

U of G researcher receives \$2 million federal grant to study drug-resistant microbes

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A \$2 million federal grant will fund U of G Prof. Chris Whitfield's studies of drug-resistant pathogens that increasingly threaten human health.

A University of Guelph microbiologist is getting a \$2 million federal grant to study bacteria and other drug-resistant microbes with a goal of finding new approaches to combating diseases.

Prof. Chris Whitfield will use his seven-year foundation grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to study drug-resistant pathogens that increasingly threaten human health.

In a press release, Whitfield said that by learning more about how microbes resist current therapies, he hopes to help point industry toward better vaccines and antibiotics for specific bacteria that cause everything from bloodstream and urinary tract infections to meningitis.



“Many of these bacteria are already resistant to antibiotics and some are becoming resistant to ‘last-resort’ approaches,” said Whitfield, who joined U of G in 1984. “We are constantly trying to stay one step ahead or, more worrisome, trying to catch up,” he said, referring to some microbes’ ability to leapfrog new treatments.

In the same release, U of G's vice-president (research) Malcolm Campbell said the investment will provide Whitfield with the foundation to sustain his innovative research, which has both scientific and practical applications.

"It also recognizes the university's capacity for doing excellent research across a wide range of disciplines," said

Whitfield, who works with multidisciplinary researchers in his department and at other institutions in Canada, said he will use the CIHR funding to support researchers in his lab, including graduate and undergraduate students, post-doctoral researchers and other staff.

He is among four U of G researchers who received the grants in the latest CIHR funding round announced this month.

U of G Molecular and Cellular Biology researcher Nina Jones, will receive \$737,744, over five years to study the molecular and cellular processes involved in development and potential treatment of chronic kidney disease, which affects three million Canadians.

Psychology researcher Kieran O'Doherty, will get a one-year \$100,000 grant to study the design and use of “public deliberation” processes to learn more about vaccine hesitancy and improve vaccination policy.

A one-year \$100,000 grant will go to Family Relations and Applied Nutrition researcher Jess Haines to conduct the Guelph Family Health Study, designed to involve families in preventing obesity in children.

In total, more than 600 grants worth nearly \$670 million were allocated to researchers across Canada.