CCNMatthews
Monday, November 24, 2003

Dr. Min Zhuo Named First EJLB-CIHR Michael Smith Chair in Neurosciences and Mental Health

OTTAWA, ONTARIO - The EJLB Foundation, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA), and the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) named Dr. Min Zhuo as the inaugural recipient of The EJLB-CIHR Michael Smith Chair in Neurosciences and Mental Health. Thanks in large part to this major award, Dr. Zhuo left Washington University to pursue his research at the University of Toronto where he will further his research on cellular and molecular mechanisms of pain. The official ceremony will be held as part of the Banquet of the Royal Society of Canada tonight at the National Gallery of Canada.

"Michael Smith was a pioneer in the field of science and a trusted advisor to the Foundation for many years," noted Dr. Michel Chretien, Chairman of The EJLB Foundation's Scientific Advisory Committee. "I am proud that this Chair bears his name and that it marks the first time a private Canadian foundation and CIHR have pooled their resources to strengthen the Canadian scientific research community, a precedent I hope will be followed by many others."

Dr. Zhuo's research is expanding our understanding of the neurobiology of pain and forming the basis for novel therapeutic approaches that will revolutionize the management of pain and diminish the societal, mental health and addiction problems of under-treated pain.

"The naming of Dr. Zhuo as the first ever EJLB-CIHR Michael Smith Chair in Neurosciences and Mental Health winner is a clear example of how increased investments in health research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are playing a key role in attracting top calibre health researchers to Canada," said CIHR President Dr. Alan Bernstein. "Dr. Zhuo's work will bring new insights into the mechanisms of **pain research** and ultimately benefit those who suffer."

The Chair is funded through the proceeds of a $1 million endowment grant from The EJLB Foundation, a $300,000 Establishment Grant from CIHR, and a yearly $50,000 Institute Support Grant from INMHA. Dr. Zhuo was awarded the five-year endowment after being selected through a peer reviewed international competition. To further enhance the award, the University of Toronto will also nominate Dr. Zhuo for a Canada Research Chair and apply on his behalf for infrastructure funds through the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

"Today's announcement is extremely encouraging because it shows how we are reversing the brain drain," said Dr. Remi Quirion, INMHA's Scientific Director. "The EJLB Foundation and its partners have created a unique model that allows the very best researchers and all Canadian universities to compete for a prestigious and important position. I hope other foundations will follow this example as we continue to bring the best researchers to Canada."

"The Royal Society of Canada is proud to be a partner in this important initiative," noted Dr. Howard Alper, President of the RSC. "The EJLB Foundation has entrusted the investment and management of its endowment grant to the Society with a representative of the RSC's Academy of Science to participate in the selection of the Chair holder."

The Chair honours the legacy of Nobel Laureate Dr. Michael Smith, who developed a critical technique that became central to the field of genetic engineering known as site directed mutagenesis, the deliberate and predictable altering of the coding sequence of genes. Until his death in October 2000, Dr. Michael Smith served as Director of the University of British Columbia Biotechnology Laboratory. A biography of Michael Smith is available on the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame website at: www.cdnmedhall.org/Inductees/smith_95.htm

The EJLB Foundation, a private Montreal-based foundation incorporated in 1983, has two main areas of interest, mental illness and the environment. In 1995, The EJLB Foundation established a Scholar Research Programme in order to provide outstanding young scientists, working in all areas of neuroscience related to schizophrenia and mental illness, with an opportunity to launch their research career. To date, the Foundation has awarded forty seven (47) grants totaling fourteen million dollars ($14,000,000) under this Programme. www.ejlb.qc.ca

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is the Government of Canada's premier agency for health research. Its objective is to excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health care system. www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

One of CIHR's 13 institutes, the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction supports research to enhance mental health, neurological health, vision, hearing, and cognitive functioning and to reduce the burden of related disorders through prevention strategies, screening, diagnosis, treatment, support systems, and palliation. Associated research will advance our understanding of human thought, emotion, behavior, sensation (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell), perception, learning and memory.

The Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Academy of the Sciences and Humanities, is the senior national body of distinguished Canadian scientists and scholars. Its primary objective is to promote learning and research in the natural and social sciences and in the humanities. The Society consists of approximately 1800 Fellows: men and women from across the country who are selected by their peers for outstanding contributions to the arts and sciences. The Society is a dynamic organization dedicated to the assessment (by Expert Panels) of significant issues of value to Canadians; recognition of outstanding achievements in research and innovation; promotion of international collaboration; and consideration of important topics by the organization of annual symposia. www.rsc.ca

For further information the following backgrounder is available at www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Backgrounder on Dr. Min Zhuo

BACKGROUNDER

Dr. Min Zhuo holds a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from the University of Iowa and is a Postdoctoral Fellow of both Stanford and Columbia universities. He is a member of the Society for Neuroscience, the International Association for the Study of Pain, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dr. Zhuo will pursue his research at the University of Toronto Centre for the Study of Pain (UTCSP). The Centre encompasses four faculties: Nursing, Dentistry, Medicine and Pharmacy. Prior to being attracted to the University of Toronto, Dr. Min Zhuo was a professor of Anesthesiology, Anatomy and Neurobiology, Psychiatry, and Chief of Basic Research at the Pain Center of Washington University, which has one of the top-ranked neuroscience programs in the United States.

Dr. Zhuo's research focuses on mechanisms of pain and analgesia. The implications of his work extend broadly in the field of neuroscience and mental health. Dr. Zhuo's work is expanding our understanding of the neurobiology of pain and forming the basis for novel therapeutic approaches that will revolutionize the management of pain and diminish the societal, mental health and addiction problems of under-treated pain.

His research success is exemplified by his publication of more than 70 scientific articles of which nearly 60 are original, peer-reviewed research papers in journals such as Nature, Science, PNAS, Nature Neuroscience and Neuron. Dr. Zhuo is Principal Investigator (PI) on three National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded projects and is co-PI on projects funded by NIH and by the McDonnell Center for Higher Brain Function. In addition, he is an inventor on three patents.

Note(s):

For further information please contact: The EJLB Foundation Robert Alain (514) 843-5112 or CIHR Janet Weichel Mackenzie (613) 941-4563 or Royal Society of Canada Geneviève Gouin (613) 991-5760 Ce document est également disponible en français.

Category: Economy
Uniform subject(s): Medicine
Subject(s) - CCNMatthews : Health
Company(ies) - CCNMatthews : AND THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA
Industrial classification(s): Medical & Biological Technology
Length: Long, 982 words

Doc. : news·20031124·CD·052