

MEDIA RELEASE

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Quebec creates leading-edge human-health genomic research teams

TWO MAJOR PROJECTS CHOSEN BY THE *PFIZER-FRSQ INNOVATION FUND* ARE BRINGING TOGETHER DISTINGUISHED QUEBEC RESEARCHERS

Toward individualizing diagnoses and treatments on the basis of genetic profile differences

MONTREAL, October 7, 2009 – The first two research projects supported by the *Pfizer-FRSQ Innovation Fund* will investigate differences in the genetic code for inflammatory bowel disease and metastatic colorectal cancer. This research could lead to improved diagnosis and the development of individualized treatments for these diseases. These innovative projects are marshalling multidisciplinary teams of seasoned researchers from major Quebec research institutions. Created in March 2008, the *Pfizer-FRSQ Innovation Fund* has as its mission to fund Quebec research projects in human health.

Chosen by the *Pfizer-FRSQ Innovation Fund's* scientific review committee, which consists of internationally renowned experts, these projects will receive grants of \$800,000 and \$1,500,000, respectively, spread out over three years. The research project entitled "Integrative biology of genes associated with several inflammatory diseases: diagnostic and therapeutic improvements" is headed by Dr. John D. Rioux, Ph.D, associate professor of Medicine at Université de Montréal and at the Montreal Heart Institute and holder of the Canada Research Chair in Genetics and Genomic Medicine of Inflammation. Dr. Gerald Batist, codirector of Q-CROC (Quebec - Clinical Research Organization in Cancer), professor and holder of the Minda de Gunzburg Chair at the Department of Oncology, McGill University, and director of the Segal Cancer Centre, Jewish General Hospital as well as of the McGill Centre for Translational Research in Cancer, is directing the project entitled "Prospective study for identifying and validating biomarkers of therapeutic resistance in cancer".

"These first two international projects bear witness to the entrepreneurial spirit of Quebec researchers, who are more than 3,000 strong across the province, and to their contribution to global human health research. Thanks to this innovation fund created in partnership with Pfizer, we will have the opportunity to support several other major research projects in the next few years," says Yves Joannette, President and Chief Executive Officer of the *Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec*.

"Pfizer is proud to support such research of excellence in genomics in Quebec, which is paving the way for personalized medicine for patients with inflammatory bowel disease or metastatic colorectal cancer. This initiative in these fields of research, where there is a genuine need, will substantially help determine the appropriate treatment, the required dose and the right time for a given patient. Not only will these researchers' scientific rigour speed up progress, it will also maintain Quebec's position as a leader that encourages innovation," states Paul Lévesque, President of Pfizer Canada.

Study of the action of four genes that predispose to inflammatory diseases

"It will soon be possible to go from specific genes to specific treatments. In the wake of genomic sequencing, researchers are now able to study specific biological processes in complex diseases, such as inflammatory bowel disease. Ultimately, different genomic profiles of affected individuals will be determined. Thus, we think we will be able to contribute to avenues to be explored for more specific diagnoses and treatments," explains Dr. John D. Rioux. "Our team will look at the variants of four of the 30 genes recently attributed to the predisposition to Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. These four genes are located in a very specific signaling pathway, the interleukin-23 (IL-23) pathway, which we are going to *modulate* in order to observe its effects. We will thus try to increase or decrease the predisposition to these diseases. We are also going to test a drug with therapeutic potential in an animal model."

Research on the biomarkers of resistance to metastatic colorectal cancer therapy

"The future has arrived in the field of cancer. Treatment individualization is almost within our reach. We now have ways to determine the molecular signatures of cancer tumors, which will eventually enable one to quickly differentiate between patients who could benefit from treatment and those who would be resistant to it," says Dr. Gerald Batist. "After 50 years of *in vitro* studies of the mechanisms of resistance to cancer therapy in cell lines and animals, science is reaching a milestone: our team will be able to conduct applied research on biopsies from about a hundred patients with metastatic colorectal cancer, at eight Quebec hospitals. We will thus create, with the necessary ethical oversight, an international bank of clinical specimens and produce results that will improve patient care."

About the Pfizer-FRSQ Innovation Fund

Created in 2008 as part of the Quebec government's research and innovation strategy, the *Pfizer-FRSQ Innovation Fund* is aimed at stimulating public-sector research in human health in Quebec and acting as a catalyst for the commercialization of innovative projects. Projects submitted must not only address major human health problems, but also be large-scale initiatives involving several institutions. In addition, they must

aim for concrete results that can lead to the commercialization of new therapeutic drugs, new know-how or new devices or technologies within three to five years.

About the *Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec* (FRSQ)

The mission of the *Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec*, which reports to the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade, is to support health research to foster the wellness of Quebec's population. Its mandate is to promote and financially support this research, to share knowledge and train researchers, as well as to establish partnerships necessary for the development of Quebec's research and innovation system and advance the research internationally. The FRSQ supports the activities of 11 groups, 19 centres and 18 thematic research networks. For more information, visit www.frsq.gouv.qc.ca.

About Pfizer Canada Inc.

Pfizer Canada is the Canadian operation of Pfizer Inc., the world's leading pharmaceutical company. Pfizer discovers, develops, manufactures and markets prescription medicines for humans and animals. Pfizer Canada is a leader in Canadian healthcare research, investing more than \$137 million in research and development activities, contributions and partnerships in 2008. The company has invested more than \$1 billion in R&D since 2000. Pfizer Canada's commitment to helping Canadians live happier, healthier and longer lives extends beyond medication. To learn more about Pfizer Canada's More than Medication philosophy and programs, visit www.morethanmedication.ca.

INFORMATION:

Brigitte Viel
NATIONAL Public Relations
Telephone: 514-843-2303
Cell: 514-912-2378
bviel@national.ca