



Grand Challenges Canada™  
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## News Release

July 21, 2011

### **Mental Health Care in Developing Countries: Grand Challenges Canada Offers \$20 Million For Bold, Innovative Solutions; A First in Research Funding**

***Developing world devastated by mental health disorders;  
Patients often untreated, stigmatized, misunderstood***

**Toronto.** A young girl in Somalia sits chained to a tree. Women in Ukraine wander aimlessly in the halls of a decrepit psychiatric hospital. Like many people in low- and middle-income countries, they suffer from mental illnesses, conditions like bi-polar disorders, schizophrenia, depression, and dementia. Often patients with these illnesses are neglected and stigmatized.

Mental disorders are a leading cause of disability globally representing 14% of the global burden of disease. Of those 450 million people afflicted, more than 75% live in the developing world. Most do not receive care. In a recent survey, the World Health Organization found up to 85% of patients with serious mental disorders did not receive any treatment in the past year of their illness. Mental illnesses are also associated with, and are risk factors for, other diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Today Grand Challenges Canada announced \$20 million in funding for bold, transformational proposals to tackle the issue of mental health in developing countries.

Dr. Peter A. Singer, CEO of Grand Challenges Canada says, “Mental illness in low- and middle-income countries is perhaps the most neglected of the ‘neglected diseases.’ It is not acceptable on any level to chain a child to a tree or lock people up as treatment for mental illness. We need to find new and better solutions.”

Grand Challenges Canada is looking for *Integrated Innovations in Global Mental Health* from social, scientific, and business researchers for significantly improved treatment and increased access to care for patients with mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries. Research proposals should overall address the issue of stigma and specifically address a number of challenges:

- Integrate screening and core packages of services into routine primary health care
- Reduce the cost and improve the supply of effective medications

- Provide effective and affordable community-based care and rehabilitation
- Improve children's access to evidence-based care by trained health providers
- Develop effective treatments for use by non-specialists, including lay health workers with minimal training
- Incorporate functional impairment and disability into assessment
- Develop mobile and IT technologies (such as telemedicine) to increase access to evidence-based care

“We are asking researchers to take an integrated innovative approach to this significant global health issue,” says Dr. Pamela Kanellis, Program Officer at Grand Challenges Canada. “Integrated Innovation includes not only the scientific and technical but also the social and commercial requirements needed for successful implementation. Our objective is to achieve scale and sustainability; in other words getting solutions to those who need them most, quickly, effectively and at a low cost.”

Grand Challenges Canada's mental health initiative seeks to fund some of the priorities identified by the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health, the US National Institute of Mental Health and others in their study “Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health” published in the July 7 issue of *Nature*. That study identified the most critical barriers in global mental health and the research required to improve the lives of people suffering from mental illnesses around the world. Grand Challenges Canada will fund up to 25 international research teams to focus on the priorities identified in the study. [[The paper can be viewed HERE](#)]

“Finding these solutions means doing research, and there is extremely little research funding for mental health in low- and middle-income countries. Mental illnesses need to be understood better and innovative approaches to care must be found. Grand Challenges Canada is breaking new ground here.” says Professor Abdallah S. Daar, Chief Science and Ethics Officer of Grand Challenges Canada, and a co-leader of the study published in *Nature*.

The Government of Canada funds Grand Challenges Canada through the Development Innovation Fund (DIF). In the 2008 Budget, the Government committed \$225 million over five years to the DIF to support the best minds in the world in a collaborative search for solutions to global health challenges.

For more information please visit [grandchallenges.ca](http://grandchallenges.ca)

### **About Grand Challenges Canada**

*Grand Challenges Canada is a unique independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of people in developing countries by integrating scientific, technological, business and social innovation. Grand Challenges Canada works with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and other global health foundations and organizations to find sustainable long-term solutions to the most pressing health challenges. Grand Challenges Canada is hosted at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health.*

[www.grandchallenges.ca](http://www.grandchallenges.ca)

**About Canada's International Development Research Centre**

*The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) supports research in developing countries to promote growth and development. IDRC also encourages sharing this knowledge with policymakers, other researchers, and communities around the world. The result is innovative, lasting local solutions that aim to bring choice and change to those who need it most. As the Government of Canada's lead on the Development Innovation Fund, IDRC draws on decades of experience managing publicly funded research projects to administer the Development Innovation Fund. IDRC also ensures that developing country researchers and concerns are front and centre in this exciting new initiative.*

[www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)

**About Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

*The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada's agency for health research. CIHR's mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health-care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 13,600 health researchers and trainees across Canada.*

*CIHR will be responsible for the administration of international peer review, according to international standards of excellence. The results of CIHR-led peer review will guide the awarding of grants by Grand Challenges Canada from the Development Innovation Fund*

[www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca)

**About McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health**

*The McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health is based at University Health Network and University of Toronto. We develop innovative global health solutions and help bring them to scale where they are most urgently needed. The McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health hosts Grand Challenges Canada.*

[www.mrcglobal.org](http://www.mrcglobal.org)

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