building equitable public health to protect communities from extreme weather events

● **Health human resources**  
Optimizing clinic workflows so healthcare workers can focus on caring for patients





Michael Smith  
**Health  
Research BC**

# Research is **everywhere**

**Michael Smith Health Research BC**  
200-1285 West Broadway  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6H 3X8

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