The CRCHUM receives $2.8 M for research into cancer prevention

Montreal February 13, 2012 -- A team led by Dr Jack Siemiatycki of the University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre (CRCHUM) with Dr Michael Pollak of McGill University has received the go ahead for a five-year project to develop and apply CANJEM, a job-exposure matrix, to discover occupational causes of lung, brain, ovarian and colorectal cancer.

With $2.8 M in funding from the Cancer Research Society and the Fonds de Recherche Québec – Santé, the team hopes to make important strides in cancer prevention by focusing on modifiable causes of cancer, particularly those encountered in the workplace (e.g., asbestos, radon gas, formaldehyde).

The centrepiece of this project is CANJEM, CANadian Job-Exposure Matrix, a dynamic, simple-to-use tool that will incorporate data accumulated over the past 30 years pertaining to exposure to 300 carcinogens in over 3,200 jobs as well as from hygiene databases from Quebec, the US and Europe. The CANJEM will include not only chemical exposures but also information on shift work, physical exertion and electromagnetic fields in different occupations. Moreover, it will be an updatable tool and applicable to countries other than Canada

The CANJEM will be an invaluable tool for occupational health practitioners seeking to identify potential exposures in different workplaces for surveillance purposes or for evaluating past exposures for compensation purposes. The results of epidemiological studies based on CANJEM will be made available to scientists, journalists, public health authorities, regulatory agencies and other parties interested in assessing and ultimately preventing occupational and environmental risks for cancer.

According to Dr Siemiatycki, today's announcement is a major step toward better cancer prevention: "Great investments have been made over the past 40 years in searching for improved methods of diagnosis and treatment. This massive effort has thankfully led to some improvements in prognosis of some types of cancer, but on balance the improvement in cancer survival has been slow and modest. The best way to reduce the burden of cancer is to prevent it. And preventing cancer through the identification of its modifiable causes and appropriate public health interventions is the most humane and possibly the most cost-effective stage in which to meet this challenge."

For Jacques Turgeon, Ph.D., Director of CRCHUM, this good news strongly demonstrates the importance and influence of research work performed by CRCHUM's scientific teams. "The fight against cancer is a challenge that can sometimes seem insurmountable. Thanks to the tenacity of researchers such as Dr. Siemiatycki, we are in a better position to prevent its occurrence and thereby allow millions of people throughout the world to foresee the future with confidence".

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About the CHUM: chumontreal.com

About the CRCHUM: www.crchum.qc.ca

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