Annual Report
2024 - 2025

BioCanRx
Canada's Immunotherapy Network
Le réseau canadien d'immunothérapie

Celebrating 10 years of Impact on Canada's Cancer Immunotherapy Landscape

Looking back over the past year, we are pleased to reflect on the remarkable achievements of our network as we successfully navigated a transition in funding while maintaining our momentum. With the launch of our $38 million, five-year commitment from the Strategic Science Fund (SSF), BioCanRx has been able to support projects already in our pipeline while investing in new initiatives selected for their high potential to move toward clinical trial. These investments underscore our resilience and our steadfast commitment to ensuring Canadian patients have timely access to innovative cancer therapies developed here at home.

Since 2015, BioCanRx has been responding to national gaps in the development and adoption of health innovations. Federal funding recognized the value and impact of our coordinated approach to advancing cancer immunotherapies and our alignment with national health and life sciences priorities. Our pragmatic pipeline model —from Catalyst to Enabling Studies to Clinical Trials— has proven highly effective at de-risking projects, positioning them for future investment, and ensuring that promising therapies advance steadily toward the clinic.

Without this critical translational support, many biotherapeutics would stall, unable to meet the regulatory, safety, and manufacturing requirements needed to proceed to a clinical trial application. Today, thanks to the efforts of our network and the support of the Government of Canada, BioCanRx investments are resulting in made-in-Canada treatments moving into clinical testing, providing new hope to patients and generating economic benefits for Canada's life sciences sector. Our Annual Report highlights these advances, the impacts of our programs, and the strength of our network. Looking ahead, we remain deeply committed to our mission of accelerating Canadian-led cancer immunotherapies, strengthening our life sciences economy, and ultimately, improving outcomes for patients.

Stéphanie Michaud, Ph.D
President and CEO

John Bell, Ph.D
Scientific Director

Russell Williams
Chair of the Board

About BioCanRx

We connect researchers and companies with the expertise and infrastructure to close the translational funding gap, accelerate breakthroughs, and build a strong life sciences talent pipeline.

Mission: Accelerate to the clinic the most promising cancer immunotherapies designed to save lives and enable a better quality of life.

Vision: Turn all cancers into curable diseases.

Who We Are

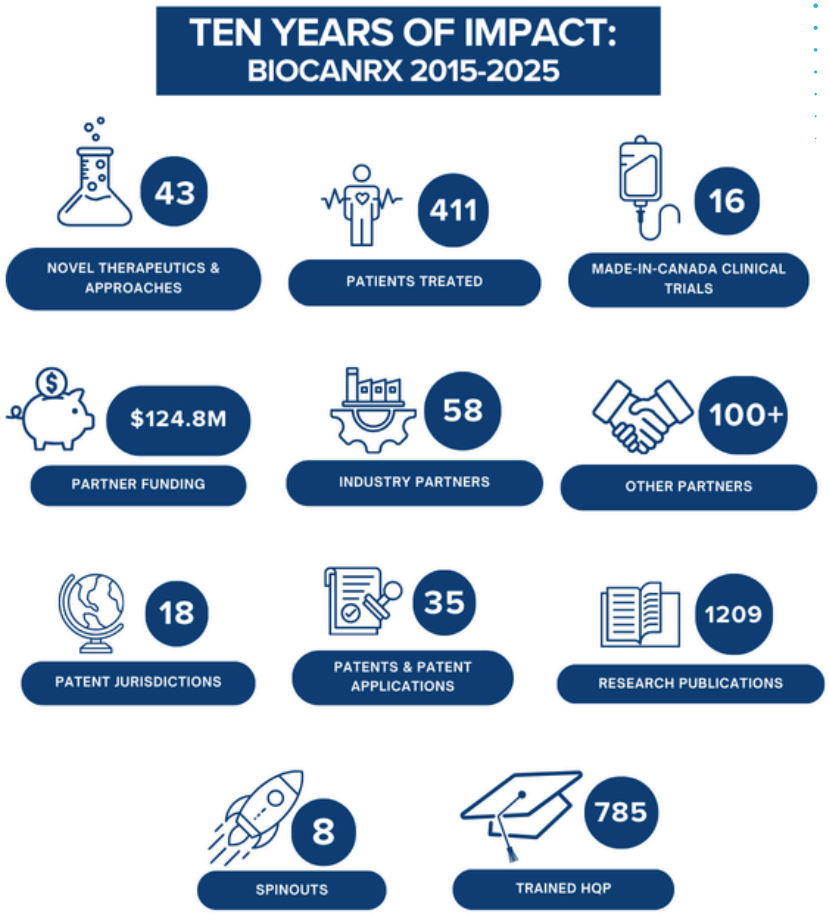
BioCanRx is Canada's Immunotherapy Network, a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to accelerating the development and delivery of innovative cancer immunotherapies. Our vision is to ensure that Canadian discoveries in the laboratory are transformed into life-saving therapies that reach patients swiftly, equitably, and sustainably. We serve as a bridge between discovery and clinical trial delivery, enabling a thriving ecosystem where researchers, clinicians, industry, patients, and policymakers collaborate to move promising innovations from the bench to the bedside. Through targeted investments, strategic partnerships, and training opportunities, BioCanRx is building the foundation for Canada to lead in biotherapeutics development and to strengthen our nation's position in the global life sciences sector while benefitting our most important stakeholder: cancer patients in Canada.

BioCanRx's work unfolds across Canada, on the traditional and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples and nations who have stewarded these lands for millennia. We respectfully acknowledge the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation, on whose land our head office is situated, and extend this recognition to Indigenous communities across the country. We honour their enduring stewardship of the lands and waters where our researchers, partners, and communities live and work. As a national network, BioCanRx embraces the responsibility of advancing reconciliation by embedding respect, inclusivity, and Indigenous leadership into all aspects of our mission.

Driving Research Translation

Supporting Translational Research Bringing Canadian-led Immunotherapies to Patients in Canada

While approximately **70% of Canada's $500M annual cancer research investment** goes to early-stage research, without translational research investment to move discoveries forward promising therapies have often languished in Canada – often finding success in other countries. In fact, between 2002 and 2015, **less than 1%** of clinical trials in cancer immunotherapy in Canada originated from Canadian research. From 2016 to 2024, this rose to **4%** thanks largely to focused programs like BioCanRx, which alone accounted for **42% of made-in-Canada immunotherapy trials** and more than **400 patients treated.**

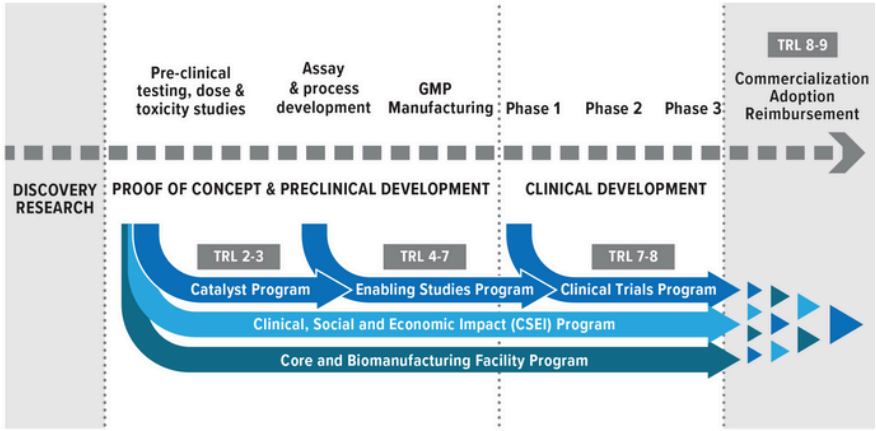


A Pragmatic Biotherapeutic Development Approach –

Supporting Bench to the Bedside alongside Canadian Companies

Supporting the translation of promising discoveries from the lab to clinical trial, BioCanRx's investments offer non-dilutive funding at a critical, and expensive, stage in therapeutics development. The goal? Bring more Canadian developed therapeutics to clinical trial to benefit more patients in Canada.

Following a staged, holistic approach driven by milestones, three of BioCanRx's research programs fund projects selected for their potential to flow progressively to clinical trial. The Catalyst, Enabling Studies and Clinical Trial funding streams provide a pathway and critical funding to ensure projects can cross through the challenging, costly and underfunded translational research phase.



BioCanRx Project Pipeline Investment Model

Funded BioCanRx projects can enter or exit the pipeline at different stages from proof-of-concept and preclinical development (Catalyst Program TRL* 2-3, Enabling Studies Program TRL 4-7) to clinical development (Phase 1-3; TRL 7-8). All funded projects must have a clear path to the clinic. Under the CSEI Program, we provide funding to further advance the forward path of these projects to inform clinical practice and health decision making, dissemination and adoption, evidence-informed changes in policy and programs, and community engagement. BioCanRx also provides funding support for essential Core and Biomanufacturing Facilities that are engaged in our projects, which are not already receiving facility staff or maintenance support within the budgets of those BioCanRx projects. Investment decisions and project progression is overseen by a committee of international experts in the field.

