Rossy Cancer Network Research Grant Summary

The RCN Research Fund was established to support advancements in quality of care research in adults with cancer. This initiative builds on the exceptional pool of expertise across the partner institutions that make up the Rossy Cancer Network (RCN): the McGill University Health Centre, the Jewish General Hospital, St. Mary’s Hospital Center, and the McGill University Faculty of Medicine.

This fund helps to support the unprecedented collaboration among the McGill-affiliated cancer missions which is at the heart of the RCN: promoting continuous improvement projects, sharing best practices and developing research and training platforms for the rapid generation of scientific knowledge related to cancer care quality.

The Research Fund is accessible to all health professionals involved in the provision of cancer care and promote collaboration among the network’s partner hospitals. An external peer review process is used to assess proposals, relying on internationally recognized experts to ensure the highest quality of scientific advancement.

Since 2014, the RCN Research Fund has invested over $2 million to enable the completion of 21 projects targeting various aspects of the cancer care trajectory. We are confident that this exciting initiative will empower health care teams to continually improve cancer care delivery and enhance patient experience and outcomes across the network, while advancing knowledge in cancer quality and strengthening McGill’s leadership in this field.
Purpose

- Support the RCN’s mandate of research in the development of knowledge centered on cancer care quality and safety;
- Assist McGill’s oncology community in becoming a recognized leader in the field of cancer care quality research and innovation;
- Facilitate the deployment and execution of RCN strategic priorities and vision.
- Assist McGill’s oncology community in ensuring regional leadership in establishing high standards in cancer care quality and clinical effectiveness; and optimizing the patient trajectory (diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment delivery, survivorship, supportive care and end of life);
- Develop research and training platforms for the rapid generation of scientific knowledge relevant to the domains of cancer care;
- Facilitate the academic career development of faculty members within the McGill oncology community involved in research in the field of cancer care quality.

Eligibility

RCN Research Grants are open to all health care professionals actively involved in the delivery of care to adult cancer patients within the RCN network of hospitals. They are available to all with an interest in the development of new knowledge and advancement in cancer care optimization. The list of eligible professionals includes, but is not limited to:

- Physicians
- Nurses and all nursing-affiliated personnel
- Rehabilitation experts (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, kinesiology, speech therapy, etc.)
- Psychosocial health experts
- Other professionals that participate in the delivery of care to cancer patients

The budget proposal for each application must not exceed $100,000. All applications must be submitted by Friday, June 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2018 via the RCN website: https://mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/grants/cqi-research/submit

\textbf{Note:} The RCN Executive Committee has approved the following measures to minimize the potential for conflict of interest: 1) hospital Oncology Leads (Drs. Aprikian, Batist & Langleben) are eligible to participate as co-applicants only. They will not be involved in ranking applications; 2) The Program Lead for Cancer Quality & Innovation (Dr. Ari Meguerditchian) and the Clinical Lead for the RCN (Dr. Wilson Miller) are not eligible for funding.
Application Terms and Conditions

- The number of research proposals submitted by one individual (as a principal investigator, co-applicant or collaborator) is not limited; however the same individual can only receive one research award as a principal applicant per year.

- All applicants and co-applicants must hold an academic or clinical appointment in at least one of the RCN partner institutions: The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) and St-Mary’s Hospital (SMH). External collaborations can be sought; however, budget expenditures to non-RCN institutions require specific justification and approval.

- Research proposals must reflect a collaborative effort from at least 2 RCN partner institutions. The participation of each collaborating partner must be proportionally equivalent (development and deployment of the research project, data analysis and interpretation) and cannot be limited to patient accrual.

- Research proposals must contain a knowledge transfer component (there are no restrictions on the type, level and professional affiliation of the targeted audience).

- Only original proposals will be considered. The 2018 cycle will not award funds if overlapping or comparable support for the same project has been obtained (even partially) from another funding source.

- Research proposals having received funding through previous cycles are not eligible for funding. This also applies to new proposals that represent the continuation of projects funded through previous cycles of RCN research funding or funding from the RCN’s Quality Improvement Initiatives program.

