

Meeting Report: Research topics in gastrointestinal disease VIII



Canadian Association
of Gastroenterology

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The Canadian gastroenterology research community is a world leader in advancing the understanding of many areas of gastrointestinal (GI) physiology and pathophysiology relevant to GI disease. These highly successful research programs have created an excellent cohort of graduate and postgraduate research trainees involved in GI research at institutions across Canada. These trainees play an instrumental role in the discoveries and new knowledge that has emerged from their laboratories. Many of these trainees are funded by the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG), in collaboration with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), a number of industry partners and the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC).

In recognition of the value of the Canadian gastroenterology trainees' outstanding research contributions, and to promote and encourage the continued efforts of the graduate and postgraduate research trainees in basic and clinical sciences, the CAG, CCFC and CIHR, in conjunction with AstraZeneca Canada Inc, held the '8th Symposium on Research Topics in Gastrointestinal Diseases' on October 24 to 26, 2008 in Toronto, Ontario (Figure 1 [page 260]). The goal of this meeting was to provide research trainees with an opportunity to informally present their original research from diverse disciplines to their peers and to a selection of faculty from across Canada. In this forum, trainees actively participated in the discussions of papers in an open setting. This year's program consisted of a series of superb presentations describing cutting-edge research, with 42 podium scientific presentations of basic and clinical GI-related research covering mechanisms of gut and liver infections, enteric nerves, enteric flora and epithelial barrier functions, hormones that modulate gut responses, epithelial and transport mechanisms, pathogens that initiate inflammatory processes and cancer, and gastric ulceration and healing mechanisms. Dr George Tolomiczenko presented 'Lay Abstracts: Worth their weight in gold in the era of knowledge translation' and this year's keynote lecture was given by Dr William Paterson titled 'What am I going to do in terms of my future.'

As in previous years, a major success of the meeting was that it provided a venue in which trainees could meet their peers from across Canada and initiate collaborations, thus developing contacts for their future research career and the future of Canadian GI research. Participants rated the meeting as outstanding to excellent, and described the experience as insightful and very good for young researchers to exchange learning. Thus, as a result of this enormously successful symposium, the organizing committee, the CAG, CCFC, CIHR and AstraZeneca Canada Inc are committed to holding this meeting on a regular basis. Plans are already underway for a fall 2009 meeting (October 16 to 18, 2009, King City, Ontario), in which, once again, research abstract submissions relating to all facets of GI health and disease will be welcomed. Canadian investigators with basic and clinical gastroenterology research programs are strongly requested to lend support to this important endeavour by encouraging the participation of their trainees and graduate students.

The CAG and its partners are indebted to the commitment of Dr Gordon Greenberg to this trainee symposium. Dr Greenberg was one of the founding fathers of this novel and highly successful training opportunity, and his commitment and participation over the years have ensured its success. With this symposium now entrenched as an annual meeting for young investigators, Dr Greenberg is stepping down as a member of the organizing committee. The steering committee welcomes Dr Nicola Jones as its newest member.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The organizers particularly thank the CCFC, CIHR INMD and AstraZeneca Canada Inc for their generous support of this meeting, the eighth of its kind in a series that will continue to advance gastroenterology in Canada. In addition, we thank the invited faculty, Drs Michael Beyak, Nicola Jones, William Paterson and Elena Verdu for their commitment and valuable contributions to this meeting.

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