



OICR invests in a new imaging probe to detect breast cancer earlier

Toronto – April 6, 2010. Dr. Tom Hudson, President and Scientific Director of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR) today announced an investment of \$415,000 towards the development of a radiolabelled insulin probe for the early detection of breast cancer.

The recipient of the award is Dr. John Valliant of McMaster University. Improper insulin regulation is common in a number of diseases, including breast cancer. Dr. Valliant has developed a form of insulin that is labelled with technetium, a widely-used radioisotope. It can be injected into the bloodstream and used to track changes in insulin metabolism, helping to find and monitor tumours that are currently difficult to detect.

“Supporting the best ideas in cancer research today will promote the health and economic prosperity of Ontarians now and in the future,” said John Milloy, Ontario’s Minister of Research and Innovation. “Thousands of Ontarians are diagnosed with breast cancer each year and this investment will help ensure this new imaging agent is developed right here in Ontario.”

“This new tool can provide a non-invasive alternative method to detect breast cancer, particularly in women with small tumours or dense breast tissue,” said Dr. Hudson. “This allows us to find and monitor the tumours that are currently the most difficult to see, and start treatment for patients earlier, when the likelihood of survival is much greater.”

OICR will actively participate in efforts to commercialize the project by providing additional expertise and resources and working collaboratively with McMaster University and Dr. Valliant.

OICR is a new centre of excellence, moving Ontario to the forefront of discovery and innovation in cancer research. OICR is making Ontario more effective in knowledge transfer and commercialization, to maximize health and economic benefits of research findings for the people of Ontario. For more information, please visit the website at www.oicr.on.ca/commercialization

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Backgrounder

Dr. John Valliant, McMaster University

Development of Radiolabelled Insulin Probe

There is a clinical need for better medical imaging agents and techniques to detect small breast tumours, particularly in women who have dense breasts. Dr. John Valliant at McMaster University is developing a medical imaging agent for monitoring changes in insulin in the body. Improper insulin regulation occurs in number of diseases including breast cancer. Dr. Valliant has developed a form of insulin that is labelled with technetium, the most widely used radioisotope in diagnostic medicine. Technetium-labelled insulin will be useful for non-invasive and early detection of breast cancer, and also for monitoring the impact of cancer therapy. The use of technetium will permit more widespread adoption of the insulin-based agent by allowing imaging with SPECT equipment, which is widely available in most hospitals. The funding from OICR will be used to create a single step instant kit so the insulin agent can be produced in a manner necessary to receive Health Canada approval for clinical trials and ultimately widespread distribution. The Centre for Probe Development and Commercialization (CPDC) at McMaster University (www.imagingprobes.ca) will be involved in developing the commercial opportunity for the new agent.