

Canadian Association of Gastroenterology Research Committee Report

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The goal of the Research Committee is to build, in collaboration with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG), Canadian capacity and expertise in the discipline of gastroenterology and nutrition and to promote excellence in research. As chair, I am pleased to update the CAG membership and *The Canadian Journal of Gastroenterology* readership on the activities of the Research Committee over the past months.

First, I gratefully acknowledge the work done by the entire Research Committee (Table 1). On behalf of the CAG, I would like to thank Drs Nathalie Rivard, Alison Fox-Robichaud and Andre Buret, who completed their term this past February. The assistance of the CAG National Office staff – Mr Paul Sinclair, the CAG National Executive Director; Ms Sandra Daniels, Manager; and Ms Karen Moricz, Administrative Assistant – is also appreciated.

It was another excellent year for investment in gastrointestinal (GI) research in Canada and I am pleased to report that every CAG member, from undergraduate students to professors and clinicians, now has an opportunity to apply for and receive research or training support.

Details relating to eligibility and application processes for all of the following awards are available on the CAG Web site <www.cag-acg.org>. The review and assessment of every application complies with CIHR standards and guidelines and any potential conflicts of interest are meticulously identified and avoided.

Operating grants

The New Investigator Grant, in partnership with Nycomed and the CIHR, was awarded to Ameer Manges (PhD, McGill University) for a project titled “*The role of altered intestinal microbiota in the etiology of Clostridium difficile-associated disease*” and the CAG Operating Grant, in partnership with Abbott and the CIHR, went to Nicola Jones (MD/PhD, University of Toronto) for the project “*Helicobacter pylori vacuolating cytotoxin disrupts autophagy*”.

New for 2007 were the availability of three Endoscopic Research Operating Grants offered in partnership with Olympus and the CIHR. These were awarded to Alan Barkun (MD, McGill University) for the project “*The cost-effectiveness*

Table 1
Members of the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology Research Committee

Member	Institution	Term
Chair – Kris Chadee (PhD)	University of Calgary	2005–2008
Jan Huizinga (PhD)	McMaster University	2005–2008
Karen Madsen (PhD)	University of Alberta	2005–2008
Donna-Marie McCafferty (PhD)	University of Calgary	2005–2008
Paul Moayyedi (MD, PhD)	McMaster University	2005–2008
Mark Silverberg (MD, PhD)	University of Toronto	2006–2009
John Brumell (PhD)	University of Toronto	2006–2009
Francois Boudreau (PhD)	University of Sherbrooke	2007–2010
Robert Hilsden (MD, PhD)	University of Calgary	2007–2010
Thomasz Michalak (MD)	Memorial University	2007–2010
Bruce Vallance (PhD)	University of British Columbia	2007–2010
Elena Verdu (Post-doctoral fellow)	McMaster University	–
Stephen Vanner (MD)*	Queen's University	–

*Representative of Canadian Digestive Health Foundation

of video capsule endoscopy in patients with gastrointestinal bleeding of obscure origin – A randomized clinical trial comparing video capsule endoscopy to push enteroscopy”, Catherine Dube (MD, University of Calgary) for “*Economic evaluation of capsule endoscopy in the evaluation of iron deficiency anemia*” and Julia Liu (MD, University of Alberta) for “*Understanding endoscopic treatment for gastroesophageal reflux disease*”.

Seven applications in the New Investigator competition, five applications in the Operating Grant and six applications in the Endoscopic Research Operating Grant competitions were reviewed.

Fellow-to-Faculty Transition Award

No applications for transition awards were received in this year's competition.

