Toronto Academic Health Science Network

14 leading Toronto hospitals sign landmark agreement to strengthen Canada's research ecosystem

New collaboration framework designed to reduce barriers to multi-site research, strengthen Canada's competitiveness and help bring discoveries to patients faster

TORONTO, November 3, 2026 — The 14 hospitals within the Toronto Academic Health Science Network (TAHSN) have signed the Master Collaboration Agreement (MCA), an important milestone in strengthening Canada's largest unified health research network and one of the largest collaborative academic health research ecosystems in the world. The agreement establishes a common legal and operational framework to accelerate research collaboration across the hospitals, all of which are affiliated with the University of Toronto. Ultimately, it aims to help discoveries move more quickly into improved patient care.

"In an increasingly competitive global environment, this agreement strengthens Canada's ability to attract research investment, industry partnerships, and leading scientific talent while helping discoveries move more efficiently into patient care," said **Sarah Downey**, Chair of TAHSN and President and CEO of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). "It demonstrates the power of Toronto's academic hospitals and the University of Toronto working together to tackle complex health challenges that no single institution can solve alone."

Canada has long punched above its weight in clinical trials, leading the G7 in activity per capita, but its advantage is eroding: trial activity fell 11 per cent in 2024, and its global ranking for industry-run Phase 3 trials dropped from fifth to eighth. Canada's academic hospitals are central to this work, helping attract research investment, supporting skilled jobs and retaining scientific talent while giving patients access to promising new treatments.

The 14 hospitals within the TAHSN network are already connected through affiliation with the University of Toronto and a shared commitment to research, education, and patient care. Participating hospitals include: Baycrest, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Humber River Health, Michael Garron Hospital, North York General Hospital, Scarborough Health Network, Sinai Health, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, The Hospital for Sick Children, Trillium Health Partners, Unity Health Toronto, University Health Network (UHN), and Women's College Hospital.

As research becomes increasingly collaborative, launching a project across institutions can require teams to negotiate similar terms and navigate different processes each time. The MCA establishes a common framework for eligible research activities—one project, one shared framework—to reduce duplication and streamline administrative processes, while maintaining each organization's requirements for ethics, privacy, security, and oversight.

Early implementation has already demonstrated measurable benefits. The MCA was first piloted as a bilateral agreement between CAMH and UHN in December 2024. Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and Unity Health Toronto joined in December 2025 to form a four-hospital pilot, test the multilateral

framework and prepare for broader implementation. During this time, average research study activation timelines were **reduced by more than 75 per cent**—from 448 days to 109 days—enabling researchers to spend less time navigating administrative processes and more time advancing discovery.

"Many of today's most complex health challenges require researchers to work across institutions, bringing together expertise, infrastructure, and data that no single organization can provide on its own. The Master Collaboration Agreement creates a shared framework that reduces administrative barriers and makes those collaborations easier to launch, while maintaining the governance and oversight required for research excellence," said **Dr. Brad Wouters**, Executive Vice President, Science and Research, UHN. "As an early partner in developing and testing this approach, UHN has seen firsthand how it can accelerate multi-site research, allowing researchers to spend less time navigating administrative processes and more time advancing discoveries that improve patient care."

Through the pilot, the MCA is already working to support 43 collaborative research studies in various stages of implementation, addressing some of today's most complex health challenges, including cardiac health, cancer care and Alzheimer's disease. These collaborations include multi-site clinical trials and research involving data sharing.

"The University of Toronto has long been a driver of large-scale interdisciplinary research to improve health and health care. What this new agreement does is reduce duplication and speed up inter-hospital collaborations to unlock even greater capacity in one of North America's most productive health sciences networks," said **Prof. Lisa Robinson**, U of T's Dean of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine and Vice-Provost Relations with Health Care Institutions.

TAHSN brings together the University of Toronto and 14 affiliated academic hospitals, forming one of North America's largest and most innovative academic health science networks. Combined research funding across the network exceeded $1.7 billion in fiscal 2025. Ten TAHSN member hospitals—representing one-quarter of the institutions on Canada's Top 40 Research Hospitals list for 2025—accounted for more than 40 per cent of the list's total research spending. This research strength is part of a broader Canadian life sciences sector that contributes more than $89 billion annually to the national economy.

Signing the MCA is an important first step, with implementation now underway across the network. Adoption will occur in phases as participating hospitals put the framework into practice and realize its benefits over time. An overview of the MCA and related resources is available on the TAHSN Master Collaboration Agreement webpage.

Quotes

"The most impactful advances in health care depend on strong collaboration across researchers and institutions. As an early adopter and partner in the development of the Master Collaboration Agreement, Sunnybrook has seen firsthand how a shared framework can significantly reduce administrative barriers and streamline research collaboration. The activation of a recent project with Unity Health in just 34 days demonstrates the value of the agreement in accelerating research and

bringing new innovations to patients faster." **– Dr. Michael Kolios**, Vice President of Research and Innovation, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

"If we're going to move the needle on big challenges, we need our strongest institutions and greatest minds to join forces. As an early adopter and pilot partner of this agreement, Unity Health has already seen what this new agreement can help us achieve. Our scientists at St. Michael's partnered with their peers at Sunnybrook to find patterns and gaps in the ways people with traumatic brain injuries are cared for across two of Canada's busiest trauma centres. By combining data from both organizations, we can generate a clearer picture of care patterns and build the evidence needed to inform better care for traumatic brain injury patients across the health system." **– Altaf Stationwala**, President and CEO, Unity Health Toronto

"Canada's research strength depends on how well we work together. By reducing barriers and improving coordination across Toronto's world-leading academic health science network, this agreement will strategically align the expertise and resources around shared health priorities. This approach will strengthen Canada's global competitiveness in the life sciences and attract talent and investment, while keeping our collective efforts focused on what matters most: turning research discoveries into better health and well-being for people in Canada and beyond." **– Dr. Paul Hébert,** President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research

About the Toronto Academic Health Science Network (TAHSN)

TAHSN is comprised of the University of Toronto and 14 of its affiliated academic hospitals. Together, its organizations serve one of the most dynamic regions in the world. The Toronto region's rich diversity is matched by a network of academic health science organizations that possess a wide array of strengths, assets, and services. Collectively, TAHSN organizations, communities, and the universal health-care system through which we provide and receive care, form an ecosystem that has excellence in collaboration, innovation, and impact. Our academic health-care achievements contribute to a healthier and more prosperous community, province, and country. https://tahsn.ca/

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