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## **The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada and Vertex Announce Collaboration to Fund Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease**

**-Unique collaboration between a biotech company, nonprofit organization and academic centres to focus on underlying biology of IBD-**

**-Collaboration complements Vertex's ongoing IBD research efforts at its Canadian research and development site-**

**Toronto, Ontario and Laval, Quebec, May 17, 2012** - [Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated](#) and the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC) today announced a new collaboration to fund novel research aimed at identifying the underlying disease mechanisms and drivers of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), specifically Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

The announcement coincides with World IBD Day - May 19 - a day when people with IBD and patient organizations around the world unite to raise awareness about the global impact of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis.

This agreement represents a unique model of collaboration between a biotech company and a national healthcare charity, where Vertex and CCFC will provide joint funding to leading scientists at three Canadian academic centres. The three-year collaboration includes two rounds of grant funding, with recipients chosen based on their approach to developing a new understanding of the underlying biology of IBD and on the potential for the research to lead to future medicines for IBD.

Vertex established a research site in Laval, Quebec in 2009, and since that time, more than 45 scientists have been focused on IBD research, among other discovery and development activities for Vertex. This team will lead the Vertex efforts in this collaboration.

"Vertex scientists are focused on understanding the root cause of IBD, and the research undertaken through this collaboration will complement our own ongoing research efforts in this disease being conducted at our Laval site," said Louise Proulx, Ph.D., Vice President and Site Head of Vertex Canada. "We recognize CCFC's leadership to advance research in IBD, a disease that hits Canadians particularly hard. This collaboration will provide both organizations with the opportunity to gain further insights into IBD by supporting innovative research at some of the country's leading academic institutions."

"With more than 200,000 Canadians living with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, the Canadian IBD community welcomes Vertex's commitment to exploring new potential causes," said Dr. Kevin Glasgow, Chief Executive Officer of CCFC. "Medical research is the best chance for finding a cure for IBD, and this new model of collaboration offers great hope for future treatments."

"Being able to work closely with other world-class scientists at Vertex and CCFC represents a promising new model for medical research," said Scott Gray-Owen, Ph.D., Professor, Molecular Genetics at the University of Toronto. "We're excited to have been chosen for this grant because it provides an opportunity to advance our understanding of a disease that affects so many Canadians."

Recipients of grants from Vertex and CCFC were selected after a rigorous peer-review process. Top investigators at leading academic institutes across Canada applied for funding. Following an in-depth assessment of the scientific merit and translational research potential by an expert and independent advisory board, Vertex and CCFC awarded grants to three academic institutions. The selected laboratories are led by Dr. François Boudreau, Université de Sherbrooke, Dr. Brian Coombes, McMaster University, and Dr. Scott Gray-Owen, University of Toronto. Their projects will investigate the role of bacteria in IBD and the body's response to an imbalance of these bacteria in order to identify potential targets for future IBD therapies.

### **About Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)**

IBD causes the intestines to become inflamed and ulcerated because of an abnormal response to the body's immune system. IBD describes a condition that can be either Crohn's disease (CD) or ulcerative colitis (UC). CD can affect any part of the

gastrointestinal tract, and patches of inflammation occur, leaving healthy tissue between the diseased areas. UC affects only the inner layer of the colon, or large bowel. It always starts in the rectum and may extend as continuous inflammation from there into the rest of the colon.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, there is no cure for IBD, and therapy is directed at achieving and maintaining freedom from symptoms. Most people require ongoing medication; when this fails, surgery is often required.<sup>2,3</sup> IBD is a lifelong disease, usually starting in early adulthood in otherwise healthy, active individuals, and it imposes a significant impact on quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

### **About the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC)**

CCFC is a volunteer-based registered charity dedicated to finding the cure for IBD. To achieve that mission, the Foundation is committed to raising funds for medical research and educating patients and their families, medical professionals and the general public about these conditions.

CCFC invests over \$5 million in new and ongoing research each year and is one of the world's leading sources of non-governmental funding of IBD research.

Canada has among the highest incidence and prevalence rates of IBD in the world, affecting over 200,000 Canadians.<sup>5</sup>

For more information about World IBD Day, please visit [www.worldibdday.org](http://www.worldibdday.org)

### **About Vertex**

Vertex creates new possibilities in medicine. Our team discovers, develops and commercializes innovative therapies so people with serious diseases can lead better lives. Vertex scientists and our collaborators are working on new medicines to cure or significantly advance the treatment of hepatitis C, cystic fibrosis, rheumatoid arthritis, epilepsy and other life-threatening diseases.

Vertex's operations in Canada share a similar commitment to science and the same vision of transformational medicine. In 2009, Vertex established one of its five global scientific research sites in Laval, Quebec, where Vertex's Canadian team is focused on research activities related to inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). The IBD research team is working to gain a deeper understanding of human IBD genetics and the human microbiome project as it applies to IBD.

Vertex currently employs approximately 60 people at the Laval site, including more than 45 scientists focused on drug discovery and development activities. In addition to its focus on IBD, Vertex's Laval site is also a center for exploratory drug discovery efforts and early development activities for Vertex. The company is also supporting the use of its first approved medicine in Canada through recently formed commercial and medical affairs teams.

Vertex's press releases are available at [www.vrtx.com](http://www.vrtx.com).

(VRTX-GEN)

### **References**

<sup>1</sup> Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. (2011) *Surviving and Thriving with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis : A Guide to Inflammatory Bowel Disease* [Brochure].

<sup>2</sup> Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. (2011). *The Cutting Edge : Surgery and Inflammatory Bowel Disease* [Brochure].

<sup>3</sup> Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. (2011). *Prescriptions for Health : Medication and Inflammatory Bowel Disease* [Brochure].

<sup>4</sup> Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. (2011) *Surviving and Thriving with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis : A Guide to Inflammatory Bowel Disease* [Brochure].

<sup>5</sup> Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. (2008). *The Burden of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in Canada*. Toronto, ON.

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