

Canadian Gene Cure Foundation Awards
Dr. Colin Ross a \$90,000
Champions of Genetics: Building the Next Generation Grant

August 3, 2011, Victoria BC - The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation (CGCF) is pleased to announce the awarding of a \$90,000 Champions of Genetics: Building the Next Generation Grant to Dr. Colin Ross for his research on the genetics of severe adverse drug reactions. The Champions of Genetics is a new award initiative of the CGCF that celebrates generations of excellence in Canadian genetics.

Canadian scientists are world leaders in human genetic research and in the discovery and advancement of cures for inherited genetic diseases. The Champions of Genetics initiative was created to both honour past genetic successes of Canada's accomplished senior scientists and ensure excellence continues in future generations of Canadian geneticists by providing financial support and encouraging mentorship early in their careers.

Genetic scientists just starting their research careers face many obstacles including heavy teaching assignments, low research budgets and difficulties recruiting highly qualified personnel. The Next Generation Grant provides much needed funding to promising young scientists, such as Dr. Ross, to hire graduate students or post doctoral researchers in their laboratories. The grant allows them to advance their own exciting genetic research while mentoring yet the next generation of scientists; thus perpetuating Canada's level of excellence in genetic research.

Dr. Ross was awarded the grant for his research on identifying genetic factors of severe adverse drug reactions and to implement testing to prevent these serious adverse reactions. In Canada, severe adverse drug reactions claim thousands of lives each year and cause many more lifelong disabilities. Building upon the identification of novel pharmacogenetic susceptibility variants for codeine-induced mortality, cisplatin-induced deafness and anthracycline-induced heart failure, Dr Ross's research plans on demonstrating the benefits of predicting in whom the genetic risk of severe adverse drug reactions is the greatest.

"As a new assistant professor, this grant is an immense boost – it will significantly help to bring new research findings from our lab to the benefit of patients in Canada. We have identified genetic variations that cause certain patients to react terribly to specific medications. In the last 30 years there have been incredible advances and new medications for the treatment of cancer. However, some patients cannot tolerate these medications and develop life-long disabilities, such as hearing loss or heart failure, and some patients die from these adverse drug reactions," explains Dr. Ross. "Our research team is deeply committed to translating this support from the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation, and all who generously support the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation, into positive outcomes and safer medication therapy for patients."

To be eligible for the grant, an applicant must have been nominated by a Champion of Genetics senior scientist as chosen by the CGCF Board of Directors. Accomplished geneticist Dr. Michael Hayden was the 2011 Champion who nominated Dr. Ross, a trainee whom he personally mentored, to apply for the grant.

"Dr. Ross's personal leadership qualities and research abilities have been critical in helping to establish a unique Canada-wide network of collaborative scientists and clinicians aimed at preventing serious ADRs," said Champion, Dr. Michael Hayden.

-30-

For more information please contact:

Sandra MacPherson
Board Chair
Canadian Gene Cure Foundation
250.213.8056
sandramacpherson@shaw.ca

Tracy Zeisberger
Foundation Manager
Canadian Gene Cure Foundation
250.213.8056
tzeisberger@gencure.ca

Background:

About the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation:

The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation (CGCF) is a registered Canadian charitable organization, formed in 1999 to raise much-needed funds for medical genetics research in Canada.

The Foundation's primary goal is to raise funds to enable Canadian scientists to discover cures and treatments for inherited diseases. In addition to the annual research grants awarded, the Foundation recognizes the importance of mentoring Canada's future scientists and hosts the annual Gene Researcher for a Week program aimed at providing unique educational opportunities for high school students across the country. The Foundation also supports networking opportunities in which scientists can exchange ideas and work cooperatively, linking advances in different disease areas. Specifically, the CGCF supports the annual Canadian Human Genetics Conference in partnership with the CIHR Institute of Genetics.

Canadian scientists are world-leaders in gene discovery and genetic research and have discovered genes relating to hundreds of disorders, including cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, muscular dystrophy, dyslexia, Huntington disease, Alzheimer's disease, breast cancer, colon cancer, cardiovascular disease and epilepsy. Through active fundraising, the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation can continue to support Canadian Scientists and their contributions to human genetics research.

www.genecure.ca

Champions of Genetics Programme

The Champions of Genetics programme was designed with multiple benefits, in that it celebrates high-caliber scientific excellence of both highly respected senior scientists, and the rising stars that they have mentored.

The first phase of recognition in the program identifies and honours Canada's long established scientists, our Champions of Genetics. The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation's Board of Directors is responsible for developing the criteria on how these esteemed few are chosen, criteria that will vary in focus from year to year. In 2011, the Board elected to acknowledge individuals responsible for establishing the dynamic Canadian Genetic Diseases Network, one of Canada's successful and highly productive Networks of Centres of Excellence, of which the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation is a legacy.

Part of the honour afforded the Champions of Genetics is the opportunity to nominate one of their former trainees to apply for a Champions of Genetics: Building the Next Generation Grant from the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation. Nominees must have excellent leadership potential, have experience running their own independent laboratory at a Canadian research institute for seven years or less and be on the path to becoming the next generation of Canada's most respected senior scientists. The projects the nominees put forth in their application must demonstrate excellent science and have therapeutic potential in the near future.

This year, three of the nominees have been awarded a two-year grant. The grant recipients will be expected use to the grant funding to hire and mentor a post-doctoral fellow. This stipulation allows them the opportunity to not only further advance their own exciting research projects but to continue the important tradition of mentorship bringing strength and a continuity of excellence to the Canadian research community.

Dr. Colin Ross Bio Sketch

Dr Colin Ross is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of British Columbia at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics (CMMT) and the Child and Family Research Institute (CFRI) at the BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver. Following graduate training in medical genetics in the U.K. with Prof. Tom Strachan and at McMaster University with Dr. Patricia Chang, Colin pursued a research fellowship with Dr. Michael Hayden to develop a novel gene therapy for Lipoprotein Lipase Deficiency, which is now completing phase III clinical trials in Canada. Together with Dr. Michael Hayden and Dr. Bruce Carleton, Colin helped found the Canadian Pharmacogenomics Network for Drug Safety (CPNDS), a nation-wide network to study the genetics of severe adverse drug reactions. The goal of CPNDS is to prevent severe ADRs by identifying those patients at greatest risk of an ADR before the drug is administered.