

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

7th July 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as experts and leaders in the fields of cardiovascular and cancer research, and as British Heart Foundation (BHF) and Cancer Research UK (CRUK) funded academics carrying out research at leading UK universities, research centres and institutes. We wish to highlight the significant impact COVID-19 has had on the medical research sector and to **urge you to take swift action to invest in a Life Sciences-Charity Partnership Fund to protect the vital and unique contribution charity-funded biomedical research makes to the UK's R&D ecosystem and the wider economy.**

The biomedical research sector is key to the health and the wealth of the nation. We therefore welcomed the Government's commitment to 'make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences'. We believe that the sector can be one of the key engines that will help boost the UK economy through COVID-19 recovery, leaving the EU, and beyond. Recent funding announcements, such as the university research support scheme, are positive first steps to help achieve this ambition, but we remain concerned they will not fully address the significant shortfall in charity investment in the UK science base.

The funding provided by charities plays a unique role within the wider funding mix, supporting high-risk discovery science that drives the breakthroughs in our fields (and others), as well as de-risking projects to attract commercial investment and supporting clinical trials that bring the latest innovations and life-saving treatments to patients. Charity funding invests in skills and has supported many of us earlier in our careers, allowing us to continue to build our expertise within the UK system, adding to the strength of its research base and building the UK's global reputation for research excellence.

However, both the BHF and CRUK are now seeing their incomes decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This will have a catastrophic and long-lasting impact on both cardiovascular and cancer research in the UK, but also on the broader R&D sector. CRUK could be forced to cut £150 million per year from its research funding, and the BHF anticipates having to cut its research spend by half this year from £100 million to around £50 million. This means a significantly lower investment in life saving high quality research, in skills and in infrastructure.

To put this challenge into context, last year, medical research charities invested £1.9 billion in research in the UK. CRUK and BHF alone funded 50% and 55% of all UK-based independent research into cancer and heart and circulatory diseases respectively – something that will not be possible to maintain for the foreseeable future. Given that level of contribution, such a drastic reduction in their capacity to fund research will have a dramatic impact on the national investment in research in two key areas of unmet medical need.

Moreover, this reduction will have a knock-on impact on our partners in industry and on the inward investment into the UK life science sector. For example, for every £1 the BHF invests, its researchers attract £2.14 of additional funding. CRUK is the second largest licensor in oncology in the world –

licenses that underpin tomorrow's medicines and today's investment by companies such as Astra Zeneca. Charities have led to the formation of over 40 spin out companies, which in turn have raised over a £1bn in third party investment and the creation of thousands of jobs. The Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) estimates a reduction in UK medical research investment of £310 million this financial year alone which will severely impact the UK's internationally recognised strength in the life sciences.

While charities are doing all they can to support existing research, we are gravely concerned for the future of biomedical research in the UK, and we fear that the latest research support package will not go far enough to plug the funding gap charities are facing. **We urge you to support the proposal from CRUK and the BHF, as well as 151 other medical research charities and AMRC, to work in partnership with the sector to establish a [Life Sciences-Charity Partnership Fund](#).** This co-investment scheme is urgently needed to help protect and invest in world-class research across the UK's four nations, whose quality is assured through a stringent peer-review process, and could provide **matched funding from Government for future charity research over the next 3-5 years** (the period in which funding is expected to be most acutely affected).

Without your support, the UK risks a slide backwards, undermining decades of pioneering and life saving research, as well as losing a generation of new researchers and a major decline in our nation's international competitiveness in life sciences that we have worked so hard to achieve. This will diminish our reputation as a world-leader in developing medical breakthroughs that save lives lost to cancer, heart and circulatory diseases and countless other conditions. We ask that you reaffirm your commitment to science and research by investing to support medical research charities in this time of need.

