



MIMM BITES

A NEWSLETTER OF MCGILL'S MICROBIOLOGY & IMMUNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

MARCH 2016

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

Dear MIMMers,

Welcome to our March Newsletter.

With the spring around the corner, one can start feeling the increasing light and colors in our daily life (or maybe it is just me, as I am writing this paragraph on my way to Southern California, and changing from -11°C in Montreal to 29°C in L.A.). It is just an example of necessary renewal. What better time to refresh the look of our MIMM Bites newsletter, thanks to the work of Patrick Ritchie and Lana Kobeici. Hope you like it. And to them, kudos!

The beginning of March has also marked the passing of a major CIHR grant deadline. Many of our colleagues have submitted applications. On behalf of all the members of our department, I would like to wish them good luck. No matter what the final results are, they deserve our full respect for the amazing work they do and propose to do.

I am going to go on record saying that, after another round of "piloting" at CIHR, there is no correlation between the quality of the proposed research and the ultimate funding results. The CIHR peer review system, once widely respected by the research community, is now a widespread source of frustration and cynicism. And this feeling keeps building with each "pilot" results released... and interpreted.

I am going to go on record saying that, based on the implementation of each pilot competition, one has the sense of a complete misalignment between the CIHR leadership and the Canadian Health Research community. The dialogue between the two parts seems to occur on different wavelengths that results in noise, with no melody.

I am going to go on record saying that we have done little to address this unfortunate situation. Our Principal, along with Presidents of other research-intensive universities, has sent a letter to the President of CIHR about the increasing concern and desperation of the Health Research Community. I hope for an impact of this letter based on the prestige of the signatories, but I am afraid that my hopes may not be long-lived.

I am going to go on record proposing that the time has come to address the CIHR Governing Council (the "Board of Directors" of CIHR) and share with them the disappointing situation for Canadian Health Research and the many negative impacts of the indiscriminate piloted initiatives by CIHR. The Governing Council may then act as its name suggests, and govern to stop the noise, and bring back dialogue and new ideas. And if not, resign.

Last, I am going to go on record saying that, just as we need (and look forward to) the spring renewal after 3 months of winter, we need renewal in the CIHR leadership.

Let me know your thoughts on this issue by emailing me. And with nothing else, enjoy the renewed MIMM Bites!

Yours in service,

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