- The principal investigator is responsible for producing all relevant ethics approvals from his/her institution and will provide documentation of such to the RCN within 6 months of proposal approval.

- “Legacy” projects reviewed by the RCN prior to the establishment of CQI will be evaluated by a separate mechanism, independent of this granting mechanism.

- While the reviewers may choose to consider matching contributions from the host Departments or Institutions (e.g. in kind resources, funds, space, equipment, dedicated personnel, etc.) in their scoring, this is not a mandatory requirement.

- All proposals must comply with the application requirements set forth by the RCN (application, budget proposal, letter of support, etc.). Proposals that fail to do so will be excluded despite potential scientific merit.
Review Process

- Applications will be reviewed by an external scientific peer-review committee chaired by the CQI Program Lead, using a standardized scoring grid (see appendix below).

- The role of Chair of the scientific peer-review committee will be to advise the committee members on issues such as scoring criteria, terms and conditions and eligibility of proposals.

- The three committee members will independently score each application, followed by a discussion by the committee to finalize the rank list.

- Scientific merit will be the sole criterion; the RCN does not have the obligation to ensure parity of funding between sites, professionals and teams.

- The scientific committee’s rank list will be presented by the CQI Program Lead along with his recommendations for discussion at the Executive Committee, to ensure that funding decisions are concordant to RCN goals and values.

- The Executive Committee is responsible for determining the final budget and therefore the maximum number of awards distributed.
Reporting Process for Recipients

- Financial and scientific progress reports are required at 6 months, for internal assessment.

- A 12-month no-cost extension can be requested upon submission of the first 6-month progress report. A written official letter and new timeline with action plan is required. As a consequence, the RCN leadership acknowledges the carry-over of assigned funds to the following fiscal year, without penalty to the CQI budget.

- In the case of a one-year extension has been granted, a financial and scientific report is required every 6 month until the end of the project.

- The principal investigator is expected to document planned carryovers (of funds or data collection) and provide an update within 1 year.

- Financial and scientific final reports are required 6 months (maximum) after the project ends, for both internal and external communications.

- Principal investigators should use standardized templates for progress and final reports provided by RCN program manager.

- Recognizing the unique financial interplay between McGill’s Faculty of Medicine and RCN partner hospitals which may result in awards being disbursed at variable dates, the day that the 1st installment is made to the host institution will be considered as the start date of the research project and not the day on which notification of award was made to the grant recipient.
Acceptance Terms and Conditions

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** the PI named on the original proposal submitted cannot be modified during the funding period (12-month period or accordingly to extension approved).

- **RCN Research Fund representative:** The Program Lead for Cancer Quality & Innovation (CQI) will act as the only official representative of the RCN Research Fund.

- **Correspondence:** the RCN will communicate only with the PI for any matter related to the attribution and use of the research grant. Reciprocally, all communications with the RCN representative shall be performed exclusively by the PI.

- **Ethics clearance:** the RCN is not responsible for securing ethics clearance for any funded project. This is the exclusive responsibility of the principal investigator. Confirmation of ethics clearance must be presented before first release of funds.

- **Transfer of funds:** the RCN Financial officer will manage the transfer of funds to the local research institute, based on the parameters of the RCN gift agreement. Funding must be intra-institution, triggered by an invoice from the research institute to RCN. It is the responsibility of the local financial representative to disburse the funds to the PI. The PI cannot modify or redirect this process.

Once the contract has been signed, research funds are attributed in 2 installments of 50% of the total granted amount. The date of the first installment will be considered as the start date (T0) of the 12-month period to complete the research project. The second installment will be made upon reception and approval of the 6-month progress report.

- **Use of Funds**
  Research funds cannot be used for:
  - Indirect expenditures such as leasing or maintenance, reimbursement of indirect costs assumed by host institution(s)
  - Clinical trials of investigational drugs (e.g. targeted therapy in the treatment of cancer)
  - Supplementing or replacing institutional / clinical operating budgets.
  - As salary support for the principal applicant, main applicant or collaborators.

  Funding is not recurrent. The RCN reserves the right to re-claim any unused funds at the end of the research project.
- **Amount**: the amount specified on the acceptance letter will not be modified under any circumstance. The PI is encouraged to leverage this financial support from the RCN to apply for external sources of funding.

