

National Canadian Consortium of Clinical Trial Training (CANTRAIN) takes off successfully

February 8th, 2024 NEWS

Eighty-four graduate students from across Canada will share over \$2 million in studentship and fellowship salary awards from four Clinical Trials Training Programs.

In January 2023, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) announced the [funding](#) of several projects—including seven clinical trials training programs—aimed at improving the development and conduct of clinical trials across the country and increasing access to clinical trials for underrepresented communities. One of these programs is the CANadian Consortium for Clinical Trials TRAINing (CANTRAIN), a project initiated at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (RI-MUHC) to implement competency training of the current and new generation of clinical researchers/trialists, professionals and trainees to conduct better, high-quality clinical trials.

A year later, CANTRAIN and three partnering Clinical Trials Training Programs (CTTPs)—CAN-TAP-TALENT, CBITN and STROKECOG—are proud of this first achievement: the creation of an awards program to enable graduate and postdoctoral trainees to be trained for clinical trials research projects. Thanks to the development of fruitful partnerships across the country, 84 students will receive salary awards in 2023–24, half of which will be awarded by CANTRAIN. The consortium will award [42 scholarships](#) totaling to \$1,161,250, with \$673,750 from CANTRAIN and 487,500 in matching co-funding from provincial organizations.



Jean Bourbeau

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted deficiencies hindering the rapid and efficient implementation of randomized clinical trials (RCTs) in Canada, which are essential to the advancement of medicine and the health sciences. Initiated a year ago in response to this situation, CANTRAIN aims to train clinical trial professionals in an equitable, diversified and inclusive approach, through collaborations across Canada," explains Dr. Jean Bourbeau, Senior Scientist in the Translational Research Program in Respiratory Diseases at the RI-MUHC, who leads the project. "This new scholarship program meets an important need and will help develop essential expertise across the country."

Overall, the 2023–24 awards program recipients include 24 master's students, 41 doctoral students and 18 postdoctoral fellows from several universities, hospitals and health authorities. They will be trained and will participate in the

conduct of clinical trials in a variety of fields.

All awardees have been selected on the merit and interest of their project proposal, from among 148 applications. In addition to the financial support they will receive, they will have access to mentoring and e-learning modules to develop their professional skills in the design, management or conduct of clinical trials.

"I am proud to be among the CANTRAIN awardees! The journey into clinical research is both a privilege and a responsibility. With this award, I am motivated to deepen my understanding and contribute to creating a healthier, more informed world," says Qiming Tan, PhD candidate at the University of Alberta, and a CANTRAIN awardee.

"One of the most exciting aspects of being a CANTRAIN awardee is the opportunity to learn from an incredible community of fellow awardees, experts and mentors within and outside of the classroom. Sharing experiences with peers is motivating while advice from skilled practitioners supplemented by experiential learning promotes the development of professional competencies. I could not think of a better way to start my career in clinical trials and look forward to benefiting from the vast experience of this community in the coming year," says CANTRAIN awardee Timo Tolppa, PhD student at the University of British Columbia.

Provincial organizations offer critical support to the initiative

Funds raised to support this first cohort of awardees total to more than \$2 M, including \$1,347,000 from CIHR and \$763,750 from four provincial co-funding organizations who joined the program during the year:

- Michael Smith Health Research BC and its division Clinical Trial BC (CTBC),
- Alberta Innovates,
- Les Fonds de recherche du Québec en santé (FRQS) and
- Newfoundland & Labrador Health Services (NLHS).

<< We are very grateful to our valued partners for their contribution. Our goal is to ensure the sustainability of the bursary program and other training initiatives developed within CANTRAIN, and we will continue our efforts in this direction over the coming years," adds Dr. Bourbeau.

A first National Clinical Trials Summit in Montreal

Alongside the first [2024 National Clinical Trials Summit](#) taking place Feb. 13–15 in Montreal, CANTRAIN and CTTP partners are also organizing a [poster competition](#) among their 2023–24 awardees with three prizes in each of the masters, doctoral and postdoctoral trainee categories to be announced on the concluding day of the summit.

QUOTES FROM THE CO-FUNDING PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

"Our organization aims to strengthen efforts to build a robust clinical trial ecosystem to maximize the health, educational and economic benefits of clinical trials for British Columbians. We are pleased to partner with CANTRAIN, CAN-TAP-TALENT, CBITN and STROKECOG on these trainee awards, which accelerate skills training of the next generation of a clinical trial workforce, attract brilliant minds to our province and build research talent for BC." — [Bev Holmes, President and CEO, Michael Smith Health Research British Columbia](#)

"Alberta is a premier destination for clinical trials, supported by a highly skilled clinical research workforce. Our partnership with CANTRAIN will expand the necessary talent for Alberta to continue executing on high-quality, efficient and integrated clinical trials." — [Tim Murphy, Vice President, Health, Alberta Innovates](#).

"This sector of activity cannot prosper without talent that guarantees the highest quality for clinical research. This is why the FRQS supports the training of the next generation to meet the needs for a highly qualified workforce in this field as in all areas of life sciences and health technology." >> - [Carole Jabet, Scientific Director of the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Santé \(FRQS\)](#).

<< Clinical trials are health research studies that measure the effectiveness of novel treatments, devices, vaccines or interventions. They are essential to medical knowledge and patient care advancement. Clinical trials are a mechanism to attract brilliant minds to our province, individuals who are committed to learning and better care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are pleased to partner with CANTRAIN for a corpus of \$52,500 in total awards to NL awardees this year. >> - [Liam Kelly, PhD, Provincial Director, Research and Innovation, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services \(NLHS\)](#).

QUOTES FROM THE OTHER CTTP NOMINATED PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS–NATIONAL LEADS

"An important objective of StrokeCog is to ensure that the principles of equity, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility are embedded in all programming to redefine how stroke clinical trials are conducted in Canada. I am very pleased that we were able to provide funding through StrokeCog to top PDF candidates who were evaluated on multiple metrics consistent with DORA guidelines and who met our EDIA goals." — [Jodi Edwards, PhD, University of Ottawa Heart Institute, for the Innovative Clinical Trials Training Initiatives for STROKE and COGnition \(STROKECOG\)](#).

"I am glad to see the federal government investing in these clinical trials training programs. The CAN-TAP-TALENT grant has been used to train the next generation of researchers and increase capacity in clinical trials in Canada, which is crucial for the innovation in therapeutic interventions in Canada." — [Angela M. Cheung, MD, PhD, FRCPC, University Health Network, University of Toronto, for the Canadian Training Platform for Trials Leveraging Existing Networks \(CAN-TAP-TALENT\)](#).

"Building our healthcare capacity, delivered at the provincial level, is imperative for positioning Canada at the forefront of research and clinical practice. The collaboration between federal and provincial governments is essential to facilitate this advancement. We are pleased that provinces have embraced the initiative to expand our capacity, contributing significantly to the improvement of the health and well-being of Canadians." — [Simon Bacon, PhD, FTOS, FCCS, FABMR, Concordia University, for the Canadian Behavioural Interventions and Trials Network \(CBITN\)](#).