



PRESS RELEASE
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New hope for patients with lactic acidosis
**A research team directed by the Montreal Heart Institute receives a grant of \$2.5M
from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

Montreal, February 5, 2010 – A team of eight Quebec-based researchers has just been awarded a major grant of \$2.5 million by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Under the direction of Dr. Christine Des Rosiers, a researcher at the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI) and professor at the Université de Montréal, the focus of this project is Leigh's syndrome, French-Canadian type, commonly called lactic acidosis. Often fatal before the age of 5, this hereditary disease is most prevalent in the Charlevoix and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean regions of Quebec. Dr. Des Rosiers's team is one of six CIHR Emerging Teams to receive financing aimed at translating genetic discoveries into concrete medical applications.

The team includes other researchers from the MHI, the Université de Montréal, the Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and McGill University. Among this group is Dr. Charles Morin, a pediatrician at the Hôpital de Chicoutimi who regularly treats children with lactic acidosis and whose team provided the first clinical description of the disease in 1993. The group of researchers also includes Dr. John D. Rioux, a researcher at the MHI whose team discovered the gene responsible for the disease in 2003, thus enabling prenatal screening.

“This grant represents a major victory for families affected by lactic acidosis and other diseases that aren't as well known as cancer or diabetes but have a real impact in Quebec,” says Pierre Lavoie, president of the Association de l'Acidose Lactique (AAL), which has acted as a key partner in securing this grant. “Since the discovery of the gene responsible for lactic acidosis, the financial support of the AAL has made it possible to create the inter-institutional and interdisciplinary team needed to push the boundaries of research on this disease. The support of the CIHR will now give us the resources we need to develop a treatment,” adds Dr. John D. Rioux.

Mr. Lavoie is also the father of two children who died from this disease. “From the outset, nothing was easy,” says Mr. Lavoie. “But our children have always motivated us to press on, to innovate and to surpass ourselves so that one day we could say, *‘mission accomplished.’*” Mr Lavoie, a world-renowned triathlete, has succeeded in promoting awareness of the disease throughout Quebec and in raising funds to help fight rare genetic diseases through four editions of the Défi Pierre Lavoie and one edition of the Grand Défi Pierre Lavoie. “The Défi Pierre Lavoie has paved the way for greater awareness of this cruel reality in Quebec. Although our children are no longer with us, we will never give up the good fight, and we will fulfil our promise of finding a cure for our children.” says Mr Lavoie.

This grant will serve to support basic and clinical research with three key objectives: to create the essential research tools, provide a better understanding of this disease and develop diagnostic tests and therapeutic approaches. “Now more than ever, our team is in good position to make significant advances that will help these young patients,” says Dr. Des Rosiers.

About the Montreal Heart Institute

Founded in 1954 by Dr. Paul David, the Montreal Heart Institute constantly aims for the highest standards of excellence in the cardiovascular field through its leadership in prevention, ultra-specialized care, professionals training, clinical and fundamental research, and assessment of new technologies. The Institute is part of a vast network of excellence in health formed by the Université de Montréal and its affiliated institutions. To learn more about the Institute, please visit our website at www.icm-mhi.org.

About the Université de Montréal

Rooted in Montreal and international in its vocation, the Université de Montréal is one of the largest French-speaking universities in the world. Founded in 1878, the Université de Montréal includes 13 faculties and two professional schools. With its affiliated schools, HEC Montréal and École Polytechnique, the Université de Montréal is the leading centre for higher learning and research in Québec and one of the most important in North America. The Université de Montréal brings together some 2,500 teachers and researchers and is home to over 60, 000 students. To learn more about the Université de Montréal, please go to www.umontreal.ca.

- 30 -

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