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**More funding for Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network good news,  
say national groups**

Winnipeg, MB and Toronto, ON – The Canadian Women’s Health Network (CWHN) and Women and Health Protection (WHP), two national organizations dedicated to the promotion of women’s health, applaud the announcement by Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq that Canada’s Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network established in July 2008 will receive major additional funding from the federal government.

“The new network is an important step toward addressing the huge gap in post-market surveillance of prescription drugs in Canada, and the additional funding acknowledges this,” says Madeline Boscoe, Executive Director at CWHN.

CWHN and Women and Health Protection have worked with researchers and Health Canada since the early stages of this cross-Canada collaboration. “We look forward to continuing our partnership on this initiative, especially to help the Network develop a sex- and gender-based analysis in its work,” says Ms. Boscoe.

Until now, Health Canada has relied on spontaneous reporting of adverse drug reactions for post-market surveillance. The new network, coordinated by Canadian Institutes for Health Research, will allow researchers to follow large populations that are prescribed specific drugs. They will be able to track more effectively drug safety and effectiveness, quickly flag concerns, and recommend action to Health Canada.

“The safety and effectiveness of prescription drugs has long been a concern for women’s health groups in this country,” says Anne Rochon Ford, Coordinator at WHP. “Look at the examples of hormone therapy, oral contraceptives, and of course Vioxx and its health impacts for women. Better tracking of safety and effectiveness could reduce, and in some cases prevent, harmful drug effects in future.”

As a current example, the recent WHP publication *Evidence for Caution: Women and statin use* by Harriet Rosenberg and Danielle Allard points to gaps in research and questions the effectiveness and safety of a group [or class] of cholesterol-lowering drugs, especially for women with no history of heart problems. “Statins are widely prescribed in Canada and would be an excellent candidate for monitoring by this network, especially looking at the different effects for women and men,” says Ms. Ford.

The Canadian Women’s Health Network and Women and Health Protection are both part of the Women’s Health Contribution Program at Health Canada.

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