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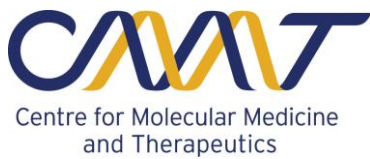
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**UBC MEDIA RELEASE | AUGUST 30, 2011**

**B.C. Leadership Chair in Genetic Medicine appointed at UBC**

The University of British Columbia today welcomed the appointment of Dr. Matthew Farrer as the new Dr. Donald Rix B.C. Leadership Chair in Genetic Medicine, the ninth B.C. Leadership Chair to be appointed at UBC.

Supported by \$2.25 million from the Province of British Columbia through its Leading Edge Endowment Fund (LEEF), \$2 million from LifeLabs and \$250,000 from the Genome British Columbia Foundation, the chair is named for the late Dr. Don Rix, physician, philanthropist, and community and business leader.

Farrer and his research team will be based at the Department of Medical Genetics at UBC’s Faculty of Medicine, and at the Brain Research Centre (BRC) at UBC and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute. Farrer will also work with scientists at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics (CMMT). Led by Dr. Michael Hayden, CMMT played an instrumental role in the recruitment of the Chair.

The Chair was announced today by Dr. Moira Stilwell, Parliamentary Secretary for Industry, Research and Innovation, at the Performance Arts Lodge (PAL) in downtown Vancouver. PAL is a community theatre venue where the Parkinson’s Society of B.C. holds one of its monthly patient support groups.

“Diseases of the brain are some of the greatest challenges facing medical science today, and funding this kind of cutting-edge research is a priority for our government,” said Stilwell. “Dr. Farrer will play a lead role in developing new drugs and therapies here in British Columbia for diseases that cause enormous suffering around the world for patients and their families.”

Stilwell was joined by John Hepburn, UBC Vice President Research and International, Mark Murphy, Director of LifeLabs Inc., Alan Winter, President of Genome BC Foundation, and Jim Smerdon, an early-onset Parkinson’s patient who was diagnosed four years ago, at age 32. Smerdon is one of an estimated 11,000 British Columbians – and 100,000 Canadians – with Parkinson’s disease.

“I am an optimist, which is one reason I put my heart and soul into raising money for Parkinson’s research,” said Smerdon, who is a member of Parkinson Society British Columbia. “Scientists like Dr. Farrer give me hope – for myself, and that someday people will never suffer the



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debilitating effects of Parkinson’s, because they will be diagnosed and treated first.”

An internationally renowned expert in the genetic aspects of Parkinson’s disease and related dementia, Farrer and his team have helped identify five genes involved in Parkinson’s by analyzing DNA from families in more than 20 countries on five continents.

His most recent discovery, published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* last month, is the identification of a genetic mutation that causes late-onset Parkinson’s disease from DNA samples of a Swiss family where 11 relatives have developed the disease. This was the first Parkinson’s-related genetic discovery led by a Canadian team. Farrer and his team are now developing new therapies based on this and other genetic discoveries of the past decade.

“We are grateful to the Province of British Columbia for its continued support for research through the Leading Edge Endowment Fund,” said UBC Vice President John Hepburn. “I have no doubt that the high-calibre basic and translational research Dr. Farrer and his B.C. and international collaborators are carrying out right here in the province will have a tremendous impact on our understanding of – and ultimately help eradicate – Parkinson’s disease and other related debilitating brain disorders.”

“British Columbia has one of the most concentrated and high-calibre cluster of brain and neuroscience researchers, and one of the most robust biotech industries in the world,” said Farrer, who also holds the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Neurogenetics and Translational Neuroscience at UBC. “This synergy provides the perfect environment for me and my team to make fundamental genetic discoveries and translate them into treatments that will improve the quality of life for patients suffering from neurodegenerative diseases and that of their families.”

“We are delighted to have this research chair named in honour of Dr. Rix in recognition of his many years of exemplary leadership in British Columbia’s biotechnology and medical research sectors,” said LifeLabs’ Mark Murphy. “We hope our support of Dr. Farrer’s innovative research will help reduce the burden that neurodegenerative diseases have on our health-care system and, most importantly, on families.”

“Genome BC is pleased to be able to bring together private industry, academia and government to harness new opportunities for health research,” said Genome BC President Alan Winter. “The appointment of Dr. Farrer to the Dr. Donald Rix B.C. Leadership Chair in Genetic Medicine will allow us to continue to build upon the great foundation in



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brain research in B.C. and contribute to new and improved treatments for patients everywhere.”

Parkinson’s disease is the second most common chronic neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer’s. It is estimated that 10 million Canadians – nearly one-third of Canada’s population – will be affected by brain disease, disorder or injuries at some time in their lives. The financial burden of treating these conditions is estimated to cost the Canadian healthcare systems \$30 billion annually.

“Genetic research is helping us uncover previously-unknown connections among rare and more common brain diseases, and this new knowledge is helping us better understand how the brain reacts to – and even repairs itself from – diseases and injuries,” said Brain Research Centre Director Max Cynader. “Dr. Farrer’s work, taken with ongoing research at the BRC, will bring us even closer to unravelling the mysteries of our brain.”

“Since joining UBC a year ago, Dr. Farrer has already made his mark by releasing the first Canadian-led discovery of a Parkinson’s-related gene mutation – and is about to publish another,” said Dr. Gavin Stuart, dean of the Faculty of Medicine and UBC’s Vice Provost Health. “He is a tireless supporter of patient-centred science – an area UBC is well-known for – and that is especially good news for the people of British Columbia.”