**TRL: technology readiness level.*

Recognizing the need to provide additional professional expertise, and following a holistic approach to project support, BioCanRx investments provide operational funding to academic core facilities that offer translational services ranging from biomanufacturing to immune monitoring to commercialization support. This operational funding ensures researchers have access to critical resources while supporting each facility's long-term sustainability. Building in the integration of these services also reduces the time-to-benefit – ensuring Canadian patients and taxpayers see timely returns.

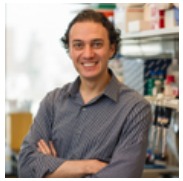
BioCanRx has also continued to invest in projects selected for their contributions to developing potential solutions to social, legal, ethical, economic or health-systems barriers facing BioCanRx biotherapeutic products through our Clinical, Social and Economic Impact (CSEI) program.

How We Work

Our investment approach brings researchers and their institutions together with industry and patient communities. We provide support and access to academic resources and facilities that researchers need to move their projects forward. And through our Cancer Community Partnership we engage with more than 40 patient organizations to ensure patient voice and experience is considered – helping shape the future of cancer care. This holistic approach has resulted in positive outcomes and impacts – both in therapeutics advanced to clinic and patients treated.

All projects are selected based on rigorous review by our Research Management Committee, composed of international experts with deep expertise in immunotherapy development and are monitored throughout the span of our investment.

Research Management Committee



Dr. Dmitriy Zamarin
Medical Oncologist, Section Head, Gynecologic Medical Oncology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Dr. Awen Gallimore
Professor, Immunology, Infection and Immunity, Cardiff University

Dr. Jeffrey Hoch
Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, UC Davis

Dr. Sumithra Mandrekar
Professor of Biostatistics and Oncology at Mayo Clinic

Dr. Alan Melcher
Professor of Translational Immunotherapy, The Institute of Cancer Research, Chester Beatty Laboratories, London (UK)

Dr. Isabelle Rivière
Vice President, Head of Oncology Cell Therapy Technologies and Product Engine, Takeda

Dr. Cliona Rooney
Professor, Baylor College of Medicine (USA)

Dr. Bruce Seet
Head of Medical Affairs (Canada) at Novavax

Dr. Allison Betof Warner
Assistant Professor of Medicine (Oncology), Stanford University School of Medicine

Dr. Guy Ungerechts
Deputy Director of the Medical Oncology Department at the Heidelberg University Hospital and National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg

Dr. Len Seymour
Professor of Gene Therapy, University of Oxford

Observers

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President and CEO, BioCanRx

Dr. Megan Mahoney
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Training and Research Manager

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Senior Scientist, the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute
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Intellectual Property Analyst, IRICoR

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Professor, Biochemistry and Microbiology, University of Victoria

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Director, Intellectual Property and Communication, IRICoR

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Associate Scientist, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (Canada)

Dr. Douglas Mahoney
Associate Professor of Microbiology, Immunology, and Infectious Disease
Associate Director, Basic and Translational Research, Charbonneau Cancer Institute
Scientific Director, Alberta Cell Therapy and Immune Oncology (ACTION) Initiative
Director, Riddell Centre for Cancer Immunotherapy

Dr. Claude Perreault
Principal Investigator, IRIC
Professor, Faulty of Medicine, Université de Montréal
Hematologist, Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital

Our targeted and monitored approach to investment in translational research yields a high return per public dollar spent, and a coordinated fund eliminates duplication, creates efficiencies and ensures dollars are spent on projects where they will achieve maximum impact. For researchers, the benefit of our model is the ability to move their product forward in development, leveraging BioCanRx investments and expert advice at each step to secure additional support from industry, academic and not-for-profit partners as they move towards clinical trial and beyond.

OVARIAN CANCER CANADA

A BioCanRx partnership with Ovarian Cancer Canada provides selected projects with additional funding to allow them to advance promising therapies targeting ovarian cancer towards the clinic. Among the projects funded through this collaborative approach are an enabling study in support of a phase 1 clinical trial of a CAR T-cell therapy for ovarian cancer led by Dr. Brad Nelson at UBC and the further development of an off-the-shelf ovarian cancer RNA vaccine led by Dr. Claude Perreault at the Université de Montréal.

BioCanRx By the Numbers

2024–25: A Year of Impact

The 2024–25 fiscal year demonstrates the measurable outcomes and value of BioCanRx's work:

- **$12.5** million invested in translational research, leveraging **$24 million** in matching funds and **$8.8 million** in additional contributions.
- **20** cutting-edge research projects and **four** core facilities supported.
- Invested in **4 clinical trials** treating up to **63 patients** across **12 cancer indications,** including paediatrics.
- **271 highly qualified personnel** trained.
- **Six Indigenous students supported** through summer internships, alongside outreach to **96 Indigenous youth** in rural and remote communities.
- More than **40 partners** engaged, including industry, academic institutions, and patient organizations.
- **335 participants** convened at the 2025 Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy, of whom **63% were trainees.**

These figures demonstrate the efficiency and impact of our approach: maximizing public investment to deliver scientific breakthroughs, patient benefit, and economic growth.

Expanding Novel Therapeutics

BioCanRx's stepwise funding pipeline has supported 20 research projects across the spectrum of translational research this year, including four early-phase clinical trials.

These projects focus on high-potential innovations such as CAR T-cell therapies, RNA-based vaccines, tumor-infiltrating lymphocyte (TIL) therapy, radiolabeled antibody therapies, and post-surgical immune system reprogramming. Notably, the vast majority of these projects integrated patient partners, ensuring that patient experiences directly inform research priorities and trial design.

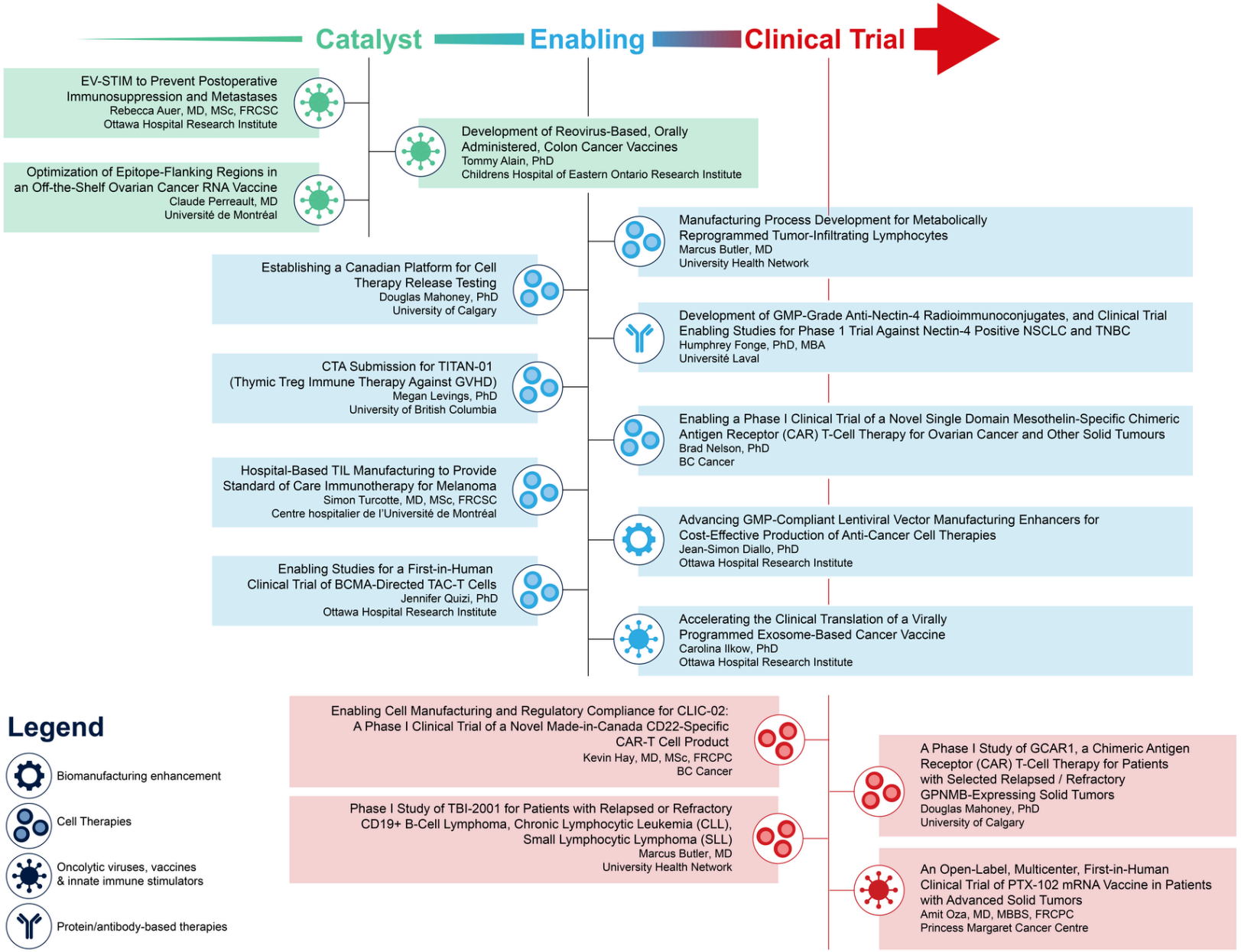
Dr. Humphrey Fonge at work. Photo: David Stobbe

