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To the Next Level *getting a leg-up from the Legacy*

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Special to the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation

Dr. Robert B. Hollinshead remembers well how a small but timely investment made all the difference for him and his Calgary shoulder-surgeon colleagues in their long-term bid to form a national clinical-trials network: "Some time ago, Cy Frank, through the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation, awarded us seed money, which allowed us to hire a clinical-research assistant for three years. At the end of that time we were very successful at receiving peer-review funding." Indeed, the initiative has evolved under the leadership of Calgary's Dr. Nicholas G.H. Mohtadi (and the late Dr. Sandy Kirkley) into JOINTS Canada (Joint Orthopaedic Initiative for National Trials of the Shoulder), which coordinates a number of multi-centre, prospective clinical projects. "We would never have been able to do it without the start-up money. I can only think that if more young, mid-career orthopaedists had a similar opportunity, a chance to pull the pieces together, they would be able to compete at the next level for support from the CIHR or other funding agencies."

And this is precisely a niche that the Canadian Orthopaedic Research Legacy (CORL) can fill, by providing seed money so that a solo researcher or a team can prepare for national or international competitions. Hollinshead also points to the pioneering work of Canada's orthopaedic trauma surgeons in creating model networks and the Canadian Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society's efforts to integrate the sub-specialty as good examples of how CORL could make a significant and lasting contribution to orthopaedic research: "More and more, we're seeing emerge some amazing networks in collaborative orthopaedic research." Canada's "uniquely collegial atmosphere" among researchers and clinicians, he notes, makes it ideal for creating networks and partnerships: "I think this is a real opportunity to foster that model of cooperative, multi-centre research - expand on existing networks and create new ones." A little could go a long way.

At both the CIHR and NIH, capacity building and clinical research are high priorities, and opportunities abound for those who are ready to enter the arena.

Still, Hollinshead recognizes that such “competing values” as clinical work, teaching, family, make it very challenging to take up research on top of everything else - especially if no funding is available to smooth the way. For Canada to continue generating outstanding surgeon/scientists such as Drs. Robert B. Salter or Cy Frank or Hubert Labelle, “it behooves us in clinical care,” says Hollinshead, “to make a contribution to those who are willing to continue the legacy. That’s why I think the Research Legacy is an important initiative that we should all try to make a priority.”