

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Chloe Payne  
ORGANIZATION: CanCOVID  
EMAIL: [info@cancovid.ca](mailto:info@cancovid.ca)  
WEB: [cancovid.ca](http://cancovid.ca)  
TWITTER: @cancovid

## CanCOVID's platform fully funded by the Government of Canada; converges with REAL to share knowledge with all Canadians

[August 27, 2020] -- The Government of Canada is investing \$1.25 million to support the development of the transdisciplinary CanCOVID network, which was recently established with the goal of facilitating rapid scientific coordination and providing a base of evidence to help inform Canadians during this crisis. "Investments in science and research are key to our government's response to COVID-19," said the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. "By helping researchers from a broad range of disciplines come together to share information and develop solutions to COVID-19, we are ensuring that we have the strongest possible evidence base to help Canada safely navigate its way out of this pandemic."

CanCOVID was established in March 2020 with the support of Mona Nemer, the federal government's Chief Science Advisor, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CanCOVID links Canada's research network using digital networking tools. CanCOVID's more than 2,300 members can collaborate across critical research and development areas, from clinical trials and testing, to diagnostics and treatment. They can also easily connect with others in their regional or local networks, and with clinicians on the frontlines. Beyond the digital communication space, activities include a weekly seminar series, researcher-vetted briefing notes, state the science reports and much more. "Science will get us through this crisis, but solving complex problems requires collaboration," said Dr. Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor of Canada. "Since the early days of the pandemic, CanCovid has been providing researchers with the means to communicate with each other and with policy makers in real time. This new support ensures that the network will continue to grow and move ahead in finding Canadian-made solutions to our challenges."

With this new funding support CanCOVID will establish thematic research networks, based on priorities developed in collaboration with the government. It will also develop partnerships with other networks such as the COVID19Resources platform and the Rapid Evidence Access Link (REAL) network, which both also originated as a COVID-19 response effort. The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, notes that "Canada's scientific expertise will help carry us through the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives like CanCOVID brings communities of experts together to share their knowledge and collaborate. Supporting engagement amongst scientists

and researchers can help save lives, provide Canadians with science-based, credible information from trusted sources and to help us prepare for the future.”

The CanCOVID network is a pan-Canadian initiative and will involve participation from researchers and experts from across the country. The CanCOVID secretariat will be led by Professor Vivek Goel as Network Scientific Advisor and Professor Julia Zarb, as Academic and Managing Director. While both are Professors in the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, where the secretariat will be based, they share years of experience working at a national level. “The pandemic has shown the crucial importance of academic researchers with a deep knowledge of government, who can produce high-quality, actionable scientific data quickly,” notes Professor Adalsteinn (Steini) Brown, the Dean of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. “With years of experience in government, academia and management, Vivek and Julia are superb choices to lead this Secretariat.”

Goel is a public health physician and until recently served as Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives at the University of Toronto, and previously served as the Founding President and CEO of Public Health Ontario. Zarb was, until taking this role, Program Director of the Master of Health Informatics program at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPME). She has 24 years of experience in health information technology strategy and marketing leadership in academic, public and private sectors.

For more information visit [www.cancovid.ca](http://www.cancovid.ca) and <https://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/covid19real/>.