



BULLETIN



CANADIAN GENETIC DISEASES NETWORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 1, 1996

CANADIAN SCIENTIST DISCOVERES LOCATION OF NEW GENE ASSOCIATED WITH JUVENILE DIABETES

A research team led by Dr. Leigh Field of the University of Calgary has discovered the location of a new gene which predisposes children to insulin-dependent diabetes. Dr. Field is a member of the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network and is a Heritage Medical Researcher.

The findings of the team will be published today in the scientific journal *Genomics*.

Juvenile diabetes is a common form of diabetes which develops in childhood and affects 1 in 300 children of European ancestry by the age of 20. Sufferers are dependent for survival on daily injections of insulin which replace the insulin normally produced by the pancreas. The syndrome of juvenile diabetes results from an abnormal autoimmune reaction in the body which destroys the pancreas cells which produce insulin.

This common form of diabetes is caused by a combination of several genes. To date, a total of eight gene loci have been identified. The latest gene location discovered by the Calgary team is on chromosome 14. Identification of genes that predispose a child to juvenile diabetes, the ultimate goal of researchers, will eventually enable doctors to perform a simple DNA test to predict susceptibility and then to prescribe treatment to prevent diabetes from developing.

Scientific Director of the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network, Dr. Michael Hayden, commented "Dr. Field's discoveries in diabetes research are significant. The Network's facilities and collaborations across Canada will continue to play a crucial part in the rapid progress of her ongoing research."

The Canadian Genetic Diseases Network is a consortium of 38 of Canada's leading geneticists who are linked with 12 universities, 9 hospitals, and 11 core facilities across the country. The Network performs leading-edge research on common genetically transmitted diseases and works with industry partners on methods of detection and treatment of the diseases. Core funding for Network programs is provided by the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence Program through the Medical Research Council of Canada.

For further information contact:
Carol Smith, Network Manager
Canadian Genetic Diseases Network
Tel. 604-822-7217/7886