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***Huntington Society of Canada and Brain Canada Announce Second Recipient of the  
HD Clinician-Scientist-to-Patient Virtual Networks Grant Competition***

(Kitchener, ON) May 16, 2017 – Bev Heim-Myers, Chief Executive Officer of the Huntington Society of Canada (HSC), and Inez Jabalpurwala, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Brain Canada Foundation, are pleased to announce the 2017 recipient of the *HD Clinician-Scientist-to-Patient Virtual Networks* grant competition. The competition, which was launched in 2016, aims to create networks of clinicians, researchers, and Huntington disease (HD) patients. These networks ensure ongoing multi-disciplinary research collaborations focused on expediting discoveries-to-treatments to slow or prevent HD and other neurodegenerative diseases.

This year’s recipient team is led by Dr. Blair Leavitt, from the University of British Columbia. His team includes Dr. Jodi McBride from Oregon Health and Science University, and Dr. Abedelnasser Abulrob and Dr. Danica Stanimirovic from the National Research Council of Canada. Together, they will work on non-invasive ways to enhance the delivery of antisense oligonucleotides (ASOs; specialized pieces of DNA currently being delivered directly into the fluid that surrounds the brain to treat Huntington disease). They will also develop new ways to measure huntingtin, the protein responsible for neuron loss in Huntington’s, in the brain to evaluate the response to therapies like ASOs. Their project is entitled “Development of novel oligonucleotide delivery modalities for Huntington disease” and it is being supported by a \$950,000 grant through this initiative.

“As we advance towards treatments addressing the root cause of Huntington disease”, says Heim-Myers, “this innovative research initiative and partnership with Brain Canada has the potential to transform HD research and provide the mechanisms to expedite discovery to treatments”.

Brain health is one of the most pressing health challenges facing Canadians. Surpassing cancer and cardiovascular disease in their magnitude and impact, disorders of the brain account for 38% of the global disease burden. Advances in research are leading to an improved understanding of the etiology of brain disorders, better diagnostics and screening, therapeutic interventions, and improved frontline care and social support services.

The Huntington Society of Canada is partnering with Brain Canada on a \$2 million-joint funding initiative to support multi-disciplinary and multi-investigator research that will expand our understanding of HD therapy in humans. Brain Canada funds are provided through the Canada Brain Research Fund, with the financial support of Health Canada.

The first recipient of the *HD Clinician-Scientist-to-Patient Virtual Networks* grant competition, awarded in October 2016, was a team led by Dr. Simonetta Sipione from the University of Alberta. Her team is examining the cause and treatment of Huntington disease from the perspective of gangliosides, important signaling molecules in the brain that are diminished in HD. The title of their project is “Gangliosides in Huntington’s disease: from bench to clinics and back.”

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The collaborations made possible by this initiative are engaging experts from various fields, including genetics, computer science and many others, in the application of emerging technologies. Furthermore, collaboration with other brain disease researchers, including but not limited to ALS, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease, will enrich the overall understanding of potential treatments for HD and other neurodegenerative disorders.

“Brain disorders often share common underlying mechanisms and, therefore, engaging researchers from the full community of brain researchers will accelerate our understanding of HD as well as other neurodegenerative diseases. The partnership with Huntington Society of Canada is also highlighting the critical role of patients and families in the research process, and ensuring bi-directional dialogue to improve outcomes for people living with this disease,” says Jabalpurwala.

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#### **About Huntington Disease**

Huntington disease (HD) is an inherited, debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease. Many more are touched by HD whether as a caregiver, a family member, or a friend. Huntington disease is devastating for both the body and the mind. The symptoms, which may include uncontrollable jerking movements and relentless cognitive and emotional impairment, usually present between the ages of 30 and 45, and gradually worsen over the 10-25 year course of the disease. Eventually they lead to total incapacitation and death.

#### **About the Huntington Society of Canada**

The Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease (HD). HSC is the only national health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with HD across Canada. HSC aspires to a world free from Huntington disease. For more information about Huntington disease and the Huntington Society of Canada visit [www.huntingtonsociety.ca](http://www.huntingtonsociety.ca).

#### **About Brain Canada**

Brain Canada is a national non-profit organization headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, that enables and supports excellent, innovative, paradigm-changing brain research in Canada. For almost twenty years, Brain Canada has made the case for the brain as a single, complex system with commonalities across the range of neurological disorders, mental illnesses and addictions, brain and spinal cord injuries. Looking at the brain as one system has underscored the need for increased collaboration across disciplines and institutions, and a smarter way to invest in brain research that is focused on outcomes that will benefit patients and families. Brain Canada's vision is to understand the brain, in health and illness, to improve lives and achieve societal impact.

The Canada Brain Research Fund is a partnership between the Government of Canada and Brain Canada, designed to encourage Canadians to increase their support of brain research, and maximize the impact and efficiency of those investments. Brain Canada and its partners have committed to raising \$120M, which is being matched by Health Canada on a 1:1 basis for a total of up to \$240M. For more **information:** [www.braincanada.ca](http://www.braincanada.ca).

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