Dr. Marcus Butler

Among the most promising projects is a first-of-its-kind RNA vaccine for ovarian cancer, led by Drs.Claude Perreault and Pierre Thibault at Université de Montréal, with industry partner Epitopea poised to launch a Phase 1 clinical trial. At Université Laval, Dr. Humphrey Fonge is advancing a novel radiolabeled antibody therapy for triple-negative breast cancer and non-small cell lung cancer, supported by BioCanRx funding to generate the regulatory and manufacturing data required for a clinical trial application. Meanwhile, at the University Health Network, Dr. Marcus Butler and his team have developed a novel and improved CAR T-cell therapy for leukemia and lymphoma patients. This work is supported by BioCanRx and industry partner, Takara Bio. These case studies illustrate how BioCanRx investments accelerate progress toward the clinic while de-risking Canadian assets for future commercialization.

TaKaRa EPITOPEA

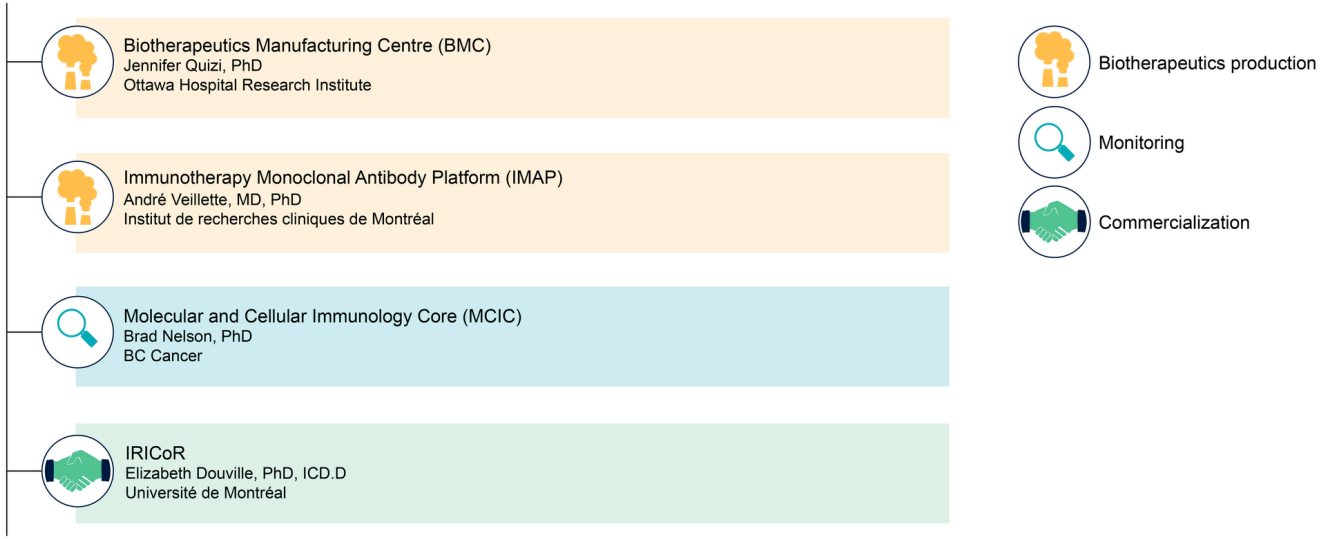
BioCanRx 2024-2025 Project Pipeline



The Tools, Knowledge and Know-How

Core facilities funding supports one part of a complex innovation journey – ensuring researchers have access to the resources they need to move their projects forward. But bringing a therapy to patients—and eventually to market— also requires expertise in the translational research process, including commercialization. BioCanRx has forged partnerships with leaders in both of these areas, empowering researchers to go beyond their institutional boundaries to access expert advice and manufacturing capacity to navigate the “valley of death” in translational research.

Core Facilities and Commercialization



These investments are mutually beneficial. Operational support from BioCanRx enables facilities to maintain staff and infrastructure while increasing their visibility, project volume and service offerings. This builds capacity and showcases their value to other academic and industry clients.

Supporting Biotherapeutic Development

Molecular and Cellular Immunology Core (MCIC)
Victoria, British Columbia

The Molecular and Cellular Immunology Core (MCIC) is a cutting-edge histology facility that supports both basic and translational research in cancer immunology. . In addition to the histological services provided, the MCIC team has extensive experience in helping to define projects from marker and clone selection to discussing analytic methods.

Through operational investments from BioCanRx, the MCIC has significantly expanded its capacity and impact, and established itself as a leading centre in Canada, and a global hub, for cell- and tissue-based immune analyses. Today the facility supports 50-60 projects per year, serving national and international academic and industry collaborations.

"As a BioCanRx-funded core facility, the OHRI's Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Centre is able to offer affordable, high-quality biomanufacturing services that help accelerate the development of cancer immunotherapies."

Dr. Jennifer Quizi, Director and Investigator at BMC-VMF

IMAP (Immunotherapy Monoclonal Antibody Platform)
Montreal, Québec

Led by Dr. André Veillette, IMAP is a state-of-the-art facility established in 2020 at the IRCM (Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal) to accelerate the development of monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) for cancer treatment.

A first-of-its-kind academic mAb facility in Canada, IMAP provides researchers with access to cutting-edge platforms and expertise allowing for the acceleration of discovery and application of new immunotherapies. Operational funding provided by BioCanRx ensures sustainability for the facility and that network researchers can access the Insitute's resources when they need to move their projects forward.

Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Centre (BMC)
Ottawa, Ontario

The Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Centre (BMC) at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI) in Ottawa is a world-class facility specializing in the development and manufacturing of biotherapeutic products for clinical trials. With over 17 years of experience, and support from BioCanRx, the BMC has become a trusted service provider for early-phase clinical trial product biomanufacturing across North America, Europe, and Asia.

The BMC has provided key manufacturing services to BioCanRx researchers and continued funding is allowing the facility to continue to build on the services offered but also maintain a commitment to supporting new and ongoing projects.

Getting to Market

IRICoR (Institute for Research in Immunology and Cancer – Commercialization of Research) Montreal, QC

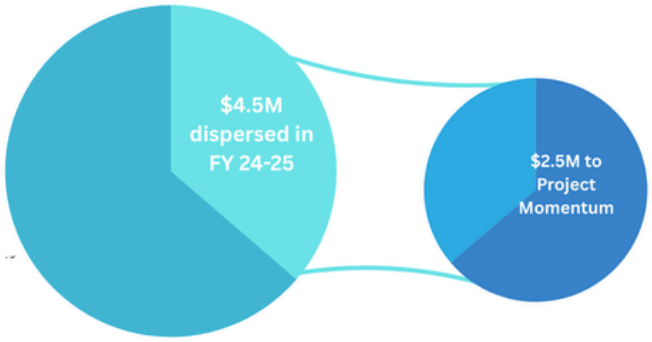
IRICoR specializes in creating value around oncology and immunology assets originating from academic centers in Canada.

BioCanRx's partnership with IRICoR focuses on the business of accelerating the translation of academic discoveries in oncology. Under this collaboration, BioCanRx provides funding to support researcher access to IRICoR's commercialization expertise, including intellectual property strategy, and business development. This means research projects within the BioCanRx network can tap into resources for project planning, risk management, market intelligence, and industry partnerships, helping promising discoveries efficiently advance toward clinical trials and commercial use.

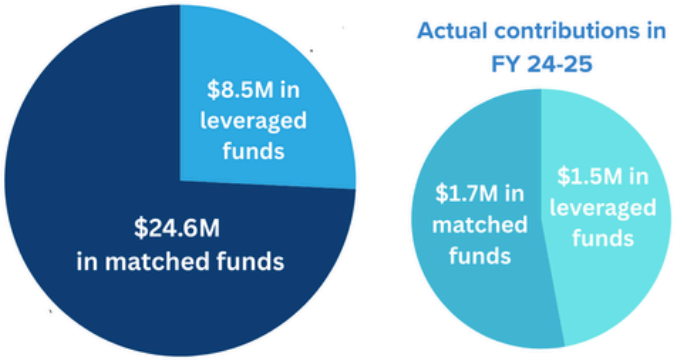
"BioCanRx's commitment to funding core facilities like IRICoR is a game-changer for Canadian immunotherapy. This support is absolutely vital, as it directly strengthens our collective ability to accelerate the development of made-in-Canada immune-based cancer therapies."