Signed,

Professor Gianni D Angelini, *British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiac Surgery, Bristol University*

Professor Andrew H Baker, *BHF Professor of Translational Cardiovascular Sciences and Gustav Born Chair of Vascular Biology, University of Edinburgh*

Professor Frances Balkwill (OBE, FMedSci), *Tumour Microenvironment Centre, Barts Cancer Institute - a Cancer Research UK Centre of Excellence, Queen Mary University of London*

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Professor Robert Bristow (MD PhD FRCP FMedSci), *Director, Manchester Cancer Research Centre; Chief Academic Officer and Honorary Consultant, The Christie NHS Foundation Trust*

Professor Massimo Caputo, *BHF Professor of Congenital Heart Surgery, University of Bristol*

Professor Neil Carragher, *Professor of Drug Discovery and Director of Translation, University of Edinburgh*

Professor Jason Carroll, *Professor of Molecular Oncology, Senior Group Leader, CRUK Cambridge Institute*

Professor Barbara Casadei (MD DPhil FRCP FMedSci FAHA FESC), *British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine; President of the European Society of Cardiology; and Cardiovascular Theme Leader, NIHR Biomedical Research Centre, University of Oxford*

Professor Keith Channon (FRCP FMedSci), *British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Deputy Head of Medical Sciences Division (Research), University of Oxford*

Professor Sir Rory Collins (FRS FMedSci FRCP), *CEO and Principal Investigator, UK Biobank; BHF Professor of Medicine & Epidemiology; and Head, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford*

Professor John Danesh, *BHF Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine; Director, BHF Cardiovascular Epidemiology Unit; Head, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge; Faculty Member, Wellcome Sanger Institute; and Director, Health Data Research UK-Cambridge*

Professor the Lord Ara Darzi of Denham (OM, KBE, PC, FRS), *Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London*

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Professor Costanza Emanuelli, *British Heart Foundation Chair of Cardiovascular Science, National Heart & Lung Institute, Imperial College London*

Professor Tariq Enver (DPhil), *Interim Director, University College London Cancer Institute and Vice Dean for Research, UCL Faculty of Medical Sciences*

Professor Gerard Evan (MA., Ph.D., FRS, FMedSci, FAACR), *Head of Department, Sir William Dunn Professor of Biochemistry, Sanger Building, Department of Biochemistry, University of Cambridge*

Professor Mathias Gautel (MD PhD, FMedSci), *BHF Chair of Molecular Cardiology and Head, School of Basic and Medical Biosciences, Randall Centre for Cell and Molecular Biophysics, King's College London*

Professor Richard Gilbertson (MBBS, PhD), *Li Ka Shing Chair of Oncology, Head of Department of Oncology and Director, Cambridge Cancer Centre*

Professor Charlie Gourley, *Professor and Honorary Consultant in Medical Oncology; Clinical Director, Cancer Research UK Edinburgh Centre and Director, Nicola Murray Centre for Ovarian Cancer Research, Institute of Genetics and Molecular Medicine, University of Edinburgh*

Professor George B Hanna (FRCS, PhD), *Head of Department of Surgery & Cancer, Imperial College London*

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Professor Mark Hanson, *British Heart Foundation Professor and Director, Institute of Developmental Sciences, University of Southampton*

Professor Sian E. Harding, *Professor of Cardiac Pharmacology, Imperial College London and Director, BHF Cardiovascular Regenerative Medicine Centre*

Professor Aroon Hingorani, *Director, UCL Institute of Cardiovascular Science and UCL BHF Research Accelerator*

Professor Daniel Hochhauser (DPhil, FRCP), *Kathleen Ferrier Professor of Medical Oncology, Clinical Director, CRUK UCL Centre*

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Professor Kay-Tee Khaw (FMedSci FRCP), *University of Cambridge*

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Professor Deborah A Lawlor, *Professor of Epidemiology, University of Bristol*

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Professor Manuel Mayr, *BHF Professor of Cardiovascular Proteomics, King's College London*

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Professor Gary Middleton, *Professor of Medical Oncology, University of Birmingham*

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Professor Gavin Murphy, *British Heart Foundation Chair of Cardiac Surgery, University of Leicester; Director, Leicester Clinical Trials Unit and Honorary Consultant Cardiac Surgeon, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust*

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Professor Sir Paul Nurse (FRS), *Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine 2001, Director of the Francis Crick Institute*

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Professor Ian Tomlinson (FRCPath, FMedSci, FRS), *Director, Edinburgh CR-UK Cancer Research Centre*

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Professor Martin Wilkins, *Vice Dean (Research), Faculty of Medicine and Director, British Heart Foundation Centre of Research Excellence, Imperial College London*

Professor Paul Workman (FRS), *Chief Executive and President, The Institute of Cancer Research*

Cc:

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care