Canadian Association of Gastroenterology Research Committee Report 2009

Canadian Association
of Gastroenterology

A primary goal of the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) and its Foundation, the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (CDHF), in collaboration with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the CAG-CDHF partners, is to promote excellence in research. This research will lead to new discoveries that will translate into improved health for Canadians. Moreover, this partnership will sustain and increase this capacity through high-quality education of talented trainees. The present report outlines another very successful year for this partnership program as well as some important new advances.

The CAG-CDHF are grateful for the work completed by the entire Research Committee (Table 1). On behalf of the CAG-CDHF, I would like to thank committee members Drs Bruce Vallance, Thomaz Michalak, Francois Boudreau and Elena Verdu, who completed their term this past February. The assistance of CAG National Office staff, namely, Mr Paul Sinclair, the CAG National Executive Director, Ms Sandra Daniels, Manager, and Ms Palma Colacino, Administrative Assistant, and from the CDHF National Office, Ms Catherine Mulvale, Executive Director, and Ms Michelle Lancaster, Administrative Assistant, have been instrumental in the success of this program.

A number of important initiatives have occurred this year:

1. The grants and fellowship competition were transitioned to the CIHR administration and review panel to enhance transparency and remove any perceived conflict of interest;
2. IBD Fellowships were enrolled in a separate CIHR pool to increase the potential number of fellowships awarded;

3. The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC) continued to be a key partner;
4. The first CAG-CDHF Research Grant was awarded to a community gastroenterologist;
5. The first research grant directed specifically for patient-oriented research from the CDHF was awarded; and
6. PhD studentships funded by the CDHF-CIHR partnership continue to be supported.

Details relating to eligibility and application processes for all of the following awards are available on the CAG website (www.cag-acg.org/research.aspx). The review and assessment of every application complies with CIHR standards and guidelines; any potential conflicts of interest are meticulously identified and avoided.

Operating grants and New Investigator Salary Award

Five operating grants and one New Investigator Salary Award (Table 2) were awarded this year.

CAG-CIHR-partnered Postdoctoral Operating Fellowship Program

The fellowship program is the cornerstone of CAG research activities, and its sustained success makes it a model for other societies. A large number of applications were received again this year, and with support from the CIHR, the CCFC and CAG's industrial partners (see acknowledgements), 10 fellowships were funded (Table 3).

TABLE 1
Members of the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology Research Committee (2009)

Position	Name	Institution	Term
VP, Research Affairs	Stephen Vanner	Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario)	2008 to 2011
Member	John Marshall	McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario)	2008 to 2011
Member	Paul Beck	University of Calgary (Calgary, Alberta)	2008 to 2011
Member	Alan Lomax	Queen's University	2008 to 2011
Member	Dana Philpott	University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario)	2008 to 2011
Member	Isabella Tai	University of British Columbia (Vancouver, British Columbia)	2008 to 2011
Member	Nicola Jones	University of Toronto	2009 to 2012
Member	Wallace MacNaughton	University of Calgary	2009 to 2012
Member (trainee)	Melanie Gareau	University of Toronto	2008

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TABLE 2
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG)-Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)-Partner-Funded Grants (2009)

Candidate	Award	Years	Institution
Julia Liu	CAG/CIHR/Olympus Operating Grant	2	University of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta)
Geoffrey Nguyen	CAG/CIHR/Shire Operating Grant	2	University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario)
Elyanne Ratcliffe	CAG/CIHR Operating Grant	1	McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario)
Marcus Stein	CAG/CIHR/AstraZeneca Operating Grant	2	University of Alberta
Elena Verdu	CAG/CIHR/AstraZeneca Operating Grant	2	McMaster University
Laura Sly	CAG/CIHR/CCFC New Investigator Salary Award	4	University of British Columbia (Vancouver, British Columbia)

CCFC Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada

TABLE 3
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG)-Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)-Partner-Funded Postdoctoral Fellowships (2009)

