International Cancer Genome Consortium announces $20 million Canadian research project to decode the prostate cancer genome.

Toronto - February 15, 2011. The International Cancer Genome Consortium (ICGC) today announced the launch of a $20 million Canadian research project that will map the genetic structure of prostate cancer and provide new information that could greatly improve the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The new project, called The Canadian Prostate Cancer Genome Network (CPC GENE), is one of 36 other currently funded ICGC research projects in 13 jurisdictions around the world.

CPC GENE aims to crack the prostate cancer genetic code by identifying changes or mutations in the DNA sequences of prostate cancers. Information about mutations in these DNA sequences could be used to better detect tumours, determine tumour aggressiveness and identify the best treatment needed to personalize prostate cancer medicine for individual patients.

Up to $15 million in funding will be provided by Prostate Cancer Canada (PCC) and $5 million from the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR).

"Prostate Cancer Canada is excited to be leading this important international study which will lead to collaboration and knowledge sharing. From a patient perspective and the 1 in 6 Canadian men who will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime, this should result in improved diagnostics and better treatment strategies" said Steve Jones, President & CEO of Prostate Cancer Canada.

"I lost my father at age 63 to prostate cancer and too many of my friends struggle with this illness. Our government is making this investment to hasten the day when we can talk about prostate cancer in the past tense," said Glen Murray, Ontario Minister of Research and Innovation.

"We anticipate that within five years, gene-based diagnoses will help physicians in determining which patients require more intensive therapies and which patients would benefit from careful monitoring, a process called "watchful waiting". It is also expected that some prostate cancer mutations detected by CPC GENE will stimulate the development of new cancer drugs" said Dr. Tom Hudson, President and Scientific Director of OICR.

CPC GENE will be led by Dr. Robert Bristow, Senior Scientist at the Ontario Cancer Institute, the research arm of the University Health Network's Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and Genitourinary (GU) Radiation Oncologist at PMH. He said, "We are excited by the possibility to use precise genetic information from our patients to personalize their prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment. This personalized medicine approach will no doubt improve the quality of life for men worldwide diagnosed with the disease."

The highly collaborative project will bring together Canadian researchers working in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Kingston and Montreal. These researchers will also work with international teams based in the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

In Canada, over 25,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and more than 4,000 will die of it. Side effects from prostate cancer treatment are often serious and long-term. Prostate cancer is currently evaluated by the stage of cancer, PSA blood test, and the Gleason score which is based on how aggressive the cancer cells appear under the microscope. However, these prognostic factors cannot accurately predict the clinical course or treatment required for an individual with prostate cancer. Investigating the genetic causes of the disease could identify the best treatment for each patient based on the unique DNA sequence of their cancer.

As of January 2011, the ICGC has received commitments from funding organizations in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America for research institutes in 13 jurisdictions. So far, funding organizations have committed more than $500 million for 38 projects. Projects that are currently funded are examining tumours affecting the bladder, blood, bone, brain, breast, cervix, colon, head and neck, kidney, liver, lung, oral cavity, ovary, pancreas, prostate, rectum, skin, soft tissues, stomach and uterus. Over time, additional nations and organizations are anticipated to join the ICGC. For more information and updates about ICGC activities, please visit the website at: www.icgc.org.

OICR, a not-for-profit research institute funded by the Government of Ontario, cofounded the International Cancer Genome Consortium. In addition to prostate cancer, OICR is responsible for an ICGC project on pancreatic cancer. OICR hosts the ICGC Secretariat that coordinates ICGC networking activities and the ICGC Data Coordination Centre, which assures that ICGC datasets generated by ICGC members in 13 countries is made available to the worldwide research community, to accelerate research into the causes and control of cancer. These initiatives have received additional support for equipment and operations from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Government of Ontario.

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