

## **Dr. Michael Hayden Honoured as a 2011 Champion of Genetics**

August 3, 2011, Victoria BC - The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation (CGCF), a national, charitable foundation committed to enabling Canadians to lead the world in the discovery and advancement of cures for inherited diseases, has honoured Dr. Michael Hayden by naming him a 2011 Champion of Genetics.

The Champion of Genetics award recognizes the scientific excellence of Canada's most respected and successful senior genetic scientists. Canadian scientists are world leaders in human genetic research and gene discovery. They have been credited with discovering genes related to hundreds of inherited, gene related diseases such as cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, muscular dystrophy, Huntington's, Alzheimer's, breast cancer, colon cancer and cardiovascular disease.

This year, the (CGCF) Champions of Genetics nominating committee is honouring Dr. Michael Hayden, along with four other scientists, for the role they played in establishing the dynamic Canadian Genetic Disease Network. The Network is one of Canada's successful and highly productive Networks of Centres of Excellence that has transformed the culture of genetic science from one of isolation to one of cooperation. It has an impressive array of scientific accomplishments including the discovery of more than 50 medically significant genes and development of state-of-the-art research facilities and biotechnology companies. The Network has also led to the formation of a charitable legacy, the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation, which continues the role of supporting Canadian scientists and their contributions to human genetics research.

Dr. Hayden is one of the early champions of genetics who paved the way for genetic research in Canada and played a key role in the development of the Network. He is also being honoured for his key discoveries in the field of Huntington's disease, including a predictive test and potential target for therapy. He has been instrumental in revealing the role that genetics plays in cardiovascular disease and adverse drug reactions.

"Dr. Hayden is a strong leader with great international acclaim. He is very focused on making sure discoveries in the lab have an impact for patients, and he instills that vision into his students and colleagues", says Dr. Anny Fortin, CGCF board member.

To be honoured a Champion of Genetics, scientists must also have demonstrated a history of mentorship. As part of the honour of being named a Champion of Genetics, Dr. Hayden was given the opportunity to nominate an individual he has personally mentored to apply for a \$90,000 Champions of Genetics: Building the Next Generation Research Grant. The grant will provide much needed funding for the chosen young scientists to advance their own exciting genetic research and discoveries and to mentor yet the next generation of scientists; thus perpetuating Canada's level of excellence in genetic research.

The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation recently honoured Dr. Hayden and four other Champions of Genetics at the Canadian Human Genetics Conference in Banff, Alberta. Sharing this honour with Dr. Hayden were:

**Dr. Robert Korneluk**, Director of the Solange Gauthier Karsh Laboratory and Director of the Apoptosis Research Centre at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and a Professor in both the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ottawa.

**Dr. Roderick McInnes**, Director of the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital, Canada Research Chair in Neurogenetics, and Professor of Genetics and of Biochemistry at McGill University.

**Dr. Brenda Gallie**, Professor in the Departments of Medical Biophysics, Molecular and Medical Genetics, and Ophthalmology at the University of Toronto and the Hospital for Sick Children and Senior Scientist in the Division of Applied Molecular Oncology at the Ontario Cancer Institute at Princess Margaret Hospital.

**Dr. Philippe Gros**, Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Complex Traits Program at McGill University.

**Dr. Michael Hayden** a Killam Professor of Medical Genetics, Canada Research Chair in Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine, and Director of the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics at the University of British Columbia.

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## **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.