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For Immediate Release

CANADIAN RESEARCHERS CARRY ON BANTING'S LEGACY IN FINDING BETTER TREATMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

Research critical in light of global diabetes epidemic

TORONTO, ONTARIO (Nov. 10, 2010) – Scientists are carrying on the proud Canadian heritage of pioneering breakthroughs in diabetes research thanks to funding from the Canadian Diabetes Association. Following in the footsteps of Sir Frederick Banting, Dr. Bernard Zinman, Dr. Bruce Verchere and Dr. Baiju Shah are working towards improving health outcomes for people living with diabetes.

“Canadian Diabetes Association-supported researchers are working to enhance our understanding of diabetes and its prevention and management, and find better treatments and, ultimately, a cure,” said Michael Cloutier, president and CEO of the Canadian Diabetes Association. “With nine million Canadians living with diabetes or prediabetes – not to mention millions around the world – their role is critical in saving and improving lives.”

Toronto researcher Dr. Bernard Zinman, based at Mount Sinai Hospital and the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute, University of Toronto, played a pivotal role in changing the way the clinical world saw and treated diabetes. As a principal investigator and vice chair of the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT), Dr. Zinman led research that revealed that keeping blood glucose levels as close as possible to normal slows the onset and progression of eye, kidney and nerve damage caused by diabetes. As a consequence, the treatment of people with type 1 diabetes has changed so that intensive diabetes management with insulin pumps or multiple daily injections is now considered the standard of care.

Dr. Zinman is currently researching how to prevent the development of cardiovascular disease in type 2 diabetes and, in this context, is studying the effect of a new class of medication.

“I am currently investigating new therapies for type 2 diabetes which target the incretins system and may have beneficial effects on obesity and cardiovascular disease, both of which are very common in people with diabetes,” said Dr. Zinman.

At nearby Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Dr. Baiju Shah is focusing on the impact and treatment of diabetes among different ethnic groups – specifically the South Asian and Chinese populations.

“I am exploring how South Asian and Chinese Canadians use the healthcare system and how well they manage their disease compared to the general population of Canada,” said Dr. Shah, an endocrinologist and scientist at Sunnybrook.

Understanding how insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas work and why they stop working in diabetes and after transplantation is the goal of research being conducted by Dr. Bruce Verchere in Vancouver. Dr. Verchere is a professor in the UBC departments of pathology

MEDIA RELEASE

and laboratory medicine and surgery, head of the diabetes research program at the Child and Family Research Institute, and holds the Irving K. Barber chair in diabetes research.

“I was drawn to diabetes research because it has a remarkable Canadian history with the discovery of insulin and the story of Drs. Banting and Best. I know many individuals with diabetes and draw inspiration from their stories in our search for a cure,” said Dr. Verchere.

For the entire month of November, the Canadian Diabetes Association is asking individuals to visit diabetes.ca to see the stories of incredible supporters – who are living healthy with diabetes, advocating for the cause and breaking ground towards a cure. Join the Association in leading the fight against diabetes by supporting the cause or participating in local Diabetes Awareness Month events or fundraising activities in your community. Visit diabetes.ca or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464) for more information.

The 2010 Diabetes Awareness Month campaign is sponsored by sanofi-aventis.

About the Canadian Diabetes Association

Today, more than nine million Canadians live with diabetes or prediabetes. Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. Our community-based network of supporters help us provide education and services to people living with diabetes, advocate for our cause, break ground towards a cure and translate research into practical applications. For more information, please visit diabetes.ca or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464).

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For additional information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

Michele Penz
Calico Communications
Cell: (778) 888-2249
calicocomm@telus.net

Randi Garcha
Manager, National Media Relations & External Communications
Canadian Diabetes Association
Tel: (416) 408-7071
Cell: (647) 292-9641
randi.garcha@diabetes.ca