March is Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month. Though it is hard to imagine a child suffering from what we think of as an elderly person’s illness, juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) is actually the most common rheumatic disease in childhood. This month, IMHA highlighted some of the progress researchers have made learning about the disease and finding effective treatments so kids with JIA can lead healthy, active lives. Researchers found that keeping physically active really helps. Pediatric rheumatologists across Canada are working together with CIHR-IMHA funding to further study physical activity in children with JIA. One of many projects IMHA funded was a video translating findings from the LEAP study which looks at physical activity and its relationship to disease factors. Click here to watch the video and see page 2 for more information on IMHA-funded research in JIA.

At the end of February, IMHA was pleased to welcome CIHR president, Dr. Alain Beaudet to its new Winnipeg office to meet IMHA staff. Dr. Beaudet was in Winnipeg, along with Federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose, and Provincial Health Minister Erin Selby, and other dignitaries, for a joint federal-provincial funding announcement regarding a new strategy for patient-oriented research (SPOR) SUPPORT unit in Manitoba. It was a great opportunity to highlight the new IMHA office space, staff, and the overall support the Institute is receiving from the University of Manitoba. For more information about the announcement, please see the CIHR news release here.

IMHA has made great progress this month in developing its 2014-2018 strategic plan. On March 13 in Vancouver, IMHA held a multi-stakeholder strategic planning meeting where the staff and the Institute Advisory Board were joined by 25 national and international invited guests who all worked towards identifying key priorities for IMHA. The meeting featured representation from all six IMHA foci and CIHR research pillars. Although much work remains to be done in this strategic planning process, key priorities identified included fostering innovative research in MSK, skin, and oral health; translating that research into practice to improve patient care, quality of life, and contributions to economic growth; and strengthening the MSK, skin, and oral health research communities through training and network building. All agreed that the day was successful and the participants enjoyed the opportunity to network in a stimulating and collegial atmosphere. The IMHA staff now have the important task of synthesizing this information and developing a first draft of the 2014 – 2018 strategic plan. We will keep everyone informed!

Research in oral health is an important part of IMHA’s work. We were very pleased to be invited to the Canadian Dental Association’s National Oral Health Action Plan Symposium held in Ottawa on February 27. The symposium was very well attended by a diverse group of stakeholders including educators, community groups, patient and consumer groups, aboriginal communities, and health care professionals. Over the course of the day the symposium participants reached a consensus on multiple priority areas for future action. These priorities include: 1) a common position on community water fluoridation, 2) oral health standards in long-term health facilities, and 3) education programs for children and parents. A consensus report will be written and disseminated in the near future.

As always, I encourage you to continue to submit any questions or comments to IMHA@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

Hani El-Gabalawy MD FRCPC
Scientific Director
CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis
Funding Opportunities and Research News

IMHA FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
For information on current funding opportunities, please visit IMHA’s Funding Opportunities online.

Applied Public Health Chair
The specific objectives of the Applied Public Health Chair are to:
- Support high quality programs of population health intervention research that contribute to new knowledge to improve health and health equity across the life course;
- Stimulate the application of innovative theories, methods and approaches in research and knowledge translation that promote reciprocal learning within and between countries;
- Catalyze interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral collaborations between researchers and knowledge users that contribute to evidence-informed decision-making and use of knowledge by public health and other sectors; and
- Mentor the current and next generation of population and public health researchers, practitioners and policy makers from a range of disciplines and sectors.

IMHA will support applied public health chairs that are relevant to the oral Health in the North research area.

Application deadline: May 1, 2014

IAB 2014 Renewal
CIHR is now renewing its Institute Advisory Board membership. Each of the 13 Institutes has an advisory board with national and international representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors, including the research community and health practitioners. Institute Advisory Boards (IABs) advise Institute Scientific Directors and Governing Council on Institute activities including deciding and evaluating health research priorities, strategies, and implementation plans for engaging the broader research community.

Online web applications for the CIHR’s 12th cycle of IAB membership renewal are available here.

Application deadline: April 11, 2014

Get up and Get Active!
March is Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) is the most common rheumatic disease in childhood. Characterized by persistent inflammation in the joints that causes pain, stiffness and swelling, JIA can now be treated effectively so that children with arthritis can lead active lives. This month, IMHA has been highlighting some of the progress made in JIA research.

LEAPing along!
An update from LEAP team researcher Dr. Lori Tucker

One of the JIA studies that CIHR-IMHA funding has supported is the LEAP study (Linking Exercise, Activity, and Pathophysiology in childhood arthritis). The study has been looking at the relationship between physical activity and disease factors, inflammation, quality of life, bone health and muscle function.

LEAP study knowledge translation has included an Ambassador Program engaging athletes and youth who participate in sports both with and without arthritis. One of the LEAP Ambassadors, Travis Gerrits, was a participant in the 2014 Olympics on the Canadian Freestyle Ski team.

For more information about the LEAP team, please visit the IMHA website.

Cassie and Friends...with the Vancouver Canucks!

Vancouver-based parent-led non-profit society, Cassie and Friends, kicked off Juvenile Arthritis Awareness month with some of the biggest exposure yet for this disease. In partnership with the Vancouver Canucks, Cassie and Friends hosted a “Community Corner” at the Canuck’s March 8th game, raising unprecedented awareness about Juvenile Arthritis, which affects about three in 1000 children in Canada, to a sold-out Rogers Arena crowd. For more information, please visit the IMHA website.
The Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN), established in 1998 as one of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE), is currently highlighting its accomplishments now that it has reached the end of its funding. The network created a legacy video to showcase the contributions it has made to research aimed at new product development, health services improvements, biological advances, and increasing awareness of arthritis and its impact on people’s lives.

Dawn Richards, Ontario representative and Co-Chair of the Consumer Advisory Council, who was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in 2007, was involved with the video’s production. She explains, “We wanted to dispel myths about arthritis by showing that people of any age can get it – even children, and that now, because of new treatments, those children can lead healthy active lives. The key message is one of hope – hope for the future because of the exceptional research being undertaken.”

**Go for Gold!**

**CIHR celebrates the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games**

Just because it’s cold out doesn’t mean you have to stay in and do nothing. Many winter activities including cross-country or downhill skiing, curling, hockey, tobogganing, snowshoeing and even ice climbing for the more daring can keep you healthy and active throughout the winter.

In celebration of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics, CIHR has been highlighting the work of researchers exploring ways in which Canadians of all ages and abilities can improve their health through physical activity.

**What is the focus of your research?**

My study looks at involvement in physical activity and other leisure activities among children and youth with JIA. It is well recognized that children and youth with arthritis are likely to adopt more sedentary lifestyles than their healthy counterparts, placing them at greater risk for decreased muscle strength and endurance, poor cardiovascular endurance and poor bone density. By identifying potential barriers such as low income or low self-confidence, and facilitators such as family support to participation in leisure and physical activities in children and teens with JIA, healthcare professionals will be better equipped to help support families to promote a more active lifestyle for their child.
**Partner Corner**

**Partnership Award**

The CIHR Partnership Award annually recognizes a partnership that exemplifies excellence. The recipients receive a $25,000 award in the form of a one-year research grant for advancing the research or knowledge translation activities of the partnership.

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