

Manitoba News Release

SASKATCHEWAN AND MANITOBA PARTNER ON MS LIBERATION CLINICAL TRIAL RESEARCH

Winnipeg, April 5, 2011

Premier Greg Selinger and Premier Brad Wall announced today that Manitoba and Saskatchewan are working together to advance clinical trial research on the multiple sclerosis (MS) liberation therapy.

The Province of Manitoba will invest \$5 million in MS research and follow the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) protocols in a complementary research process in Manitoba.

Saskatchewan was the first province to initiate clinical trials for the MS liberation procedure when it announced a \$5-million investment and launched a call for proposals in December 2010. SHRF is managing the publicly funded health research process, and has developed a competitive call for clinical trials and appointed an expert advisory panel. A research proposal that will lead to clinical trials will be selected soon.

Today's \$5-million funding announcement by the Province of Manitoba doubles the investment in clinical trials in Canada. The Manitoba Health Research Council (MHRC) will issue a call for proposals following consultations with the SHRF to ensure proposal criteria and review processes are complementary.

"MS patients and their families deserve to know as quickly as possible whether this experimental procedure is the breakthrough so many of us hope it is," said Selinger. "This partnership will help us get the answers we urgently need while providing Manitobans a chance to participate early in the clinical trial process."

"Saskatchewan is committed to advancing the science in MS diagnosis and treatment," said Wall. "We are pleased that Manitoba is proceeding with its own clinical trials, furthering efforts to get answers for people who suffer from this devastating disease."

The liberation procedure is a potentially ground-breaking discovery for the treatment of MS. However, it is not yet proven as a scientifically valid therapy. The funding announced today will help produce more extensive data and ultimately, may determine the procedure's validity as a treatment for MS, said Selinger.

Both SHRF and MHRC support the complementary approach. The multi-site clinical trial approach will strengthen the research conclusions by providing a larger sample size and the ability for research teams to pool results to further understand the effectiveness of the liberation procedure on MS patients.

"The MHRC understands that funding and progressing research in multiple sclerosis is vital to Canadians suffering with MS," said Dr. Brian Postl, chair of MHRC. "We look forward to working with SHRF and welcome the opportunity to complement their process as multi-site clinical trials are considered the gold standard of medical research because they provide the most conclusive evidence about the effectiveness of an experimental procedure."

June Bold, chief executive officer of SHRF, added, "We will work very closely with MHRC to create complementary clinical trials that use common protocols and outcome measures. This approach will strengthen the scientific findings of the studies."

Patients in both provinces will have an opportunity to participate in the clinical trials once successful research teams have been announced. More information on research processes in Saskatchewan and Manitoba is available at www.shrf.ca and www.mhrc.mb.ca.

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