Dr. Elizabeth Douville
IRICoR President and CEO

$12.5 M awarded in funding



$33.1 M in pledged partner contributions

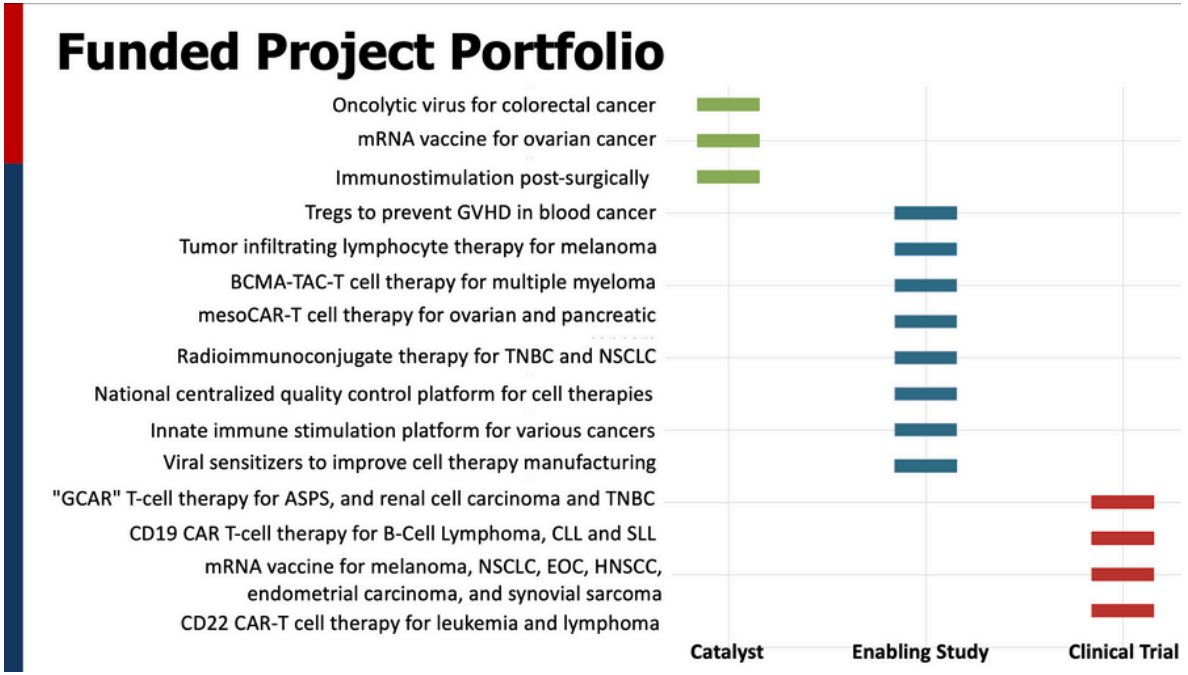


The investments made in 2024-2025 through funding from the Strategic Science Fund will directly advance Canada's capacity to deliver timely, cutting-edge cancer treatments and advance progress towards becoming a world leading centre for research and innovation by funding translational research that bridges lab discoveries to clinical trials.

Proving the Strength of our Model

Our research model and approach works. Three BioCanRx Catalyst and Enabling Studies portfolio projects – funded between 2015 and 2023 – received investments towards clinical trials in 2023 and 2024. However, these projects required further funding to complete the work required to advance to clinical trial.

In 2024-2025 these three projects were able to secure funding under our Enabling Studies and Clinical Trials Programs that specifically, and uniquely in Canada, support these activities. Thanks to our SSF funding, BioCanRx was able to help these projects move forward and one has since opened its clinical trial, providing a novel CAR T product unavailable elsewhere in Canada for the treatment of both pediatric and adult blood cancer patients.



ASPS = Alveolar soft part sarcoma
BCMA = B-cell maturation antigen
CAR-T = Chimeric antigen receptor T-cell
CLL = Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
EOC = Epithelial ovarian cancer
GVHD = Graft-versus-host disease
HNSCC = Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma
mRNA = Messenger RNA
NSCLC = Non-small cell lung cancer
SLL = Small lymphocytic lymphoma
TAC-T = T-cell antigen coupler T-cell
TNBC = Triple-negative breast cancer

Expanding Access to Novel Therapies

Precious time is often wasted while patients in Canada wait for innovative immunotherapy products to come from outside the country. A key objective for BioCanRx has been to challenge this status quo, and ensure that novel therapies are developed, produced, and clinically tested here in Canada, reaching Canadian patients without delay.

A cornerstone of BioCanRx's work is expanding national access to CAR T therapies through the Canadian-Led Immunotherapies in Cancer (CLIC) network. This year, a spectrum of manufacturing, clinical trial, and regulatory advancements contributed to the growth of CLIC.

By building this made-in-Canada CAR T platform, BioCanRx is ensuring patients have access to life-saving therapies without delays caused by reliance on international supply chains.

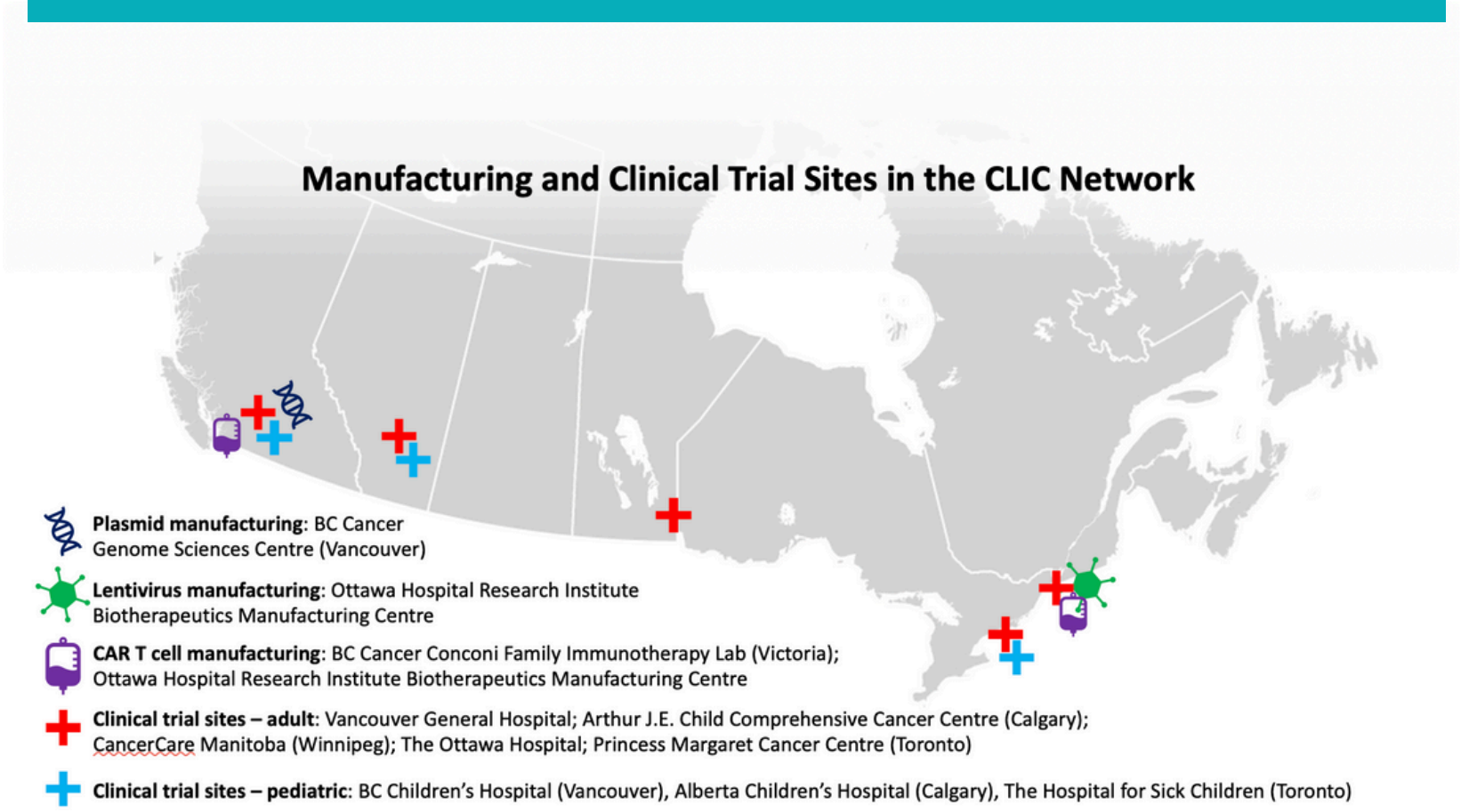
The History of CLIC

In 2017, spurred by lack of access to CAR T cell therapy in Canada at the time, BioCanRx network investigators in Ottawa, Vancouver and Victoria formed the Canadian-Led Immunotherapies in Cancer (CLIC) network and began building a Canadian CAR T cell therapy pathway.

