

A research project originally funded by CQDM and Brain Canada leads to a new partnership between the Centre for Drug Research and Development (CDRD), the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital at McGill University (MNI), and Merck

March 24, 2017

Montreal, March 24, 2017 – A project funded by CQDM and Brain Canada has resulted in the creation of NeuroCDRD, a new collaboration between the Centre for Drug Research and Development (CDRD), the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital at McGill University (MNI), and Merck.

CQDM and Brain Canada, with financial support from Health Canada through the Canada Brain Research Fund, are proud to have provided \$1.5M to allow Dr. Edward Fon and his team to develop *A patient-derived hiPSC neuronal platform for drug discovery in Parkinson's disease and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)*.

A major challenge for the development of new medications for Parkinson's and ALS is the lack of relevant patient-derived neuronal cells. It is to address this challenge that Dr. Fon and his team will generate human induced pluripotent stem cells (hiPSCs) from patient's skin or blood cells. Under the appropriate culture conditions, the hiPSCs become different types of neurons, and can be used to mimic Parkinson's disease and ALS. Such patient-derived neurons can then be used to study the disease and to perform some tests. NeuroCDRD was created following the recognition of the huge potential that these neuronal cells represent. Indeed, the partners will use these hiPSCs to develop screening platforms and identify new drug candidates against these diseases.

"CQDM is proud to support the work performed by Dr. Fon and his team, and is delighted that the infrastructure and equipment that will be put in place by NeuroCDRD has the capacity to translate the technology developed by Dr. Fon into real benefits to Parkinson's and ALS patients." mentioned Mario Chevette, Vice President, Scientific Affairs, CQDM.

"Brain Canada is pleased that the Platform funding provided to Dr. Fon's team, through our partnership with CQDM and Health Canada, has enabled a new collaboration of academia, pharma and biotech. Such collaborations, which align academic research with industry, serve to fast-track promising discoveries through the pipeline to outcomes that will benefit people," said Inez Jabalpurwala, President and CEO, Brain Canada Foundation.

To learn more:

<http://www.cqdm.org/en/projects-portfolio/project/66>

<http://centrefordrugresearchanddevelopment.cmail19.com/t/ViewEmail/r/2431D9B0E12ABB992540EF23F30FEDED/C16A50E3B6CA61AFD8E2A916412CAE5B>

http://braincanada.ca/files/Focus_on_Brain_press_release_EN_Final_v2.pdf

About CQDM

CQDM is a consortium active in biopharmaceutical research whose mission is to fund the development of innovative tools and technologies to accelerate drug discovery. Unique in the world, CQDM's business model is based on a collaborative approach where all stakeholders share the costs of biopharmaceutical research and benefit from its results. CQDM also provides a common meeting ground where academia, governments, biotechs and the pharmaceutical industry converge to address numerous complex medical challenges. CQDM receives financial support from Merck, Pfizer Inc., AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, GlaxoSmithKline, Eli Lilly Canada, Janssen, Novartis Pharma Canada, Sanofi Canada, as well as from Quebec's Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation (MESI) and from the Government of Canada under the Business-Led Networks of Centres of Excellence Program (BL-NCE). For more information: www.cqdm.org.

About Brain Canada

Brain Canada is a national non-profit organization headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, that enables and supports excellent, innovative, paradigm-changing brain research in Canada. For almost twenty years, Brain Canada has made the case for the brain as a single, complex system with commonalities across the range of neurological disorders, mental illnesses and addictions, brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and institutions, and a smarter way to invest in brain research that is focused on outcomes that will benefit patients and families. Brain Canada's vision is to understand the brain, in health and illness, to improve lives and achieve societal impact.

The Canada Brain Research Fund is a partnership between the Government of Canada and Brain Canada, designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada and its partners have committed to raising \$120M, which is being matched by Health Canada on a 1:1 basis for a total of \$240M. For more information: www.braincanada.ca.