

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New professorship for McGill Faculty of Medicine

Epigenetics pioneer Moshe Szyf garners GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship in Pharmacology

MISSISSAUGA, ON (May 13, 2009) – The prognosis is most promising for epigenetics and the role it plays in the treatment of cancer and other diseases, with the appointment of Professor Moshe Szyf to the inaugural GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship in Pharmacology at McGill University, funded by GlaxoSmithKline Inc. (GSK) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

“Today’s announcement underscores the wonderful impetus created through partnerships among granting agencies, private enterprise and academia to advance research and lead the way in the development of new treatments and cures,” said Richard I. Levin, Vice Principal (Health Affairs) and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. “We are thrilled that Prof. Moshe Szyf, one of our top scientists, has been chosen to lead the GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship and to advance our knowledge in this critical area. We are, of course, very grateful for the vital support provided by GSK and CIHR.”

“GlaxoSmithKline sees it as its role to support research and innovation through research chairs and professorships such as this,” said Dr. Rav Kumar, Vice-President, Research and Development, GSK in Canada. “We are very proud to support Dr. Szyf through the Pathfinders Fund for Leaders in Canadian Health Science Research, and to promote health sciences research and foster innovation in Canadian medical schools. Dr. Szyf’s work gives hope to patients that we may soon better understand diseases such as cancer and develop better treatments.”

Epigenetics explores heritable changes in gene function that occur without a change in the DNA sequence and that contribute to the development of diseases. A world leader in epigenetics, Prof. Szyf has focused his research on understanding the basic principles of DNA methylation machinery and its involvement in cancer, and applying this research towards identifying novel anticancer targets. “Science cannot be managed or programmed, nor defined by committees; it comes out of unhindered thinking of curious and free minds. The GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship provides us with this freedom to think dangerously,” Szyf said.

“My main challenge is to utilize the opportunity provided by this generous gift to think the unthinkable and to continue bridging the social environment and our physical DNA – a bridge that is critical for health as well as well as for our social and physical being. To understand human health and disease, we must study humans in their true environmental context.” His laboratory focuses on how the social environment during early childhood affects the way genes are marked and the machinery that lays down

these marks, as well as on developing drugs that act on this machinery as anticancer agents.

“We are proud to be funding this research in partnership with GSK and McGill through our CIHR-Rx&D Partnership program,” said Dr. Alain Beaudet, President of CIHR. “Dr. Szyf has already established himself as a world leader in epigenetics, and his current exploration of the links between the epigenome and cancer treatment holds the tremendous promise of new and powerful tools to combat this disease. If his work is successful, millions of Canadians stand to benefit in terms of better health outcomes. This country would also have the opportunity to reap important economic benefits once any treatment therapies are perfected and commercialized.”

The GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship in Pharmacology provides support for the salary and benefits of the incumbent. This research revolves around a program devoted to pharmacology in support of a better understanding of critical diseases and new drug discovery. This award will promote excellence in Canadian health science research, to establish Canada as a world leader in research and development, and to fund research to meet the health-care needs of Canadians.

The GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship in Pharmacology has received funding in the amount of \$1.3 million, an investment supported by GlaxoSmithKline and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The Professorship is one of 20 national endowed chairs initiated by GSK’s Pathfinders Fund, and an invaluable addition to McGill’s Faculty of Medicine as it seeks to build new and innovative platforms for medical research, education and care.

The announcement of the GlaxoSmithKline-CIHR Professorship in Pharmacology will be held on May 13.

About GlaxoSmithKline Inc.

GlaxoSmithKline – one of the world’s leading research-based pharmaceutical, vaccine and health-care companies – is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. In Canada, GlaxoSmithKline is among the top 15 investors in research and development, contributing more than \$156 million in 2008 alone. GSK is designated a Caring Company by Imagine Canada, and is consistently recognized as one of the 50 best companies to work for in Canada. For company information please visit, www.gsk.ca.

About The Canadian Institutes of Health Research

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada’s agency for health research. CIHR’s mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health-care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to nearly 12,000 health researchers and trainees across Canada. For more information, please visit www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

About McGill University

McGill University, founded in Montreal, Que., in 1821, is Canada's leading postsecondary institution. It has two campuses, 11 faculties, 10 professional schools, 300 programs of study and more than 34,000 students. McGill attracts students from more than 160 countries around the world. Almost half of McGill students claim a first language other than English – including 6,000 francophones – with more than 6,400 international students making up almost 20 per cent of the student body. For information, please visit www.mcgill.ca

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