The first CLIC success story? A made-in-Canada CAR T cell therapy – CLIC-1901 - available to leukemia and lymphoma patients in Canada through the CLIC-01 clinical trial. CLIC-01, led by Dr. Natasha Kekre, opened its doors in late 2019, giving hope to many patients who had run out of standard therapy options and were unable to access commercial CAR T products. One of these patients, who remains in complete remission after CLIC-1901 treatment in 2020, shares his story on page 21.

This year's CLIC clinical trial highlights:

- The CLIC-01 trial has now treated over 90 patients.
- CFIL achieved CLIC-02 clinical trial manufacturing readiness for a novel CD22 CAR T
- Health Canada approved the CLIC-02 trial, which began recruiting and started treating its first patients.



The CLIC network exemplifies a collaborative, academic-led approach to developing and delivering novel therapeutics that address unmet needs for cancer patients in Canada. To produce the CAR T building blocks, plasmids are manufactured in the Vancouver lab of Dr. Robert Holt at BC Cancer and lentiviral vector is manufactured under Dr. Jennifer Quizi at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute's Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Centre (OHRI BMC). The final cell products are manufactured using an automated platform that is compatible with production at or near the point of care (POC). The Conconi Family Immunotherapy Lab (CFIL) directed by Dr. Brad Nelson at BC Cancer in Victoria, is CLIC's lead cell manufacturing site and responsible for technology transfer to new CLIC cell manufacturing subsites. Combined with a growing number of CLIC clinical trial sites, this Canadian CAR T platform is a shining example of working together to bring the best that science has to offer to Canadian patients with cancer.

In support of the efforts and outcomes of the CLIC network in 2024-2025, BioCanRx worked to advance regulatory, clinical trial, and manufacturing capacity for made-in-Canada cellular immunotherapy.

Expansion of CLIC manufacturing infrastructure: BioCanRx continued funding activities to onboard the Ottawa CAR T cell manufacturing subsite (OHRI BMC). Supported by CFIL, the BMC is poised to seek regulatory approval for addition as a second cell manufacturing site for the CLIC-01 clinical trial — the first time a made-in-Canada, multi-site manufacturing approach will be used to supply a single clinical trial

Launch of the CLIC-02 clinical trial: Building on previous investments to enable a successful Clinical Trial Application (CTA) for CLIC's second CAR T cell product, a CD22 CAR T, BioCanRx continued to support the clinical trial. CLIC-02, led by Dr. Kevin Hay, BC Cancer, is a Phase 1 trial that includes both adult and pediatric blood cancer patients. While CLIC-02 received CIHR clinical trial funding, investment from BioCanRx is required to support cell manufacturing, product testing, and Health Canada-mandated process qualification and monitoring activities essential for this trial.

Investments in harmonized Quality Control (QC) platforms: BioCanRx invested in an Enabling Study led by Dr. Douglas Mahoney, University of Calgary, to develop a harmonized QC platform for CAR T and other cell-based therapies. Establishing this capacity in testing labs at institutions across Canada will enable faster, more affordable, and reliable release of CAR T cells and other therapies for clinical use. These QC activities feed into the CLIC program, with CFIL and the BMC included as partner facilities.

Regulatory Activities and Engagement: BioCanRx contributed to high-profile national and international initiatives related to regulatory frameworks and manufacturing models for expanding access to advanced cell therapies. Among these were participation in a Health Canada external reference group on regulatory aspects of CAR T cell therapies manufactured at POC, organization of a Health Canada tour of the OHRI BMC, and participation in a U.S.-based working group led by the non-profits Friends of Cancer Research and the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy. The working group included FDA and international leaders who explored regulatory, manufacturing, and sustainable access strategies for genetically modified cell-based therapies. BioCanRx also worked with members of CLIC on regulatory planning to seek market authorization of the CLIC-1901 CAR T cell product — a critical next step for ongoing access to CLIC-1901 beyond the clinical trial stage.

PARKER INSTITUTE FOR CANCER IMMUNOTHERAPY

FRIENDS of CANCER RESEARCH

Health Canada members (left to right) Janet George, Nikhilesh Pradhan, Kenneth Joly, Martin Nemec, PhD, Roxana Filip, PhD, and Beth Gilmour tour the OHRI BMC.

In 2020, and 4 years post stem-cell transplant after his first recurrence, Owen Snider learned his large B-cell lymphoma had returned.

Owen and Judith Snider

However, this time he had a new treatment option. Just one week after his diagnosis, his oncologist called to say a CAR T therapy clinical trial had opened at The Ottawa Hospital — a Canadian first. He didn't hesitate to sign up.

The outcome?

One month later, Owen and his wife Judith received some exceptional news. "At my check-up 30 days after getting my T-cells back, I was almost clear of cancer. The scan showed that there was almost nothing left. I was gobsmacked," he says.

Today Owen is still cancer free and grateful for the opportunity CAR T therapy offered.

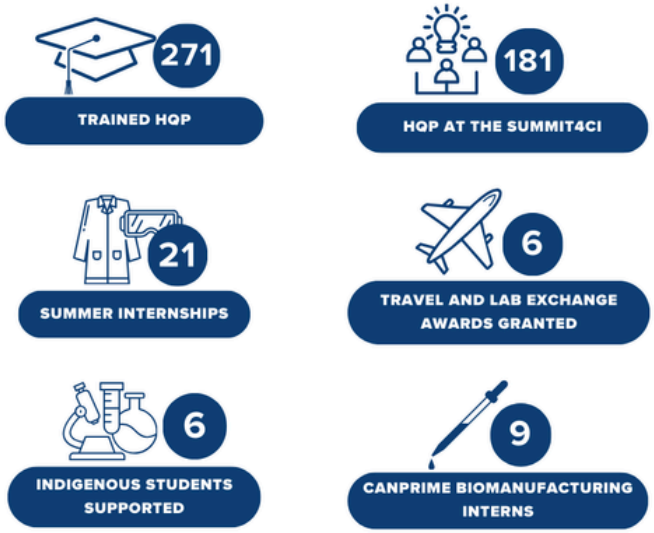
Dr. Natasha Kekre and Owen Snider, image credit: Ontario Hospital Association

For Dr. Natasha Kekre of the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI) , giving patients like Owen new hope for the future is what inspires her. "For the first time, I think in a long time, Owen felt that the lymphoma might actually be disappearing. He's had multiple scans since then that show the same thing. And so now, I think he's starting to believe it. And I think that's the reality of why I do this, because patients like him who had no options before, could soon have the option of CAR T therapy. That's what happened for Owen and that's what we hope will happen for many more patients," says Dr. Kekre.

Training a Diverse and Job-Ready Workforce

Since its inception, BioCanRx has recognized that building a diverse workforce, skilled in all aspects of clinical translation, from bench to clinic is critical to the success and growth of the Canadian life sciences sector.

Since 2015, BioCanRx has supported the development of more than 785 Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP), aligning with the Biomanufacturing and Life Sciences Strategy's (BLSS) commitment to building talent.



Training Impacts in 2024-2025

These HQP gained hands-on experience with leading technologies and therapeutic approaches in fields such as virology, immunology, health policy, and biomanufacturing, positioning them at the forefront of the field. Today, many network alumni continue to strengthen Canada's ability to bring novel treatments to patients through careers in academia, industry, and healthcare.

Leanne Palichuk, MSc student, Medical Science (Cancer Biology), University of Calgary, gives a plenary talk at the Summit4CI 2025

BioCanRx also offers targeted workshops, internships, and travel and lab exchange awards. A particular focus has been creating pathways for Indigenous students to participate in cancer research. Through partnerships with Indspire, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Canadian Cancer Society, and Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, we deliver the Indigenous Student Summer Internship program. This program reflects BioCanRx's commitment to meeting the goals of reconciliation and equity (established in our Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) throughout our programming, and goals established by the Government of Canada.

Summer Studentships Program

BioCanRx provided 21 paid summer internships (undergraduate and college level students) to conduct research in BioCanRx -funded translational cancer research labs across Canada, offering direct lab experience and career development. Participants presented at the 2025 Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy engaged in professional development sessions, and reported increased interest in pursuing careers related to immunotherapy.

