

The Henry G. Friesen

INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

in Health Research

LE PRIX INTERNATIONAL

de la Recherche en Santé Henry G. Friesen

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## **Nobel Laureate and Friesen Prize Winner Urges Importance of Medical Science to Change Global Health**

**TORONTO** – Nobel Prize winning scientist and renowned cancer researcher, Dr. Harold Varmus, is optimistic that global health in developing countries will improve by encouraging medical science within these countries, increasing access to medical information, and by funding large networks of scientists to help determine the best means to control disease.

Dr. Varmus, president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, will deliver his unique prognosis for global health as the 2008 winner of the prestigious Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research next week. Dr. Varmus is the former Director of the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) where he showed exceptional leadership and a world vision during the transformational period of innovation in genomics, international and multi-disciplined partnerships, population health, clinical research, and legislative support that more than doubled the public investment in health research.

“The importance of health as a key indicator of economic success is now widely understood by developing countries and those nations who help them,” Dr. Varmus said. “As a result, the investments by governments and foundations around the world have expanded significantly over the past decade. This is a major step forward in changing history.”

As part of his own personal effort to promote science to address global health, Dr. Varmus has chaired the Scientific Board of the Grand Challenges in Global Health, an initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Wellcome Trust, Foundation for the NIH, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). This initiative has awarded nearly \$450 million to over forty research teams to achieve seven long-term goals to improve health in the developing world: improving vaccines; creating new vaccines; controlling insect vectors; improving nutrition; limiting drug resistance; curing infection; and measuring health status.

To ensure that new scientific knowledge and sound health policy are effectively shared around the world, Dr. Varmus established a public digital library of scientific papers called *PubMedCentral* at the NIH, and is also the co-founder and chair of the Public Library of Science, a publisher of the most prestigious journals in medicine and biology in the world that are open to the public.

“Leaders in medicine are working with developing countries to build strong centers of research and training in their own nations, such as the Malaria Research and Training Center in Mali,” said Dr. Varmus. “This is the key to changing the future of developing nations and global health – by enabling these countries to contribute directly to the health of their own people.”

Dr. Varmus is scheduled to speak on this topic in a public forum on **Wednesday, September 24, 4:30 pm, at the MaRS Discovery District.**

The Henry G. Friesen International Prize in Health Research is a collaboration of the Friends of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (FCIHR) and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. For more information, please visit the FCIHR website at [www.fcibr.ca](http://www.fcibr.ca).

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