

**BRAIN CANADA AND THE W. GARFIELD WESTON FOUNDATION COLLABORATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO ACCELERATE PARADIGM-CHANGING RESEARCH ON THE BRAIN**

*First recipients of Multi-Investigator Research Initiative grants announced*

**Toronto ON April 29, 2013** – Brain Canada, in collaboration with The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, announced today the grant recipients of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation – Brain Canada Multi-Investigator Research Initiative (MIRI). The \$7.5 million grant total includes \$3 million from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation and a matching \$3 million from the Government of Canada through the Canada Brain Research Fund. Additional funds are being provided by The Krembil Foundation and other donors.

“Brain Canada has an outstanding track record of funding breakthroughs in neuroscience. We are delighted to be the first to support Brain Canada, and are confident the research of these five exceptional teams will benefit the millions of Canadian patients and caregivers affected by brain disorders. This program continues our long history of support for medical research, from funding the Banting and Best Institute in the 1960s to the new Dalglish Family Hearts & Minds Clinic,” said W. Galen Weston, Chairman and President, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation.

Five teams comprised of researchers from among Canada’s top medical and research institutes are being funded \$1.5 million over three years. These teams were selected following a two-phase international peer review from over 165 applications. Each team is pursuing novel, transformative research aimed at improving our understanding of human nervous system function and dysfunction, and its impact on health.

**COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO BRAIN RESEARCH**

“The human brain is an interconnected, dynamic and highly adaptable system, which is why our organization supports a ‘one system’ collaborative approach to brain research,” said Inez Jabalpurwala, President and CEO of Brain Canada. “Thanks to the catalytic leadership of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, Brain Canada was able to launch the first MIRI competition, shortly after the launch of the Canada Brain Research Fund. MIRI grants support excellent research, which may be higher-risk, but with the potential to be paradigm shifting, at any stage of the research process, from basic to clinical to health policy. By supporting our best ideas and researchers, we will ensure Canada’s place as a leader in the global quest to understand the brain and brain disease.”

The five initial MIRI grant projects include research into:

- Validating an eye test to help early detection of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and frontotemporal dementia; **team lead Dr. Sandra Black**, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre;
- Exploring brain cell polarity and how it helps to build and maintain the brain as an underlying cause of neurological disorders; **team lead Dr. Michel Cayouette**, Institut de Recherches Cliniques de Montréal;
- Investigating how environmental factors alter the function of genes to identify potential biomarkers for mental illness; **team lead Dr. Michael Meaney**, McGill University;

- Mobilizing stem cells in the brain to treat brain injury in children; **team lead Dr. Freda Miller**, Hospital for Sick Children; and,
- Reprogramming skin cells to restore visual function in diseases such as age-related macular degeneration; **team lead Dr. Valerie Wallace**, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute.

“The Harper Government is proud to partner with Brain Canada and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation to support innovative research that has the potential to bring new hope to patients and families dealing with brain illness,” said the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Federal Minister of Health. “I also want to congratulate the grant recipients and thank them for their deep commitment to advancing scientific discoveries in this complex field, which we all believe are possible.”

The MIRI grants were announced at an event today at the MaRS Centre in Toronto. Attendees included: Hon. Leona Aglukkaq, Federal Minister of Health; representatives from Brain Canada and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation; and, various grant recipients.

**ABOUT BRAIN CANADA**

Brain Canada is a national charitable organization with the mission of accelerating the pace of Canada’s world-class brain research in order to advance our understanding of the brain, and develop diagnostics, treatments and ultimately cures for brain disorders. The Government of Canada has committed to match up to \$100 million of private and non-governmental contributions to Brain Canada over six years, through the Canada Brain Research Fund.

For more information about Brain Canada: [www.braincanada.ca](http://www.braincanada.ca).

**ABOUT THE W. GARFIELD WESTON FOUNDATION**

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is a private Canadian family foundation, established in the 1950’s by Willard Garfield Weston and his wife Reta. In 1924 Garfield inherited his father’s company and during his life established baking and retail businesses throughout Canada and in many parts of the world. The founders believed that as the funds are generated through the hard work and success of his Canadian companies, grants should be given in Canada for the benefit of Canadians. For three generations, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has maintained a family tradition of supporting charitable organizations across Canada. Today the Foundation directs the majority of its funds to projects in the fields of neuroscience, land conservation, education, and scientific research in Canada’s North.

For more information please visit: [www.westonfoundation.org](http://www.westonfoundation.org)

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