Candidate	Award	Institution	Years	Supervisor
Jennifer Bishop	CAG/CIHR/CCFC Fellowship Award	University of British Columbia (Vancouver, British Columbia)	2	Kenneth Harder
Matthew Croxen	CAG/CIHR/Ferring Fellowship Award	University of British Columbia	2	Brett Finlay
Poonam Dharmani	CAG/CIHR/Axcan Fellowship Award	University of Calgary (Calgary, Alberta)	1	Kris Chadee
Katharina Foster	CAG/CIHR Fellowship Award	University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario)	2	Ken Croitoru
Kaoru Geddes	CAG/CIHR Fellowship Award	University of Toronto	2	Dana Philpott
Brian Gulbransen	CAG/CIHR/CCFC Fellowship Award	University of Calgary (Calgary, Alberta)	2	Keith Sharkey
Mary Sherlock	CAG/CIHR/UCB Fellowship Award	University of Toronto	2	Anne Griffiths and Geoffrey Nguyen
David Smyth	CAG/CIHR/CCFC Fellowship Award	University of Calgary	2	McKay Derek
Charlie Wang	CAG/CIHR/Pentax Therapeutic Endoscopy Fellowship Award	University of Toronto	2	Jill Tinmouth
Connie Wong	CAG/CIHR/Janssen Fellowship Award	University of Calgary	2	Paul Kubes

CCFC Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada; UCB UCB Canada Inc

TABLE 4
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG)-Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (CDHF) and CDHF Patient-Oriented Research Grant (2009)

Award	Awardee	Institution	Title
CAG-CDHF Community Gastroenterology Research Grant	Theodore Shapero	The Scarborough Hospital (Toronto, Ontario)	Prevalence of colorectal neoplasia in a suburban Canadian community: Influence of ethnicity, obesity and the metabolic syndrome
CDHF Patient-Oriented Research Grant	Maida Sewitch	McGill University (Montreal, Quebec)	A survey of Canadian patients regarding quality indicators for endoscopy

CAG-CDHF Community Gastroenterology and CDHF Patient-Oriented Research Grants

This was the first year for these new awards, specifically targeted to help meet the needs of the CAG membership (Table 4). The Community Gastroenterology Grant was designed to support and encourage research activities of community gastroenterologists who do not have an academic appointment. The Patient-Oriented Grant was designed to promote and support patient-oriented research.

CDHF-CIHR PhD Studentship Program

This CDHF-CIHR partnership (SHOPP) funded three students (Table 5).

CAG Summer Studentships

It is critical that young investigators be supported at all levels of their training. Thus, in partnership with the CCFC and the CIHR, 20 students received awards (salary plus a small operating

budget: \$6,000/award) to work in laboratories of recent or established investigators whose interests cover many facets of gut function (Table 6).

CAG-CCFC Partnership

The CCFC continues to be a key partner in the CAG research program, with inflammatory bowel disease being a major focus of the research being conducted. The summaries (Tables 2, 3 and 5) show that the CCFC supported three Fellowships, the New Investigator Salary Award and 12 Summer Studentships. These CCFC partnerships totalled a commitment of \$446,000.

CAG Resident Research Program

One award was made available with generous partnership from Warner Chilcott to Dr Mamatha Bhat (McGill University, Montreal, Quebec) under the supervision of Dr Marc Deschenes.

TABLE 5
Canadian Digestive Health Foundation-Canadian Institutes of Health Research Studentship Program (2009)

Candidate	Supervisor	Institution	Title
Jaclyn Strauss	Emma Allen-Vercoe	University of Guelph (Guelph, Ontario)	Virulence determinants of <i>Fusobacterium nucleatum</i> and relevance to IBD
Connie Kim	Rupert Kaul	University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario)	The role of gut mucosal immunity in HIV immunopathogenesis and transmission
Daniel Mulder	Christopher Justinich	Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario)	Immune surveillance mechanisms in the pathogenesis and treatment of esophagitis

TABLE 6
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology-Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada-funded Summer Studentships (2009)

