



Canadian Academy of Health Sciences  
Académie canadienne des sciences de la santé

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**NEWS RELEASE:**

***Canada's first national health advisory explores opportunities to enhance health of Canadians at second annual meeting***

Some of the best minds in the country will gather in Ottawa this week at the second annual meeting of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS), a source of expertise that will provide advice on key issues relevant to the health of Canadians. The meeting runs from Sept. 26 to 28 in Ottawa.

The CAHS membership is made up of 220 health-care leaders from diverse backgrounds who have attained the highest levels of academic and professional accomplishment in their respective fields. Members volunteer their time and expertise to serve as an independent, arms-length, credible body that will undertake major strategic assessments.

When Tony Blair needs urgent advice on a pressing health matter, for example, he turns to the Academy of Medical Sciences in the U.K. For Jacques Chirac, there is the Académie Nationale de Médecine in France. In the U.S., George Bush can call upon the Institute of Medicine within the National Academy of Sciences. That body has produced such pivotal reports as "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System," and "Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance." However, until only recently, Canada's political leaders have had no comparable group to provide them with unbiased advice on pressing matters related to the health of Canadians.

CAHS hopes to fill that gap and inform in an ongoing advisory process. The group may tackle such potential topics as striking the right balance in stem cell research, addressing the challenge of disadvantaged populations, the increased burden of chronic diseases or preparing for global threats to health.

"Canada has lagged behind other countries when it comes to having an independent, arms-length organization that can respond to questions put to them from a variety of sources including government, industry, non-governmental organizations and major research organizations. That has now changed with the formation of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences," said Dr. Paul Armstrong, founding President of CAHS and professor of medicine at the University of Alberta. "I am genuinely excited at the potential to realize a unique opportunity to enhance the health of Canadians with this new initiative while meeting in the nation's capital. We have an outstanding group of leaders in health who have accepted a covenant to serve their fellow citizens by volunteering their expertise that is drawn from all disciplines concerned with health. Their collective expertise and talents can and will make a difference."

The fellows of the CAHS will be working to establish a unique relationship with various health sectors and to address the issues of highest priority. They will engage in important dialogue during a panel moderated by Matthew Spence, the former President of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and comprised of Pierre-Gerlier Forest, Chief Scientist of Health Canada, David Butler Jones, Chief Public Health Officer, Penny Ballem, former Deputy Minister of Health of BC, and Bartha Knoppers, professor of Law and Medicine at the University of Montreal and an expert in international health law. Federal Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Health Steven Fletcher will also address the participants at the meeting.

Some of the CAHS distinguished members include: University of Toronto President **David Naylor**; Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research President **Kevin Keough**; law Professor and senior researcher at the Centre for Public Law Research, Université de Montréal, **Bartha Knoppers**; President and CEO of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, **Eliot Phillipson**; and, Canadian Institutes of Health Research President, **Alan Bernstein**.

One of the keynote addresses will be delivered by the former president of the United States' Institute of Health, Dr. Kenneth Shine, who will impart lessons learned from his institution. A second keynote speaker, Jonathan Lomas, President and CEO of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation will discuss how we can move to evidence-based public health policy.

As well, the inaugural recipient of the Henry Friesen International Prize in Health Research, Dr. Joseph Boyd Martin, Dean of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine will deliver a lecture called "Brain Disease: Health Research Policy for the Public Good." He is expected to speak on the overwhelming burden of mental illness and other debilitating brain diseases, and his vision of the shift in health-care policy and practice needed to mitigate this burden.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Dr. Paul Armstrong**  
Professor of Medicine, University of  
Alberta  
780-492-0591

**Phoebe Dey**  
Public Affairs, University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
(780)492-0437

**Dr. Martin Schechter**  
Professor and Head, Department of  
Health Care and Epidemiology  
University of British Columbia  
604-822-3910