

Research Manitoba Announces Strategic Partnership and Funding for Health Research Innovation in Manitoba

September 24, 2020 – Winnipeg, Manitoba. Honourable Ralph Eichler, Minister of Economic Development and Training, launched Research Manitoba’s first Strategic Partnership with the Victoria General Hospital Foundation (VGHF). Today the partners announced **\$470,000** in research funding to support a health research competition to begin in the Fall of 2020 (\$110,000) and a research study, which uses telepresence robots to remotely interact between persons with dementia (PWD) and their caregivers to extend stay at home care opportunities (\$360,000).

“Our province is committed to ensuring that our research and innovation investments are aligned with industry need and health care priorities,” said Ralph Eichler, Minister of Economic Development and Training. “This partnership will lay the groundwork for meaningful health and economic outcomes, while improving the health and well-being of all Manitobans.”

This strategic partnership is a model for other partnerships, bringing together industry and research, supporting innovation in Manitoba. The Strategic Partnership Program engages with new sectors of industry, builds collaborations that create economic growth, provides employment opportunities, and supports local talent.

“This is definitely a milestone day for Research Manitoba, and we are very thankful to the Victoria General Hospital Foundation for being our inaugural partner within our recently launched Strategic Partnerships Program,” said Sean McKay, Interim CEO, Research Manitoba. “The ability to leverage capabilities and funding to support not just one but several health-related projects that advance the Vic Foundation’s research aspirations under one agreement is a great example of how this program can maximize benefits for Manitobans.”

“The Vic Foundation has a proud history of innovation and we are honoured to partner with Research Manitoba in support of world class research, ideas and innovations that improve the health and wellbeing of Manitobans,” said Charlene Rocke, Executive Director, Victoria General Hospital Foundation. “We are particularly honoured to collaborate with Dr. Urbanowski and his team in finding transformative ways to help caregivers of persons with dementia and support the vital role they play in sustaining independence and quality of life for those in their care.”

September is World Alzheimer's Month, which is an international campaign to raise awareness about dementia. Dr. Reginald Urbanowski is the lead on the research study being supported by this partnership, his team is researching the possibilities of improved care for PWD and their caregivers.

“Telepresence robots provide an effective solution for minimizing the burden on informal caregivers of people living with dementia,” said Dr. Reg Urbanowski, Dean & Associate Professor, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba. “There are different kinds of telepresence robots, but the kind proposed here provides two-way communication for the caregiver and the person they are caring for when the caregiver is out-of-home, which could help them maintain a career, home and family life.”

Contacts

Kristen Hooper, Communications Officer
Research Manitoba
204-942-8702
kristen.hooper@researchmb.ca

Erin Girouard, Communications & Public Relations Manager
Victoria General Hospital Foundation
204-477-3190
egirouard@vgh.mb.ca

Background:

Research Manitoba and the Victoria General Hospital signed a Strategic Partnership agreement on July 30, 2020 and the total partnership funds are \$670,000. On September 4, 2020 Research Manitoba announced the Manitoba COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Competition and eight Manitoba clinical trials related to COVID-19 and applied health research. A portion of the funding announced on Sept. 4/20 is part of this partnership (\$100K from RMB and \$100K from VGHF). On September 24, partners are announcing the remainder of the partnership funding, which is \$470,000. ([Click here for more info](#))

What is a Telepresence Robot?

A telepresence robot is a computer, tablet, or smartphone-controlled robot, which may include a video-camera, screen, speakers, and microphones. This helps the person/people interacting with the robot view and hear its operator and the operator can simultaneously view what the robot is "seeing or looking at" and "hearing."

About Research Manitoba:

Research Manitoba promotes, supports, and coordinates the funding of research excellence and innovation in health, natural and social sciences, engineering and the humanities in Manitoba. [Research Manitoba](#) supports local talent development by providing research support to early career researchers and graduate students, along with fostering strategic partnerships to strengthen research and innovation in Manitoba.

About Victoria General Hospital Foundation:

[Victoria General Hospital Foundation](#) is dedicated to advancing healthcare at Victoria Hospital and in our community to create healthier futures for us all. Since 2009, we have invested more than \$15 million in innovations that enhance patient care, prevent disease and injury, and improve the overall health and well-being of our community.