Nobel Prize winner addresses the Academy

Harold Varmus, winner of the 1989 Nobel Prize in Medicine and of the 2008 Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research, was the guest of honour at the closing luncheon of the Academy’s 2008 annual meetings in Toronto.

After winning the Nobel Prize, Varmus was named by President Bill Clinton in 1993 to serve as the director of the NIH, a position he held until his appointment as CEO of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in 2000.

Dr. Varmus’ luncheon lecture to the Academy focused on his pioneering work regarding open access to scientific papers. He has spearheaded a movement that argues the results of scientific investigations should reside in the public domain. This has resulted in policies at numerous agencies including the NIH stipulating that articles must be freely available within six months of their publication in a journal, and in the creation of not-for-profit open access publishers such as the Public Library of Science that he co-founded. Dr. Varmus’ lecture was stimulating and provocative, and generated an enthusiastic discussion among the Fellows in attendance.

Honourable Monique Bégin helps induct new Fellows

At the annual ceremony and dinner, the Honourable Monique Bégin was the guest of honour and was inducted as the second Distinguished Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. She joins Dr. John Evans who was inducted last year as the first Distinguished Fellow. Dr. Bégin was honoured by CAHS for her many contributions to health care policy including the Canada Health Act of 1984 which enshrined the five core principles of universality, comprehensiveness, portability, accessibility, and public administration into Canada’s health care system. Following her own induction, Dr. Bégin participated in the ceremony and congratulated each new Fellow as he or she came forward to be recognized. Later, during dinner, Dr. Bégin delighted the audience with a riveting account of her time in politics and of her recent work concerning population health and social determinants.

ROI Assessment report to be released in January 2009

The much anticipated CAHS Assessment concerning the best metrics for evaluating the return on investments in health research, led by CAHS Fellow Dr. Cy Frank, is nearing the finish line. After more than a year of hard work, the Panel’s report is now in the hands of external reviewers and will be revised in December 2008. Subject to Board approval, the Final Report will be released on January 20, 2009 in Ottawa. Assessment sponsors will get first crack at the report at a special presentation that day by Dr. Frank and colleagues, prior to wider release by the Academy.
37 new Fellows inducted in 2008
At the annual ceremony and dinner in Toronto on September 23, 2008, CAHS inducted 37 new Fellows into the Academy representing the full breadth of academic health science in Canada. We welcome these new Fellows whose accomplishments, wisdom and experience deeply enrich the Fellowship.

Andre Cantin
Andre Parent
Annette Majnemer
Bernard Bressler
Celine Goulet
Charles Bernstein
David Hart
George Steiner
Guy Sauvageau
Heather Spence-Laschinger
Howard Feldman
Jack Jhamandas
Jack Siemiatycki
Jean-Lucien Rouleau
Jean-Pierre Pelletier
John David Spence
John Gilbert
John Prescott
Louise Potvin
Mark Wainberg
Martha Piper
Michael Kramer
Murray Huff
Neil Cashman
Patrick Parfrey
Peter Leung
Pierre-Gerlier Forest
Renee Lyons
Robert Sheldon
Robert Sindelar
Robyn Tamblyn
Ronald Barr
Ronald Worton
Stan Kutcher
Terrance Snutch
Thomas Chang
William Fisher

Forum on Chronic Disease Management launches new assessment
The fourth annual meeting of the Canadian Academy of Health Science (CAHS) was held in Toronto, Ontario from September 22 to 24, 2008 and included a full day Forum that launched CAHS’s Major Assessment on Health System Transformation to Meet the Burden of Chronic Disease.

Approximately 125 individuals Fellows, sponsors and guests attended the Forum. The objective of the day was to explore elements that are key to success for achieving optimal health outcomes for patients with one or more chronic diseases, including adults and children; to identify the major structural barriers to developing effective models of prevention and care in the context of affordability and sustainability; and to delineate the steps necessary to implement the transition to an effective model with clarification of roles and responsibilities, in the Canadian context.

Penny Ballem and Louise Nasmith, Co-Chairs of the CAHS Assessment, facilitated the Forum. The morning began with an outstanding plenary address from Catherine Zahn (Executive Vice President, Clinical Programs and Practice, University Health Network) followed by a panel discussion including Penny Ballem, Louise Nasmith, William Reichmann (CEO, Baycrest Hospital), and Ben Chan (CEO, Ontario Health Quality Council). Following lunch, attendees participated in another excellent panel discussion featuring Jean L. Rouleau (Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Montreal), The Hon. Michael J.L. Kirby (Chair, Mental Health Commission of Canada), Valerie Tregillus (Executive Director, Medical Services Division, BC Ministry of Health) and Eldon Smith (Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary).

The gathered Fellows and Sponsors broke into working groups to consider the appropriate scope for the Assessment and the kind of expertise required for an ideal Assessment Panel to take on this complex challenge. A wrap-up session brought a number of ideas and threads together and provided an excellent launch for this latest Major Assessment.

CAHS builds strategy on External Affairs
Dr. Peter Singer of the University of Toronto has joined the CAHS Board of Directors and will manage the External Affairs portfolio. At the annual general meeting, he outlined a 5-point strategy for the next year:

1. Survey CAHS members on their activities in global health
2. Recommend a structure for External Affairs
3. Strengthen the relationship with the Inter-Academy Medical Panel, a global network of academies of medicine
4. Strengthen the relationship with the US Institute of Medicine
5. Work up the theme of “Canada’s role in Global Health” as a possible symposium topic for the 2009 Annual meeting

Peter is eager to hear your thoughts on any of these points, or others, about external affairs. You can email him at peter.singer@mrcglobal.org.