Nora Abdelsamie, 2024 Summer Student Internship recipient, at the Ottawa Hospital

Indigenous Student Participation

Through our continued partnerships with Indspire, Canadian Cancer Society (CCS), and Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR), BioCanRx was able to fund six Indigenous Student Summer Internships. Projects ranged from culturally safe cancer screening to CAR-T optimization. In addition, through a partnership with Let's Talk Science, BioCanRx supported outreach programs that reached 96 Indigenous youth in rural and remote communities.

Searra Warnock, 2024 Indigenous Student Summer Internship recipient, works in Dr. Sabine Kuss's lab at the University of Manitoba

"In the past, most of the research opportunities I pursued were either unpaid or took place during the academic year, forcing me to juggle both coursework and employment... this opportunity has been transformative, allowing me to fully immerse myself in a field I am passionate about... Being able to dedicate uninterrupted time meant that I could explore new ideas, troubleshoot challenges more thoroughly, and contribute more meaningfully to the ongoing projects."

– Everett Poole, University of Victoria, 2024 Indigenous Summer Student Intern

Travel and Lab Exchange awards were provided to foster knowledge transfer and visibility of Canadian immunotherapy research, including a hands-on exchange with Sartorius Stedim Biotech in the U.S., which led to new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for biomanufacturing at McMaster University in Canada.

In partnership with Mitacs, the **CanPRIME program** provided nine 8-month biomanufacturing placements at Canadian facilities, including the Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Center (BMC) (Ottawa) and Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) (Saskatoon). Program participants received additional hands-on biomanufacturing training in partnership with the Canadian Alliance for Skills and Training in Life Sciences (CASTL). Five of these trainees graduated during the reporting period; three are now working in the sector.

CASTL
Canadian Alliance for Skills and Training in Life Sciences
adMare Academy Partner

mitacs

The Ottawa Hospital
Biotherapeutics Manufacturing Centre

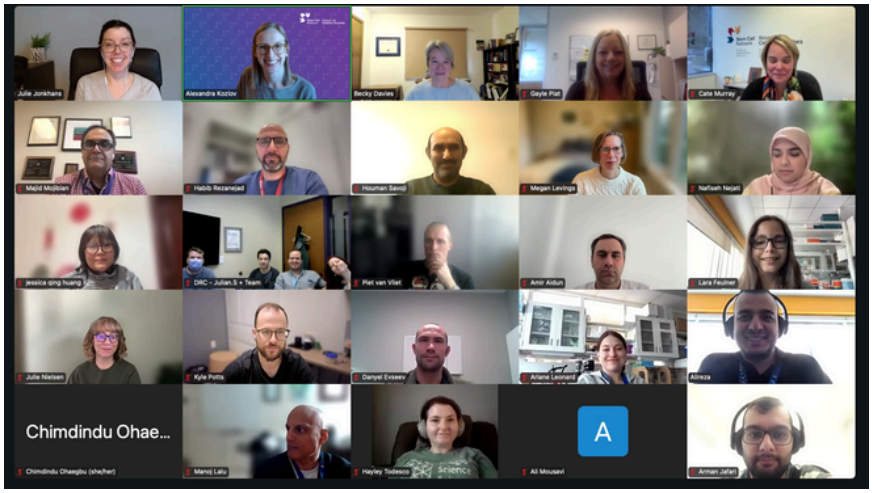
VIDO
VACCINE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE ORGANIZATION

From December 2-4, CASTL welcomed undergraduate co-op students from Algonquin College, Ottawa University, McGill University, and Saskatchewan Polytechnique participating in BioCanRx's CanPRIME training program to their Montréal Training Facility. This three-day, custom program covered: GMP and cleanroom operations; upstream processing fundamentals; and downstream purification techniques

Through instructor-led modules and lab-scale simulations, CanPRIME participants further expanded their skillsets needed to work confidently in regulated biomanufacturing environments.

“Best Practices in Data Management” Workshop

Co-hosted with Stem Cell Network, this workshop brought together 20 participants from the BioCanRx network, including investigators and their research team members, for expert-led sessions on best practices for managing data and research records in translational research labs. Participants gained strategies and tools to implement quality management systems that produce accurate, traceable research records, strengthening reproducibility and minimizing troubleshooting during therapeutic translation.

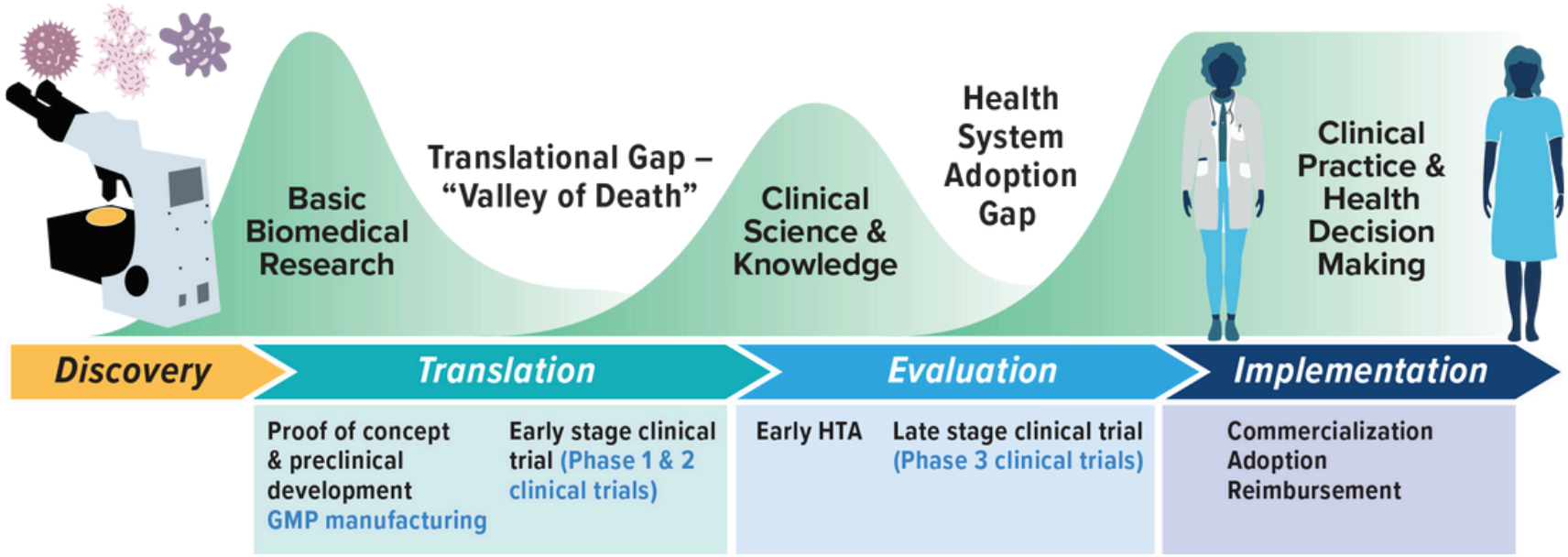


HQP Development Day

HQP Development Day is a half-day pre-Summit event dedicated to fostering the career and professional development of HQP. This year, 133 HQP attended the event, which featured expert-led talks on engaging patients in research, establishing a new lab, commercializing discoveries, and navigating healthcare adoption of novel therapeutics. A ‘Meet-the-Experts’ networking session connected HQP with professionals from academia, industry, and clinical settings, helping to build professional relationships and expose HQP to diverse career pathways.

Accelerating Health System Readiness

Crossing the Valley of Death in translational research is only one step towards bringing novel therapeutics to patients in Canada. Ensuring that health systems (including patients, clinicians, hospitals) are ready and capable of adopting new therapeutic approaches – that often fall outside of traditional delivery channels – requires an understanding of the systemic barriers and the impact these treatments can have on the lives of those they are designed to treat. BioCanRx's Clinical, Social, and Economic Impact (CSEI) program addresses systemic barriers to adoption of new therapies and the execution of clinical trials to increase both recruitment and retention.



Projects included economic modeling of decentralized CAR T production, development of patient-centered trial protocols for tumor-infiltrating lymphocyte (TIL) therapy, and assessments of sustainable point-of-care delivery models. This work included regulatory planning for CLIC-1901, examining different modes of delivery for this life-saving product, representing a crucial step toward securing long-term access to made-in-Canada CAR T therapies. By investing in real-world evidence and system readiness, BioCanRx investments examine the barriers and proposes solutions so that promising therapies can be effectively translated and in the future, adopted sustainably and equitably across Canada's publicly funded health system.

Cancer immunotherapies made from a patient's own immune cells can be complex and costly to produce, leading to economic burden on the healthcare system and delayed or limited patient access to treatment. Currently, all commercial CAR T cell therapies marketed in Canada are manufactured in centralized U.S. facilities and priced at approximately $500,000 per one-time treatment.


