



Excellence

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INTRODUCING THE NCE'S NEWEST STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

As president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Dr. Beaudet's goals are to help Canada do a better job at translating research into effective diagnoses, treatment and practices, while at the same time, reducing skyrocketing health care costs.

Dr. Alain Beaudet is an expert in understanding the neurological machinations that underpin the central nervous system and pain receptors. Now, after a long and distinguished career working at science's most fundamental level, the President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) – and newest member of the Network of Centres of Excellence Steering Committee – is developing new partnerships with the provinces, granting councils, scientists, physicians and patients to ease the pains in Canada's health care system.



Dr. Alain Beaudet, President,
Canadian Institutes of Health
Research

One of the first steps, he says, is for governments, funding agencies and researchers to become more responsive to local needs. That means consulting with the provinces to identify their specific health needs and developing closer ties with physicians who work directly with patients to test new research.

"This will require even greater coordination and cooperation between the different (CIHR) institutes, and better structuring of our clinical research environment to ensure that people are well trained," says Dr. Beaudet.

In 2005, Dr. Beaudet set aside his career as a scientist and professor at the Montreal Neurological Institute to become President and CEO of Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec. In July 2008, he took on the top job at CIHR, replacing inaugural President Dr. Alan Bernstein, who led the organization's transformation from the Medical Research Council (MRC) to CIHR. Dr. Bernstein is now Executive Director of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, based in New York City.

"What Alan did marvelously well is understanding that the future of health research is not in disciplines – it's in challenges, ideas, problems and in bringing people together from different backgrounds and different disciplines.

"That's also what the NCE program is trying to achieve," he adds. "The NCE, in a sense, is doing what the CIHR's 13 institutes are doing, on more focused problems and with a clear objective of commercialization and knowledge translation."

Visit the NCE Web site at www.nce-rce.gc.ca for the full interview with Dr. Beaudet.

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GROWING START-UPS INTO VIABLE BUSINESSES A MAJOR FOCUS FOR CECRS IN VANCOUVER AND TORONTO

Canada has taken a major step to move promising research out of the lab and into the marketplace with the establishment of 11 new Centres of Excellence for Commercialization and Research (CECR).

In this issue, we look at how a CECR in Toronto is helping to grow start-up companies into global competitors. In Vancouver, a Centre is removing barriers that have resulted in too many homegrown biotech companies running out of cash. Another Vancouver-based CECR is working with industry to move prostate cancer drugs into clinical trials.

(Full articles are available at www.nce-rce.gc.ca.)

HELPING START-UP COMPANIES SURVIVE AND THRIVE

CENTRE FOR COMMERCIALIZATION OF RESEARCH (CCR) TORONTO, ON

The Centre for Commercialization of Research (CCR) is a “virtual incubation centre” that offers practical support to Canadian companies to reduce the risk of developing and financing new products and services.

CCR received \$14.95 million over five years from the federal government as a CECR and more than \$55 million in commitments from 14 partners, including the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Systems, IBM Canada and the Waterloo Accelerator Centre.

CCR is operated by the Ontario Centres of Excellence, an established organization with strong ties to industry and academia, minimal red tape and a solid track record in producing results.

“We want to help start-ups grow into global competitors that attract private capital,” says Mario Thomas, CCR’s Managing Director.

CCR is prepared to help qualified companies recruit skilled managers and a board of directors, and assist with financial and accounting services, market analysis, technology validation and business plan development.

Its initial focus is on economically crucial areas such as energy, the environment and natural resources, health and life sciences and digital media sectors.

REDUCING THE RISK FOR BIOTECH COMPANIES

CENTRE FOR DRUG RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (CDRD) VANCOUVER, BC

The Centre for Drug Research and Development (CDRD) is tackling two of the main hurdles that have prevented small- and mid-sized biotech companies from growing into large global players: a lack of early stage funding and spinning out technologies and products too early from a university.

CDRD has created a multi-disciplinary drug R&D platform comprising facilities, equipment, expertise, education and administration that is second-to-none in Canada. The goal is to help academics and companies develop several drugs from the discovery to the pre-clinical stage.



Photo courtesy of CDRD

“By further validating these ideas, there’s a better chance they will succeed when they do ultimately get spun out or licensed to an existing company,” says Natalie Dakers, President and CEO of the CDRD.

CDRD’s not-for-profit commercial arm, Drug Development, Inc., will then take on further development of selected drug candidates by providing additional capital and expertise. CDRD has received funding support from QLT Inc., Angiotech Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.

MOVING PROSTATE CANCER DRUGS INTO CLINICAL TRIALS

PROSTATE CENTRE - TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE FOR ACCELERATED DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT (PC-TRIADD) VANCOUVER, BC

The Prostate Centre’s Translational Research Initiative for Accelerated Discovery and Development (PC-TRIADD) has developed a new model for commercializing university health research. The centre acts as a bridge between academia and the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry to conduct pre-clinical and clinical proof-of-concept studies on projects originating in both the academic and industrial worlds. Its primary focus is on the mechanisms of late stage tumour progression and acquired treatment resistance.

PC-TRIADD has already identified five key genes that cause prostate cancer to progress and licensed eight drug products to three local biotech companies. Some of those drugs are currently being tested in clinical trials.

“What’s helpful to our industry partners is that everything is integrated within one centre,” says Dr. Martin Gleave, PC-TRIADD’s Executive Director. “Not only can we help move their compounds forward, right through to phase 1 and 2 clinical trials, but at the same time we get access to their early stage drugs which can be used to study other basic research questions.”



Dr. Martin Gleave,
Executive Director,
PC-TRIADD