- **Reporting requirement (financial)**: A financial report is required at 6 months, detailing expenses according to the standard RCN format provided. Expenses not justified in the original proposal will be subject to review and potential rejection. A final financial report is required at 18 months for project completion. The RCN reserves the right to re-claim any unused funds at that time.

- **Reporting requirement (scientific)**: the PI is required to produce a scientific report at 6 months, detailing progress of the project, according to the standard RCN format provided. The CQI Program Lead can hold subsequent payment of funds if the progress is judged non-satisfactory, after submission to the Executive Committee. The final scientific report is required maximum 6 months after the project completion.

- **Communications**: the RCN reserves the right to use any portion of the summary and lay term abstract provided at application for visibility purposes. In addition, it may ask the PI and his/her team for photographs or interviews or any other material deemed necessary for RCN visibility purposes both within the McGill community and the general public.

The grantee also agrees that the RCN will manage media and communications related to the funded proposal. Communications outside of the PI’s immediate team (intra- or inter-institution, outside media, etc.) must be reviewed by the RCN communications Manager.

- **Acknowledgement**: The grantee agrees to acknowledge the RCN in all written or oral forms of communications stemming from funded proposal. Please refer to the Communications Policy for CQI projects available online at mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/rcn-initiatives/team-tools.

- **RCN-related events**: The PI is expected to attend RCN-related scientific and clinical events during the 24 months corresponding to the funding start to present work accomplished upon request of the RCN.
Additional Information

For questions regarding eligibility, please contact:

- Dr Ari Meguerditchian, Program Lead, Cancer Quality & Innovation (CQI) program: ari.meguerditchian@mcgill.ca
- Paola Gardère, CQI Program Manager: paola.gardere@muhc.mcgill.ca

Assessment Grid
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Quality and originality of proposal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The project proposed is original and innovative</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The project targets cancer care quality improvement</td>
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<td>- The project includes an objective assessment component</td>
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<td>- Clarity of the proposal (problem statement well documented, research questions clearly stated, objectives measurable and tangible outcomes)</td>
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<td>- The objectives correspond to the hypothesis and are realistically attainable within the timeline and methods proposed</td>
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<td><strong>2. Feasibility of the proposal within proposed teams and environments:</strong></td>
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<td>- The methodological approach proposed is appropriate, realistic and feasible according to the research goals (e.g. number of participants, accessibility of participants, ethics considerations etc.)</td>
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<td>- Technical Capacity: Team composition covers all relevant clinical / scientific skills required</td>
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<td>- The clinical / scientific activity of the proposed sites is able to support the proposed research activity</td>
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<td><strong>3. Relevance of project to cancer care quality &amp; research:</strong></td>
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<td>- The project targets an unanswered question in the science</td>
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<td>- The project builds on currently existing knowledge</td>
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<td>- The research question is relevant</td>
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<td>- The proposed research is likely to have an impact by leading to ground-breaking advances in cancer care quality improvement</td>
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<td>- Results from the proposed project will support larger research initiatives</td>
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<td>- Results from the proposed project has the potential to be rapidly translated into practice and/or guidelines</td>
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<td><strong>4. Budget relevance:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The proposed budget realistically reflects the requirements to successfully complete the project (sufficiency)</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget covers all aspects to successfully complete the project (comprehensiveness)</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget does not contain elements corresponding to institutional operating expenses</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget is in compliance with the terms and conditions</td>
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<td>- The proposed project could realistically persist beyond research activities with reasonable, minimal support (sustainability)</td>
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<td><strong>5. Relevance to the RCN goals and objectives:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The proposal is relevant and align with RCN objectives and strategic priorities (Patient Experience, Evidence based-care, Access to care, Leading-Edge treatments, Research and Education)</td>
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<td>- The project involves more than one site as proportionally equal partners (clinical and scientific collaboration, patients recruitment…etc)</td>
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<td>- The project will generate knowledge / know-how or opportunities that can be exported to other RCN sites, priorities or initiatives</td>
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<td>- The project has the potential for eventual alignment with disease site group activities</td>
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