

An eighth institute, the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, received \$50 million, although its research program was peer reviewed and received glowing recommendations from an international panel, which urged that its original \$25 million/5 year federal award be renewed.

Critics, including Dr. Ronald Worton, chair of the new advocacy group Research Canada: An Alliance for Health Discovery, and CEO and scientific director of the Ottawa Health Research Institute, charged that the awarding of funds to the 7 institutes without benefit of scientific input and peer review constituted a “dangerous” precedent.

Other details of the new program remain sparse. Federal officials have indicated that applicants in the forthcoming competition will have to meet a matching dollar requirement to be eligible for funding. That requirement will apparently be stiffer for centres that focus on commercialization than for those which focus on research. But the scope of that difference has yet to be established— Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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A call to unite: Physicians must help children in areas of conflict

Canadian physicians should throw their considerable political weight behind international efforts to protect children’s rights and help heal children who’ve been affected by war and conflict, former Canadian senator Langdon Pearson pleaded in a keynote address to the Physicians for Global Survival (Canada) on Mar. 30 in Ottawa.

“You cannot underestimate the impact you all can have when you get together and communicate a message,” the former president and chair of the Canadian Council on Children and Youth (1984–90) said in her address, entitled “Conflict and Health: the imperative for response and prevention.”

Protection of children’s rights

should be a key component of Canada’s foreign policy, Pearson argued. “We need to put pressure on the government to put children back on the agenda — credible groups like you can help do this.”



ICRCT, Gassman

This child from south Sudan puts a face to the 6 million children who have been seriously wounded in conflict.

The Physicians for Global Survival say that more than 2 million children have been killed in armed conflicts since the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child was adopted. Three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled, while countless others witnessed or participated in acts of violence.

“But just as many children die of malnutrition heightened by conflict,” Pearson said. “The most vulnerable are under 5 years old.”

International efforts must focus on preventing child soldier recruitment and child prostitution; protecting refugee children, helping families to reunify, and providing access to education, reproduction education, health care, physical and psycho-social help, and more, Pearson added.

Pearson also argued that physicians have a “responsibility to look after the world’s children.”— Jennifer Gearey, Ottawa

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News @ a glance

All aboard: The nation’s 13 provinces and territories quickly clambered onto the Patient Wait Time Guarantee incentive train to qualify for a per capita share of a new \$612 million wait time fund unveiled in Finance Minister Jim Flaherty’s Mar. 19 budget (*CMAJ* 2007;176:1071). To qualify, and as a lure, provinces were given until Mar. 31 to “publicly” outline a plan for a guarantee in at least 1 of 5 designated priority areas: cancer treatment, heart procedures, diagnostic imaging, joint replacement and sight restoration. The tactic proved effective. Quebec had already qualified for \$126.6 million with its commitment to establish hip, knee and cataract surgery guarantees. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, PEI and BC established guarantees for cancer radiation therapy, qualifying for respective \$24.2 million, \$21.3 million, \$27.9 million, \$12.1 million and \$76.4 million stakes. Ontario garnered \$205 million with a cataract surgery guarantee. Saskatchewan earned \$24.8 million by establishing a coronary artery bypass graft surgery guarantee. Yukon garnered \$4.5 million for a mammography guarantee, the Northwest Territories, \$4.6 million for a “primary health care” guarantee and Nunavut, \$4.5 million for a diagnostic imaging guarantee. Health Canada said agreements with Alberta and Newfoundland had also been reached but details were not released.

Xbox surgery: According to a small study (*Arch Surg* 2007;142:181-6), there may be a correlation between competency in laparoscopic procedures and game-playing skills. Surgeons who play video games 3 times a week commit 32% fewer errors and are 24% faster than nonplayers. The correlation is even higher for those who played at least 3 hours weekly (37% and 27%, respectively). The authors say “training curricula that include video games may help thin the technical interface between surgeons and screen-mediated applications, such as laparoscopic surgery.” — Compiled by Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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