Dr. Kednapa Thavorn

Dr. Kednapa Thavorn, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, is interested in how a domestic and decentralized CAR T cell manufacturing approach could impact Canada's publicly funded healthcare system and benefit patients. By studying the cost efficacy of locally produced CAR T cells under the CLIC manufacturing model, Dr. Thavorn's research supports ongoing efforts to produce personalized immunotherapies more efficiently and affordably, improving access for patients across the country.

Clinical, Social, Economic Evaluation

Excelerating Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes (TIL) as a Treatment for Melanoma (TIL-ME)
Dean Fergusson, PhD, MHA, FCAHS
Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

Improvements in Quality of Life, Health Utility, Cost, and Return to Work for Lymphoma Patients After Chimeric Antigen Receptor T Cell Therapy in a Real-World Setting
Kelvin Chan, MD, MSc, PhD
Sunnybrook Research Institute

LabPartners: Co-Creation of Best Practice Training Resources for Preclinical Patient Engagement in Cancer-Immunotherapy Research
Manoj Lalu, MD, PhD, FRCPC
Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

Understanding the Economic Value of Decentralized CAR-T Therapies for Adults with Relapsed/Refractory Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia
Kednapa Thavorn, BPharm, MPharm, PhD
Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

Mobilizing Knowledge and Engagement

Knowledge mobilization is at the core of BioCanRx's mission. In 2024–25, we published more than ten thought-leadership articles, enhanced our digital communications, and engaged directly with policymakers through submissions and briefings.

The 2025 Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy convened 335 participants, including researchers, members of industry, NGOs and government representatives, patients, trainees, and international leaders such as Dr. Uğur Şahin, co-founder of BioNTech and Dr.Katy Rezvani of MD Anderson. Through the Summit, the Learning Institute, and the Imagine Lecture, we deepened dialogue between patients and researchers, showcasing how patient perspectives can shape scientific practice.

Drs. Uğur Şahin (L) and Katy Rezvani

BIONTECH

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

Internationally, BioCanRx contributed to discussions at the International Society for Cell and Gene Therapy (ISCT), the World Cancer Congress, and the Copenhagen Symposium on Advances in T-Cell Therapy & Cellular Engineering, underscoring our global role in shaping the future of cancer immunotherapy.

BioCanRx Director of Regulatory Affairs and Policy Dr. Erin Bassett (second from left) at the Copenhagen Symposium on Advances in T-Cell Therapy & Cellular Engineering, along with network members Drs. Natasha Kekre, Jennifer Quizi, and Rob Holt (third, fourth, and fifth from right).

Dr. Erin Bassett speaks on a panel at ISCT 2025 in New Orleans, USA.

Cancer Stakeholder Alliance (CSA)

The BioCanRx Cancer Stakeholder Alliance (CSA) - a consortium of charities and non-government organizations focused on cancer research, advocacy, and support for patients and their families, ensures researchers understand the importance of inclusion of patient and family experiences in BioCanRx projects.

CSA member organizations provide community updates and feedback on issues and priorities that are important to patients and their families and caregivers. Their insights help to guide BioCanRx in the development of communications and outreach activities and ensure relevant information can be accessed by cancer patients, their families and caregivers, and the concerned public.

A driving force behind our Learning Institute program at the Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy, the CSA Learning Institute working group provides input and feedback to BioCanRx that supports the development of activities and opportunities for participants and ensure patients and academics have an opportunity to learn from each other.

Learning Institute members Cynthia Mitchell, Jessica López Espinosa, Sandra Dudych and Harjeet Kaur enjoy a coffee at the Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy 2025 in Toronto.

The CSA was revitalized this year with existing partners, a review of key priorities, and the development of a plan to address BioCanRx and partner needs and objectives. Through consultations and round table discussions, the CSA has helped to define new areas of activity and focus for BioCanRx related to patients, engagement in research, and knowledge sharing. Inputs from the CSA will be used to shape future communications activities, develop patient resources and inform research practice across the network.

CANCER STAKEHOLDER ALLIANCE (CSA) → CANCER COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (CCP)

Starting in 2025-2026 the CSA will be known as the **BioCanRx Cancer Community Partnership (CCP).** The CCP will continue to inform our understanding of patient community needs and experiences, the development of communications, learning and outreach activities, and ensure patient voice is considered throughout our organization and research network.

Cancer Community Partnership

SUMMIT FOR CANCER IMMUNOTHERAPY

Throughout the year BioCanRx planned for the 2025 Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy (Summit4CI) held in Toronto April 6-8, 2025. A highlight for the Canadian cancer immunotherapy research community, the conference brought together 335 participants—including researchers, patients, HQP, industry and policymakers—for scientific exchanges, networking, and training.

The 2025 Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy showcased two exceptional international speakers: Dr. Katy Rezvani, Vice President & Head, Institute for Cell Therapy Discovery & Innovation, MD Anderson Cancer Center and Dr. Uğur Şahin, Co-Founder and CEO of BioNTech.

The plenary sessions hosted by leading Canadian researchers attracted world-leading experts to Canada. The Summit provided an exceptional environment for knowledge sharing, skills development, and building connections for participants.

With 63% of attendees identifying as HQP, the Summit offered strong trainee engagement and capacity building.

Drs. Katy Rezvani (left) and Uğur Sahin (below) deliver keynote speeches at the Summit for Cancer Immunotherapy in Toronto

The Learning Institute (LI)

Developed by BioCanRx's Cancer Stakeholder Alliance LI Working Group and our HQP community, the 2025 LI – held during the Summit4CI - brought together leaders from oncology patient communities and academics from the immunotherapy research community. This year, eight patient and eight academic participants (early-stage researchers and HQP) were paired up to support bi-directional learning and knowledge exchange as they participated in all conference activities.

The 2025 Learning Institute

The outcomes? Academic participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of the important value of patient perspective and realities in research, while patient participants learned more about advances in immunotherapy and how they can contribute to shaping the future of cancer research and care in Canada.

Imagine Lecture

A highlight of the conference, the annual Imagine Lecture showcases a trainee taking a patient-focused approach to their research with a goal to improving the quality of life for patients with cancer.

This year's recipient was Shannon Snelling, a PhD candidate at the Arnie Charbonneau Cancer Institute and Riddell Centre for Cancer Immunotherapy and supervised by Dr. Jennifer Chan and Dr. Douglas Mahoney. Her research is on emerging immunotherapies for glioblastoma, including mRNA vaccines and CAR-macrophages.

Shannon Snelling delivers the Imagine Lecture

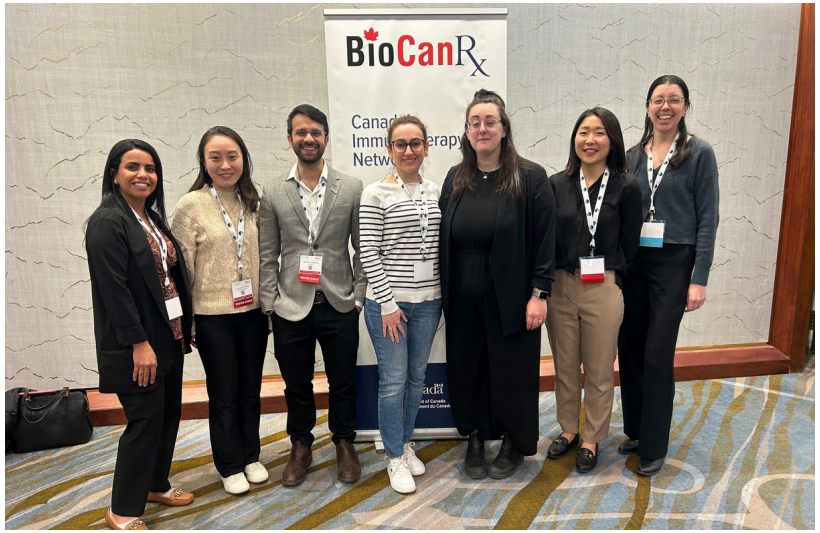
Shannon's engagement with the Brain Tumor Support Group in Calgary motivated her to start a co-mentorship program which pairs patient partners with graduate student trainees.

Patient Keynote Speaker

This year's Summit4CI Patient Keynote featured Milan Heck whose cancer journey began in 2015 when she was diagnosed with Alveolar Soft Part Sarcoma – a rare cancer. A donation to the Alberta Tumor Biobank early in her treatments lead to her collaboration with a CAR T therapy research initiative at the University of Calgary. Her experiences with rare disease have led to her involvement in patient advocacy which has included speaking at fundraisers, public lectures, and contributing to news segments.