Candidate	Supervisor	Sponsor	Institution
Hui Li	Derek McKay	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Calgary (Calgary, Alberta)
Chandani Upadhyay	Patricia Brubaker	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Toronto (Toronto, Ontario)
Shivangi Trivedi	Patricia Brubaker	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Toronto
Joshua Bennitz	Aleixo Muise	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	The Hospital for Sick Children (Toronto, Ontario)
Kyle Burrows	Colby Zaph	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of British Columbia (Vancouver, British Columbia)
Evelyn Chea	Dana Philpott	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Toronto
Anton Fomenko	David Armstrong	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario)
Andrew Jack	Jennifer Jones	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)
Arthur Ling	Stephen Girardin	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Toronto
Mark Mimee	Samantha Gruenheid	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	McGill University (Montreal, Quebec)
Danya Traboulsi	Justin MacDonald and Paul Beck	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Calgary
Denis Yu	Jennifer Gommerman	Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada	University of Toronto
Rahul Srivastava	Sujata Persad	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	University of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta)
Tara Farquharson	Nicola Jones	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	The Hospital for Sick Children
Peter Horwich	Andrew Stadnyk	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia)
Jennifer Li	Young-In Kim	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	University of Toronto
Siavash Piran	Johane Allard	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	University of Toronto
Emily Stern	Alan Lomax	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario)
Sarah Ann Teatero	Samatha Gruenheid	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	McGill University
Corey Valinsky	Micheal Beyak	Canadian Association of Gastroenterology	Queen's University

Congratulations to all the successful awardees. We look forward to your contributions and your continued participation in Canadian gastroenterology research and CAG/CDHF activities. Again, many thanks to the CIHR, the CCFC and the CAG partners – the 20 summer studentships, one resident research award, 10 fellowships, one salary award and seven grants add to a research dollar commitment in 2009 of \$2,224,000.

CANADIAN DIGESTIVE DISEASES WEEK (CDDW) 2009 AND THE 5TH ANNUAL CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE LIVER (CASL) WINTER MEETING

In addition to reviewing research applications, the other main role of the research committee is to review abstracts submitted to CDDW, which showcases the best of Canadian gastroenterology research. A total of 283 abstracts were accepted to the core CDDW/CASL Winter Meeting scientific program; 48 as CAG or CASL oral presentations, and the remainder in one of two poster sessions.

The following are the 2009 recipients of CAG awards:

- Dr Derek McKay (University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta) – Research Excellence Award
- Dr John Brumell (The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario) – Young Investigator Award
- Dr Alan Barkun (McGill University) – Visiting Professor Award
- Dr David Armstrong (McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario) – Education Excellence Award
- Dr Nicola Jones (The Hospital for Sick Children) – Young Educator Award
- Dr Daniel Podolsky (University of Texas, Texas, USA) – The RD McKenna Memorial Lecturer Award

This year's student research prizes were awarded, based on the quality of submitted CDDW abstracts, as follows:

CAG sponsored:

A Vanderlee, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
 C Lussier, University of Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Quebec

CCFC sponsored:

B Kabakchiev, University of Toronto

M Darisgny, University of Sherbrooke

RESEARCH TOPICS IN GI DISEASE IX MEETING

Held in October 2009 at the Kingbridge Centre, King City, Ontario, 39 students and trainees, both basic science and clinical, were invited to give oral presentations, with six established or junior faculty serving as mentors. This, really, is a trainee meeting, with the students and fellows chairing the sessions, and dominating the discussion periods. Feedback from the trainees was, once again, overwhelmingly positive – clearly, this is a beneficial and much-enjoyed event. Financial support was provided by AstraZeneca Canada Inc, the CCFC, and the CIHR Institute of Diabetes, Nutrition and Metabolism. The scientific program was reviewed by Drs Ken Croitoru (University of Toronto), Nicola Jones (University of Toronto), Stephen Vanner (Queen's University) and George Tolomiczenko (CCFC), with the CAG

National Office coordinating the abstract submission, meeting management and the event.

It has once again been an excellent year for Canadian gastroenterology research and everyone involved deserves congratulations. Should CAG members have questions relating to the work of the Research Committee, or proposals on how to expand or promote our activities, please contact me or any member of the committee.

With thanks,

Stephen Vanner

Chair, CAG Research Committee

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