



Research
Manitoba



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

RITHIM: A new way forward for health research in Manitoba

(Winnipeg, Manitoba) Monday, April 4, 2022 –Health research in Manitoba has a high value to our society. It can provide important information about disease trends, outcomes of treatment, and public health interventions, as well as give Manitobans, access to leading-edge clinical trials. Conducting health research on humans requires a rigorous review of human ethics and privacy. Navigating these necessary reviews has been cumbersome and lengthy, involving many organizations with as many processes and timelines. Research Manitoba is leading the way to a better system with the new provincial initiative [Research Improvements Through Harmonization in Manitoba \(RITHIM\)](#). RITHIM will streamline and harmonize the review processes related to health research in Manitoba. This innovative program will create a more efficient and effective pathway for researchers including all the necessary checks and balances while cutting down the lengthy time for approval that currently exists in the province. RITHIM and its innovative platform will make it faster and easier to conduct health research, making Manitoba one of the most attractive provinces in Canada to conduct health research.

“The advantages that this innovative program creates will have on the health-care system are numerous. Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency in health research methods while ensuring rigorous review to protect Manitobans will help to position our province as an extremely attractive health research center.”

- Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health

“Navigating the complex environment related to human research has been a barrier to delivering cutting edge care to Manitobans at the developmental stage. RITHIM addresses this problem head on and is a much welcome solution by the research community who are committed to advancing patient care in Manitoba.”

- Dr. Peter Nickerson, Vice Dean Research, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba, Medical Director Transplant Manitoba

RITHIM received support from the Ministers of Health and the Economy in 2015 and again in 2017 when Research Manitoba was asked to lead the implementation of a series of recommendations to transform the system for health research approvals in Manitoba. RITHIM is the most ambitious project undertaken by Research Manitoba. It was designed by the research community over several years with many stakeholders including the Manitoba government, Shared Health, Regional Health Authorities, Healthcare and Research Institutions, Post-Secondary Institutions, Researchers, and Industry.

“Our province has a lot of innovative healthcare researchers with the skills and knowledge to help their fellow Manitobans. Today’s announcement will be very beneficial in helping to attract additional investments to the province. By having a better streamlined process, it will shorten the timelines for the reviews and approvals needed to conduct health research, including clinical trials. This move will help research to be more in line with the modern speed of business.”

- Cliff Cullen, Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade

RITHIM will streamline the applications through the electronic Provincial Research Administration System (PRAS) and harmonized review processes, making it easier and faster to conduct health research in Manitoba while maintaining the highest levels of ethics and privacy protection.

“RITHIM will reduce the administrative burden for researchers, in turn, attracting talent and cutting-edge clinical trials to Manitoba.”

-Karen Dunlop, Chief Executive Officer, Research Manitoba

“The University of Manitoba has supported RITHIM since its inception. The harmonization and streamlining it facilitates will benefit Manitoba’s researchers and will help attract clinical trial investments in Manitoba. The University of Manitoba is pleased to continue to support RITHIM through a variety of in kind supports.”

-Dr. Digvir S. Jayas, Vice-President (Research and International), University of Manitoba

RITHIM launched its *first phase* of the program on January 1, 2022, when amendments were made to *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA). These amendments enabled the formal implementation of the RITHIM program, including the establishment of the Provincial Health Research Privacy Committee (PHRPC) as the only committee authorized to review and approve requests to access personal health information for research purposes. The Committee for Harmonized Health Impact, Privacy, and Ethics Review (CHIPER) will conduct ethics reviews for all initiatives going forward.

The full RITHIM program, including *phase two* of the execution of PRAS, will be implemented later in 2022.

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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 and fostering strategic partnerships to strengthen research and innovation in Manitoba.