Milan Heck delivers the Patient Keynote

Members of the Learning Institute enjoy Social Night with Board member Mỹ Dang at the 2025 Summit4CI



The HQP Working Group with Julie Jonkhans, Ph.D, Training and Research Manager for BioCanRx at the 2025 Summit4CI

Telling our Story

Through the dissemination of research findings, sharing of thought leadership on the need for support for translational research, and providing informative and engaging communications on immunotherapy for cancer research in Canada, BioCanRx is committed to increasing public awareness of science and showcasing the impact of federal investments in life sciences.

- 10+ high-profile op-eds and articles published in Hill Times, Nature Biopharma Dealmakers, FutureEconomy.ca, Research Money, BIOTECanada Insights and CSPC;
- Monthly newsletters reached 1,800+ subscribers;
- Engagement on social media channels.

A retrospective review of activities from 2015-2024 was also made available online – offering readers a complete history of the investments, activities and impacts of BioCanRx. The report not only provided a comprehensive overview of the accomplishments of the past 10 years of BioCanRx, but also showcased the significant impact of federal investments in life sciences outcomes for the economy and patients with cancer across Canada.

@biocanrx

Governance

BioCanRx is governed by a Board of Directors composed of leaders from academia, industry, government, and the patient community. In 2024–25, Russell Williams assumed the role of Chair, succeeding Ken Newport, with four new Directors joining the Board. Our Research Management Committee, composed of international experts, continued to guide investment decisions with rigor and transparency. Together, these governance structures ensure accountability, excellence, and alignment with our mission.

Conseil d'administration actuel

Russell Williams, IAS.A
président du conseil d'administration

Karimah Es Sabar
Présidente-directrice générale et associée, Quark Venture LP

John Stagg, PhD
Professeur agrégé, Faculté de pharmacie de l'Université de Montréal, chef de laboratoire au Centre de recherche de l'Hôpital du CHUM

Mỹ Dang
Innomar Strategies, directrice, Affaires réglementaires

John Bell, PhD
Directeur scientifique, BioCanRx Scientifique principal, Hôpital d'Ottawa Professeur, Université d'Ottawa

David Poon, PhD
Co-fondateur, responsable des affaires, DCx Biotherapeutics

Antonia Palmer
Cofondatrice d'Ac2orn : Défense des intérêts du Réseau canadien de recherche en oncologie infantile

Sébastien Beauchamp
LL.M, MBA, IAS.A
Vice-président, Relations gouvernementales, Dynacare

Josée Brisebois, PhD
Consultante exécutive dans les secteurs biopharmaceutique et des sciences de la santé

Doreen Hume Associée, Audit et certification, Deloitte Canada

Brigette Kocijancic
Certification ABC, PROSCI

Jumai Abioye, PhD
Fondatrice et PDG, PanAccess Innovations Inc

Cross-Cutting Commitments

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) remain central to BioCanRx's mission. This year, we strengthened pathways for Indigenous students, supported patient engagement across our projects, and worked closely with the Cancer Stakeholder Alliance, which has evolved into the Cancer Community Partnership. These initiatives ensure that BioCanRx's work is grounded in the perspectives of patients, caregivers, and communities. Our EDI commitments to the network are grounded in accountabilty and not only advancing reconciliation and equity but also strengthening the scientific excellence and real-world relevance of our work.

Reporting System

BioCanRx has teamed up with Inclusive Kind to provide LOOP, a confidential and anonymous service designed for anyone connected with the organization to report experiences of exclusion, unfair treatment, or inequity.

The information is anonymized and reported back to the organization with insights and suggestions to foster a more inclusive and welcoming culture.

Next Steps

Investing in translational research is not just good health policy —it is smart economic and social policy. It allows critical, life-saving research to move from the lab bench to the clinic. It directly contributes to an increase in clinical trials available. It contributes to the economic strength and growth of our life sciences sector. And it helps researchers in Canada develop and deliver world class approaches and innovation in immunotherapies to patients right here at home.

In 2024-2025, our first year of SSF funding, BioCanRx demonstrated our ability to significantly impact translational research in immunotherapy for cancer in Canada. We were able to build on our previous investments and move promising therapies forward towards the clinic where they will benefit those who matter most – cancer patients.

CAR-T recipient and patient advocate Camille Leahy, right, with her daughter.

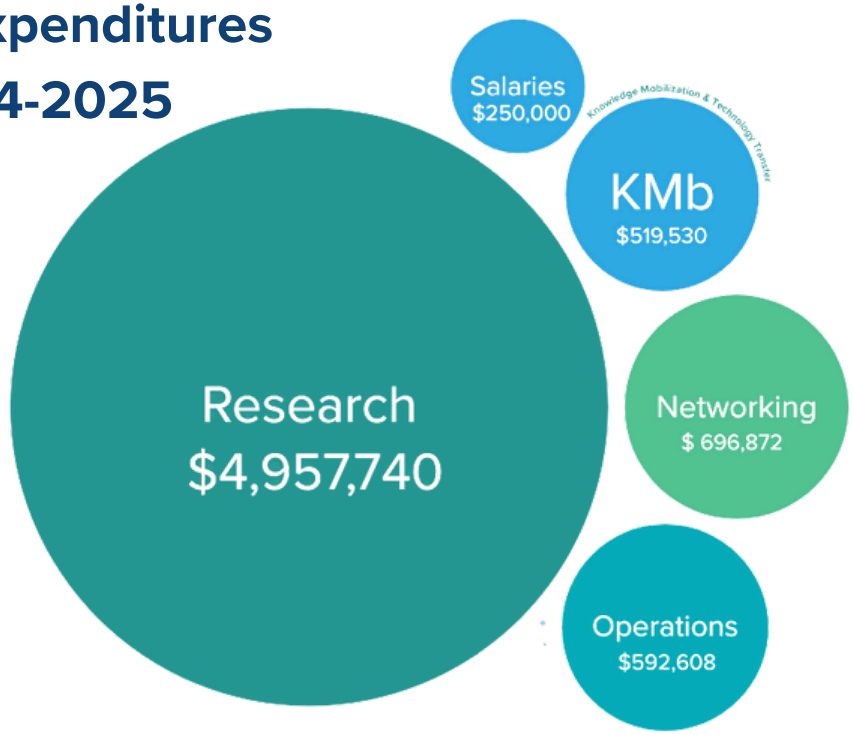
BioCanRx has shown how Canada can lead in high-growth sectors like cancer immunotherapy investments made this year are both strengthening and advancing research and responding to our government's call to catalyze private investment, modernize spending, and build a resilient, globally competitive economy.

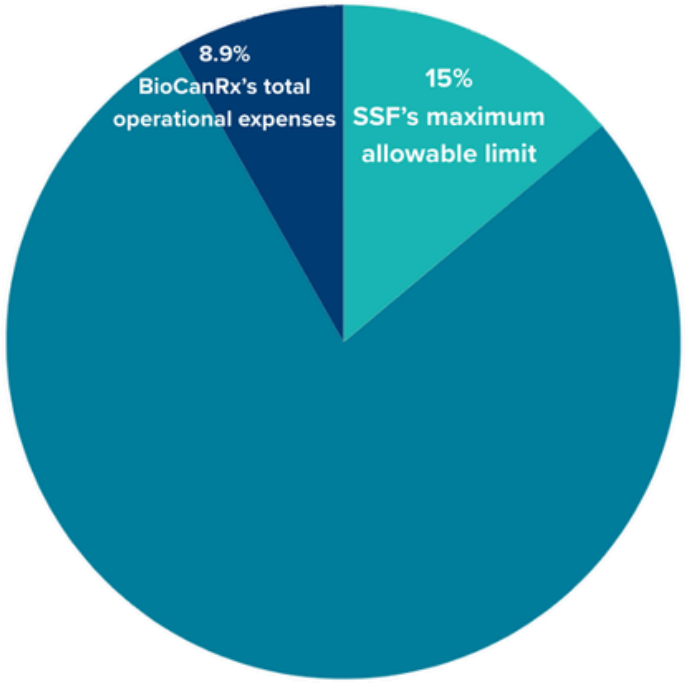
Looking forward, we are excited to see our impact grow and bring more novel therapeutics forward, strengthening our life sciences economy and ultimately benefiting patients in Canada.

Financials

In 2024–25, BioCanRx managed federal investment with discipline and transparency. Of the $6.4 million in Strategic Science Fund expenditures, more than $4.9 million was allocated to research, $519,000 to knowledge mobilization, $696,000 to networking, and $593,000 to operations. Operational expenses represented just 8.9% of total expenditures, well within the SSF's 15% cap. These investments were amplified by matching and leveraged funding, multiplying the impact of public dollars. Independent audits confirmed BioCanRx's compliance and financial stewardship, reinforcing confidence in our ability to deliver impact for patients, partners, and the Canadian economy.

Total Expenditures for 2024-2025





$6,438,092

Total SSF expenditures

At $573,978, BioCanRx's annual operating expenditures fell well within the allowed 15% maximum limit set by SSF