

Best and brightest leukemia researchers receive \$1 million from Cole Foundation

Fellowships awarded to the Université de Montréal, McGill University, and the Institut Armand-Frappier

Montreal, June 2, 2008 – For the second year in a row, the Cole Foundation is awarding \$1 million in fellowships to the most promising researchers studying pediatric leukemia and related diseases. The fellowships will enable these young scientists from the Université de Montréal, McGill University, and the Institut Armand-Frappier to pursue their research.

“With two major faculties of medicine and some of the best biomedical research centres in the country, Montreal is home to an amazing concentration of research talent,” explains Barry Cole, President of the Cole Foundation. “We’re proud to support the next generation of leukemia researchers to help maintain Montreal’s tradition of medical excellence. By backing the most promising talents, we hope to encourage their development. These are the people who will gradually uncover the causes of leukemia, find new ways of treating it and eventually eradicate all forms of the disease.”

Leukemia research has advanced considerably in recent years. Thirty years ago, four out of five children suffering from acute forms of leukemia would succumb to the disease. Today, research has reversed that situation: four out of five children survive but there is greater concern for secondary illnesses that develop later in life.

“There has been a lot of progress in the field and that is really fantastic, but until we manage to cure every child who is struck by leukemia, we have to push our research further,” notes Dr. Richard I. Levin, Vice-Principal (Health Affairs) and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University. “The Cole Foundation provides truly outstanding support to our cause by funding the research that is taking place in Montreal today and encouraging the development of the researchers who will take this fight into the future.”

“Our universities contribute significantly to healthcare research,” said Dr. Pierre Boyle, Vice-Dean of Research and Graduate Studies of the Faculty of Medicine at the Université de Montréal. “They train most of the doctors and researchers in the country, and they are the most active in terms of research. The fellowship program established by the Cole Foundation helps us attract the best researchers to form the elite teams we need to achieve convincing results. All of these efforts come together to give patients the benefit of the best treatment and, above all, to give them hope.”

Finally, Dr. Yves St-Pierre, professor at the INRS-Institut Armand-Frappier congratulated the new Cole fellows: “They all have been selected for the exceptional quality of their work. These young researchers represent what science is at it’s best: dedication, passion and a constant thirst for new knowledge. We are very proud to support them in the pursuit of their work.”

The Cole Foundation research fellowship program offers \$1 million over two years to be divided among 21 clinical researchers, post-doctoral researchers and students in doctoral and master's programs. Of the 21 recipients, 15 are associated with various research laboratories at the Université de Montréal, including the Institute for Research in Immunology and Cancer (IRIC), the Sainte-Justine Research Centre, and the Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont. 5 fellowships will be distributed to students and researchers working at McGill University and its associated hospitals and research units, including the Royal Victoria Hospital and the Lady Davis Research Centre at the Jewish General Hospital. One fellowship is awarded to a student at the INRS-Institut Armand-Frappier.

The Cole Foundation was created in 1980 by Montreal businessman John N. (Jack) Cole to support Montreal hospitals and research in pediatric oncology and hematology. After his only child, Penny, died of leukemia, he established the Penny Cole Laboratory at the Montreal Children's Hospital. The purpose of the lab was to foster research into the causes and potential cures for leukemia and other related diseases affecting children. In 1997, the Cole Foundation also endowed the Jack Cole Chair of Pediatric Oncology and Hematology at McGill University.

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