“The LEEF Chair came to fruition as a result of CMMT and UBC’s invaluable partnership with Genome BC and LifeLabs,” said CMMT Director Dr. Michael Hayden. “The award in Don Rix’s name in Genetic Medicine is particularly significant as it recognizes Don’s visionary leadership and commitment to the translation of genetic knowledge to society. Don was a wonderful mentor, friend, and an inspiration to me and countless others.”



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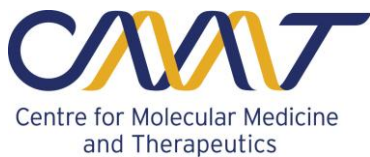
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**BACKGROUND | JANUARY 21, 2011**

**BC Leadership Chair in Genetic Medicine appointed at UBC**

**About Dr. Matthew Farrer**

An expert in the field of molecular genetics, Dr. Matthew Farrer has made several influential discoveries in neurogenetics and is critically acclaimed for his work on the genetics of Parkinson’s disease, including identifying the most important genetic risk factors for the debilitating disease.

In May 2010, Farrer was appointed as the Canada Excellence Research Chair Neurogenetics and Translational Neuroscience at UBC, one of only 19 world-class researchers to be named in the inaugural federal research program. Prior to that, Farrer was a Professor of Molecular Neuroscience and Director of the Neurogenetics Division at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. At the Clinic, he worked on finding innovative new treatments for patients suffering from neurologic diseases by refining diagnoses and identifying biomarkers of early and progressive disease.

In 2008, Farrer was named Mayo Clinic Distinguished Investigator, the prestigious institution’s highest award for research excellence. He has studied patient populations and families world-wide and his molecular insights have led to model systems that are helping to define the biologic processes perturbed by genetic mutations, and have laid the foundation for new and effective therapies.

Farrer’s research has been funded by the U.S. National Institute of Aging, the Pacific Alzheimer’s Research Foundation and the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research. He is a member of the Michael J. Fox Foundation’s Scientific Advisory Board.

Farrer holds a PhD in Human Genetics from Imperial College London and a bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry from King’s College London in the UK. He was also a postdoctoral fellow in medical and community genetics at St. Mark’s National Health Service Trust, U.K.

His current research interests are neurodegenerative disorders, with a focus on the molecular genetics and functional modelling of movement disorders, including Parkinson’s disease and Lewy body dementia.



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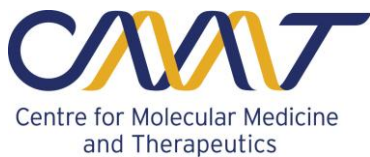
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**The Brain Research Centre** comprises more than 250 investigators with multidisciplinary expertise in neuroscience research ranging from the test tube, to the bedside, to industrial spin-offs. The Centre is a partnership of the UBC Faculty of Medicine and VCH Research Institute [www.brain.ubc.ca](http://www.brain.ubc.ca).

**The Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics** is a synergistic group of scientists and researchers who share a strong sense of commitment to solve the many genetic questions surrounding human illness and well being. Affiliated with the University of British Columbia and the Child & Family Research Institute, CMMT conducts discovery research and translates that research into effective clinical and therapeutic strategies to promote health. For more information, visit [www.cmmt.ubc.ca](http://www.cmmt.ubc.ca).

**Genome British Columbia** is a catalyst for the life sciences cluster on Canada’s West Coast, and manages a cumulative portfolio of over \$450M in technology platforms and research projects. Working with governments, academia and industry across sectors such as forestry, fisheries, agriculture, environment, bioenergy, mining and human health, the goal of the organization is to generate social and economic benefits for British Columbia and Canada. The Genome BC Foundation was established to support the expansion and enhancement of life sciences education in the province. [www.genomebc.ca](http://www.genomebc.ca).

**LifeLabs** provides laboratory testing services that help physicians and other health-care professionals diagnose, treat, monitor and prevent disease in patients. LifeLabs employs more than 3,000 professionally trained staff who deliver more than 50 million laboratory tests annually to over 10 million patients and nearly 20,000 physician customers. LifeLabs has operated in Canada for nearly 50 years. In communities across British Columbia, LifeLabs provides a full range of diagnostic testing services supported by an extensive network of collection, transportation, information technology, and analytical and consultative expertise. Every day, more than 11,000 patients visit one of LifeLabs’ 80 service centres across the province. LifeLabs also provides services to more than 500 patients at home and in long-term care facilities in B.C. Today it is owned by Borealis Infrastructure, a global leader in infrastructure investing, with assets in energy, transportation and infrastructure buildings, including long-term care facilities and hospitals, pipelines and telecommunications.

**The UBC Faculty of Medicine** provides innovative programs in the health and life sciences, teaching students at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels. Its faculty members received \$295 million in research funds, 54 percent of UBC’s total research revenues, in 2010-11. For more information, visit [www.med.ubc.ca](http://www.med.ubc.ca).



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**Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI)** is the research body of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, which includes BC’s largest academic and teaching health sciences centres: VGH, UBC Hospital, and GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre. In academic partnership with the University of British Columbia, VCHRI brings innovation and discovery to patient care, advancing healthier lives in healthy communities across British Columbia, Canada, and beyond.

[www.vchri.ca](http://www.vchri.ca).



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