



**TWO RESEARCH TEAMS FUNDED THROUGH THE
INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM BETWEEN
CANADA AND CALIFORNIA
TO ADVANCE CANCER STEM CELL RESEARCH**



Ottawa, October 28, 2009 – The Cancer Stem Cell Consortium (CSCC) is pleased to announce that two multi-disciplinary research teams co-led by Canadian and Californian scientists have been awarded funding through a Collaborative Partnership Program with The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM). The program supports research that will result in a cancer stem cell based therapy with the specific aim of improving cancer treatment.

“We are really pleased that our first international partnership has met with such success for Canadian cancer stem cell research and we look forward to future targeted initiatives with CIRM,” said Dr. James Till, President, CSCC.

The first project is led by Dr. John Dick, University Health Network and Dr. Dennis Carson, University of California, San Diego. Their research will focus on the development of novel drugs to treat leukemia, which will address a compelling medical need as half of adults diagnosed with leukemia die of the disease. Substantial evidence supports the concept that recurrence and persistence of many leukemias stem from the relative resistance of leukemic stem cells (LSCs) to treatments currently in use, so the development of drugs that preferentially target LSCs may be particularly valuable in attacking both lymphoid and myeloid malignancies.

The goal of the second project is to utilize a pipeline strategy to develop novel drugs targeting cancer-initiating cells in solid tumor cancers. This project is led by Dr. Tak Mak, University Health Network and Dr. Dennis Slamon, UCLA. The reviewers of this application determined that the proposed drugs would provide a significant clinical benefit to cancer patients and recognized the unique capabilities of the assembled team to successfully identify and develop new drugs.

“International collaborations that bring together the best scientists in the world to focus on important health issues have the highest likelihood of success,” said Dr. C. Thomas Caskey, Chairman of the Board of Genome Canada. *“This initiative between the CSCC and CIRM provides the opportunity for Canadian and Californian scientists to combine their expertise and focus on*

cancer stem cells. These cells are widely believed to be the root cause of cancer and responsible for its reoccurrence and spread. Genome Canada supports this ambitious undertaking with its objectives of making new discoveries and turning them into new therapies."

Both Canadian scientists have been recognized internationally for their contributions to the field of cancer research. Dr. John Dick is an award-winning scientist, credited with first identifying cancer stem cells in human leukemia. His discovery spawned a new direction in cancer research. Dr. Tak Mak is an acclaimed immunologist renowned for his 1984 discovery of cloning the human T-cell receptor. His role in the development of genetically altered mice for scientific study has led to important breakthroughs in immunology and understanding cancer at the cellular level.

"This initiative is bringing together the leading minds in cancer and stem cell research from Canada and California," said Dr. Morag Park, Scientific Director of the Institute of Cancer Research, part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Government of Canada's health research agency. *"CIHR, in conjunction with Genome Canada and through the Cancer Stem Cell Consortium, is proud to fund Canadian Scientists in this cross-border collaboration that will engage scientists from many disciplines, combine resources, technologies and knowledge to find more effective treatments for Leukemia and solid cell tumours."*

The two Canada-California collaborative projects on cancer stem cells were selected from thirty-one applications, which targeted a broad range of diseases and injury. Each Canadian team has requested close to \$20 million CAD over four years, with their Californian partners requesting similar levels of funding from CIRM. Funding for the Canadian scientists is being provided by two members of the CSCC, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Genome Canada. Californian scientists will be funded by CIRM.

"This funding will enable Drs. John Dick and Tak Mak and their research teams at University Health Network and across Canada to accelerate the work to translate stem-cell research into effective, targeted cancer treatments," said Dr. Christopher Paige, VP, Research at the University Health Network. *"We are enormously proud to be able to continue to build on the legacy of the original stem-cell discovery here in 1961 by Drs. James Till and Ernest McCulloch."*

THE CANCER STEM CELL CONSORTIUM

The Cancer Stem Cell Consortium is a not-for-profit corporation that was incorporated in 2007 to coordinate an international strategy for cancer stem cell research and related translational activities. The strategy will allow the biomedical community to move quickly and effectively from discoveries to application in the clinic; establish partnerships among organizations from Canada, California and other jurisdictions to accelerate and synergize research and translation opportunities related to cancer stem cells; and secure investments from governments, private foundations and the private sector for sustained and stable research funding. Current Consortium members include: the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canadian Institutes of

Health Research, Genome Canada, the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, the National Research Council Canada, the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research and the Stem Cell Network.

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. As of October 1, 2009 the CIRM governing board has approved 301 grants totaling more than \$781 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human embryonic stem cell research in the world.

GENOME CANADA

Genome Canada is a not-for-profit Corporation that acts as the primary funding and information resource relating to genomics and proteomics in Canada. Its main objective is to position Canada as a world leader in genomics and proteomics research. Dedicated to developing and implementing a national strategy in genomics and proteomics research for the benefit of all Canadians, it has received \$840 million in funding from the Government of Canada since 2000 to which has been added close to \$1.0 billion in partnered co-funding and interest earnings.

THE CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada's agency for health research. CIHR's mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to catalyze its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health-care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 13,000 health researchers and trainees across Canada.

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Media queries:

David Coulombe

Media Specialist

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Telephone: 613-941-4563

Cell: 613-808-7526

David.Coulombe@irsc-cihr.gc.ca

Hélène Meilleur

Director, Communications & Events

Genome Canada

Telephone: 613-751-4460 ext. 116

Cell: 613-355-5968

hmeilleur@genomecanada.ca