

Kidney Disease

Research Funding Is Paying Dividends

If you're looking to fund medical research in Canada and want to get the most for your dollar in terms of directly improving the lives of Canadian patients, it's hard to find a better investment than kidney disease research. Kidney disease affects 1 in 10 Canadians and yet, for decades, research into new treatments and therapies has been chronically underfunded.



Elisabeth Fowler
National Director of
Research, The Kidney
Foundation of Canada



Dr. Adeera Levin
Professor of Medicine, Head Div.
of Nephrology, UBC,
President International Society of
Nephrology (2015-17)

"Kidney disease is underappreciated as a major public health problem in Canada and worldwide," explains Dr. Adeera Levin, Head of Nephrology at the University of British Columbia. "As a consequence, funding and research is lacking, so we are behind in terms of being able to offer patients novel and exciting therapies."

For many years, kidney researchers have laboured to improve outcomes for Canadian patients, all with little in the way of funding or recognition. But finally, that is beginning to change. *Listening, Learning, Leading: Canadians Seeking Solutions and Innovations to Overcome Chronic Kidney Disease* (Can-SOLVE CKD)

Research at The Kidney Foundation of Canada. "The researchers I have spoken to tell me that they find this very helpful not just because it reminds them why they are doing what they are doing, but because it provides them with a new perspective to help them look at their research in a different way."

Not just new research, but new researchers

Of course, while directly funding and promoting research into kidney disease is incalculably valuable, it will all be for naught if Canada doesn't have a cadre of top-notch kidney disease specialists able and willing to undertake this re-

search. Enter the *Kidney Research Scientist Core Education and National Training Program* (KRESCENT), a unique training initiative that encourages investigators to pursue kidney disease research and provides support and education for those who do. After 10 years into their mission, a retrospective of KRESCENT's achievements paints a dramatic picture of success.

"KRESCENT is a capacity-building program that trains new investigators early in their careers, providing salary support as well as mentorship and a curriculum," says Fowler. "In the first 10 years, there were 72 graduates through the program and 79 percent of them went on to get funding from

the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), which is really impressive when you consider that the normal success rate for CIHR funding is very low. Compared to their peers, they had twice as many publications, they had more international collaboration, they're much more multi-disciplinary, and their papers are more highly cited. What's more, 90 percent of graduates credit the KRESCENT program with having contributed to their success."

With training programs like KRESCENT feeding into research programs like Can-SOLVE CKD, Canada is beginning to invest in new innovations in the treatment of kidney disease that will directly help millions of Canadians. The research ranges from exploring dialysis alternatives to the question of providing equal care in First Nations communities to the interplay between kidney disease and rare diseases. This is vital research that has gone too long undone.

The best news is that, despite decades spent underappreciated, Canada's kidney disease researchers are proving ready and eager to take this opportunity to show what they've got. "One thing about kidney disease in Canada is that it's very much a team sport," says Dr. Levin. "A lot of us have been working together for a very long time. It's very exciting to see where we can now go with this amount of dedicated funding, and we're really good at using our money wisely because we've never had a lot of it before." ◉

By D.F. McCourt

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 **EXPERT PERSPECTIVE**



Paul Kidston
National President, The Kidney
Foundation of Canada

The Kidney Foundation's research investments are the cornerstone to the support we provide Canadians living with kidney disease.

For more than 50 years, the Foundation has made this a priority by directing funds to innovative projects that make a positive impact on patients' lives.

It has been tremendously rewarding to see the success of the KRESCENT program. Through their research, this talented group of researchers is dedicated to changing the landscape of treatment options, therapies, and prevention methodologies. They are leaders in raising awareness about the Foundation, its programs, and services.

In addition to the value which will come of such a focused investment by many funding partners, including The Kidney Foundation, we are pleased to see so many patients directly engaged through the Can-SOLVE CKD network. Inviting patients to lead the direction of the Network and to be invested partners in the research projects from their inception through to their ultimate discoveries, is a game changing opportunity we are proud to support.

In addition to its research investment, the Foundation continues to provide a variety of programs for patients impacted by kidney disease daily. Our information and referral services provide extensive data to people, while programs like peer support and the Kidney Community Kitchen offer practical supports. ◉

By Paul Kidston

 **STATS**

KIDNEY DISEASE

15 people

are told that their kidneys have failed everyday.



36% increase

of Canadians living with end-stage kidney disease since 2006.

36,251

Canadians are being treated for kidney failure.



47%

of new patients are under the age of 65.

SOURCE: THE KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF CANADA, 2017 CANADIAN ORGAN REPLACEMENT REGISTER (CORR)

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of Canada

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