



BULLETIN



CANADIAN GENETIC DISEASES NETWORK

CANADA AND GERMANY SIGN AGREEMENT TO COLLABORATE ON RESEARCH & TRAINING IN HUMAN GENETICS

February 19, 2002: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Leading research institutes in Canada and Germany today signed an important agreement to collaborate on research and capacity building in all fields of human genetic disease. Representatives of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) – Institute of Genetics, the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network (CGDN) and the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics (MPIMG) formalized the agreement in Berlin, saying it is expected to accelerate the discovery of disease-causing genes to the benefit of citizens worldwide. The signing complements Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's concurrent Team Canada visit to Germany.

The five-year collaborative program between Canadian and German scientists is called the Elucidation of Human Genetic Disease Using Genomic Technologies. "This unique collaboration brings together scientists of two nations who are international leaders in applying genomic technologies to unravel the complexities of genetic disease worldwide," said Dr. Stephen Scherer, Chair of the Priority and Planning Committee for International Collaborations in Human Genetics for the CIHR Institute of Genetics. Activities planned include joint research projects and scientific meetings, exchange of scientists between Canada and Germany, and support for scientific trainees.

"The agreement will speed up our ability to study single-gene disorders (monogenic diseases) and complex diseases which contribute in some way to approximately 90% of health problems and mortality," said Dr. Ron Woznow, CEO of the Canadian Genetic Diseases Network. The agreement states that this will be done through shared development and application of genomic technologies, development of new genomic methodologies and clinical resource databanks, and the study of single-gene disorders and mouse models of human disease.

The emphasis on monogenic disorders will pave the way toward the understanding of complex patterns in genetic diseases. "The large-scale elucidation of single-gene disorders is an important general strategy to study the

function of the human genome,” said Dr. Hans-Hilger Ropers, Managing Director of the Max-Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics in Berlin. “In addition to the expected benefits for health care, this collaboration will provide new insights into the molecular processes of life.”

A significant contribution of the collaboration will be to meet a growing international need for scientists trained in genetics and genomics. An emphasis will be to recruit and train clinical scientists along with scientists who can work at the interface of computer science, chemistry, mathematics, physics, bioinformatics and the social sciences.

The CIHR Institute of Genetics is an internal part of Canada's premier federal agency for health research, and supports excellent research on the genetic and biochemical basis of health and disease, including the interaction of genes with the physical and social environments. The Institute facilitates the translation of research findings into health policy and practice, and examines the ethical, legal and social implications of genetic discoveries.

The Canadian Genetic Diseases Network is a not-for-profit corporation and a federal Network of Centres of Excellence in human genetic disease research. CGDN's mission is to be the primary catalyst in advancing Canada's scientific and commercial competitiveness in genetic research and the application of genetic discoveries to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of human disease.

The Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics (MPIMG) in Berlin is a member of the Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Science, the leading German research organization. Max Planck Institutes carry out basic research, with an emphasis on natural sciences. The MPIMG focuses on vertebrate genomics, human hereditary disorders, and computational molecular biology. It has an active role in the German National Genome Research Network and other government funded genome research activities.

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