Expressions of Interest: CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis Research Ambassadors

The Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR – IMHA), is seeking applications from interested and enthusiastic suitably qualified individuals to fill four vacancies in the CIHR – IMHA Research Ambassadors group. We specifically need representation from young adults, men, vulnerable populations, and representation of disease groups falling under our research mandate including conditions affecting bone, connective tissue, joint, muscle, oral health and skin.

Who are the Research Ambassadors?
In 2003, CIHR – IMHA created a Knowledge Exchange Task Force to develop a new and innovative approach to create a communication pathway linking researchers and key stakeholders. The result was a group of individuals called Research Ambassadors. Research Ambassadors are members of the public who either live with a condition that falls under CIHR – IMHA’s research mandate (conditions related to bones, joints, muscles, connective tissue, skin and teeth) or who are advocates for those living with such conditions, such as family or community members. The Research Ambassadors meet twice yearly to share information with the Institute and to learn new Institute information to share with their respective organizations and communities.

The main principles surrounding the Research Ambassadors group are:

1) Transparency/partnership
   The knowledge that passes between researchers and patients or patient advocate stakeholders bridges the gaps between them, resulting in the development of partnerships through discovery of common ground, building community and forming bonds of trust.

2) Relevancy of Research
   Involving patients early in the research process increases the likelihood that the products delivered will be directly relevant to their needs. Part of the Research Ambassadors’ role is to ensure that the products developed from CIHR’s strategic research funds are optimal, relevant, and responsive to the needs of stakeholders.

3) Diversity
   Research Ambassadors represent the diversity of CIHR – IMHA’s stakeholders, and reflect the diversity of Canada; therefore inclusiveness is a principle of the group.
4) **Accountability**

By maintaining open communication between researchers and patients or patient advocate stakeholders, CIHR – IMHA is demonstrating its accountability to all groups, showing that research funding is being productively and responsibly invested to benefit Canadians.

**Key responsibilities of Research Ambassadors include:**
1. Representing the needs of the public/patient community by effectively conveying knowledge about research to the general public with sensitivity to diverse populations;
2. Contributing new perspectives and opinions with confidence, while also being able to listen, think and speak about differing points of view with respect for others at the table;
3. Attending two meetings per year in person, to take active and enthusiastic part in sharing news of group and stakeholder activities;
4. Participating in reviewing plain language abstracts for the annual Research Ambassadors Knowledge Translation Award;
5. Being prepared to review documents and contribute to discussions regarding new initiatives or projects of the Institute when it requests patient or patient advocate participation and engagement.

**The deadline for applications is August 26, 2016.**

Candidates must have several of the following qualities and competencies, or have demonstrated willingness and ability to achieve them:

- Basic understanding of research
- Agreement with the importance of patient participation in the research process
- Ability to commit time and energy to the group
- Interest in learning about CIHR – IMHA
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively in and with a group, respecting differing personalities and opinions in the group
- Ability and confidence to share new ideas and perspectives with a group that includes patients, patient advocates, health care professionals and researchers
- Willingness to respect all areas of CIHR – IMHA’s research mandate and not be constrained to one in particular
- Demonstrated willingness to take active part in discussions and complete tasks assigned

Appointments to the CIHR – IMHA Research Ambassadors will be made in a way that ensures:

- A strong and effective group;
- Transparency, fairness and credibility of process
- Diversity of experience, expertise and knowledge;
• Diversity of membership (e.g. demographic profile, gender, language, and connection to CIHR - IMHA’s mandated areas of research)

The appointments will start in September, 2016.

Roles and Responsibilities
The Research Ambassadors bridge the gap between researchers, and the ultimate beneficiaries of research, addressing the different stages of the research process which CIHR traditionally identifies as Basic Biomedical Science, Clinical Science and Knowledge, and Clinical Practice and Health Decision Making.

Time Commitment
The Research Ambassadors meet twice a year, fall and spring, usually in October and April. Each meeting requires reading and giving feedback on materials distributed to group members beforehand. Meetings last a day and a half plus travel time. Expected time commitment is up to 7 days per year including reading, writing or doing meeting-related work at home, travelling, and attending meetings. Currently, the time commitment is two meetings: October, 2016, and April, 2017, with the potential for continued meetings as CIHR – IMHA transitions to a new Scientific Director after April, 2017.

Remuneration and Expenses
Members are not compensated for their service, however, travel and accommodation expenses are reimbursed in accordance with the Government of Canada Treasury Board Guidelines.

How to Apply
Interested individuals are invited to submit the following documents for consideration.

1) A letter of interest mentioning background, interest areas, relevant related experiences, and sharing points of view and ideas that they would bring to the work of the CIHR – IMHA Research Ambassadors;
2) Names, phone numbers and email addresses of two references;
3) A resume (showing past work and life activities);

Documents should be emailed with the subject heading “Research Ambassadors” to: IMHA@umanitoba.ca