The CAG is proud to acknowledge its Benefactor Corporate Sponsors:

Abbott Laboratories Ltd	AstraZeneca Canada Inc	Axcan Pharma Inc	Janssen-Ortho Inc
Nycomed (formerly ALTANA Pharma)	Olympus Canada Inc	Pentax Canada Inc	Schering Canada Inc
Pfizer Canada Inc	Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals		

Table 2
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology-Canadian Institutes of Health Research-Partner Funded Postdoctoral Fellowships (2007)

Candidate	Industrial partner	Years	Institution	Supervisor
Lorna Friis	AstraZeneca	2 (+1)	University of Alberta	D Taylor/M Keelan
Bryan Jones	AstraZeneca	2 (+1)	University of Calgary	R DeVinney
Lisa Elisabeth Månsson	AstraZeneca	2 (+1)	University of British Columbia	B Vallance
Karen Smith	AstraZeneca	2 (+1)	McMaster University	A Macpherson
Thomas Walters	AstraZeneca	2 (+1)	University of Toronto	A Griffiths/M. Silverberg
Sébastien Bergeron	CCFC	2	University of Sherbrooke	N Rivard
Melanie Gareau	CCFC	2	University of Toronto	P Sherman
Markus Geuking	CCFC	2	McMaster University	A Macpherson
Simon Hirota	CCFC	2	University of Calgary	P Beck/J MacDonald
Woo Yong Lee	CCFC	2	University of Calgary	P Kubes
Justin Cheung	Ferring	1	University of Alberta	S van Zanten
Jennifer O'Hara	Janssen-Ortho	2	University of Calgary	A Buret
Rithwik Ramachandran	Janssen-Ortho	2	University of Calgary	M Hollenberg
Camila Dale	Schering	2	University of Calgary	N Vergnolle

CCFC Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of Canada

Table 3
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG)-Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC)-funded Summer Studentships (2007)

Candidate	Sponsor	Institution	Supervisor
Ausma Ahmed	CAG	University of Toronto	P Brubaker
Anderson Hsu	CAG	University of British Columbia	T Kieffer
Guan (Jane) Huang	CAG	University of Toronto	P Brubaker
Kelly McCowan	CAG	University of Calgary	D Butzner
Anton Namolovan	CAG	University of Toronto	J Brumell
Joanne Rybicka	CAG	University of Calgary	K Chadee
Aaron Yuen	CAG	University of Western Ontario	C Creuzenet
Alexander Chow	CCFC	University of Toronto	A Griffiths
Christine Chow	CCFC	University of Toronto	A Griffiths
Jacqueline Hayworth	CCFC	University of Western Ontario	C Creuzenet
Nikolaus Jewell	CCFC	McMaster University	K Croitoru
Garming Lai	CCFC	University of Toronto	M Silverberg
Pearl Leung	CCFC	University of Calgary	K Chadee
Rohan Parab	CCFC	University of Calgary	K Rioux
Mryanda Sopol	CCFC	University of Calgary	A Stadyk
Kevin St. Arnaud	CCFC	University of Alberta	K Madsen
Robert Vanner	CCFC	Queen's University	J MacLeod
Carolyn Wong	CCFC	University of Calgary	K Chadee

CAG-CIHR-Partnered Postdoctoral Operating Fellowship Program

The fellowship program is the cornerstone in the CAG research activities and its sustained success makes it a model for other societies. This year, 37 fellowship applications were received. With support from CIHR, the CCFC and CAG's industrial partners (see acknowledgements), 14 fellowships were funded (Table 2) – a 35% success rate. Twelve of 30 applications from PhD scientists (40%) and two of seven applications from MD scientists (29%) were funded.

CAG Summer Studentships

It is critical that young investigators be supported at all levels

of their training. Thus, in partnership with CCFC, 18 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 3). Twenty-three applications were reviewed, giving approximately a 78% success rate in this year's competition.

Resident Research Program

This initiative, launched in 2003/2004, provides gastroenterology residents with \$5,000 to fund research projects that can run throughout an academic year. With support this year from Axcan, Procter & Gamble and Novartis, seven candidates applied for and were granted the award (Table 4).

Table 4
Canadian Association of Gastroenterology-funded Residents Research Award (2007)

Candidate	Sponsor	Institution	Supervisor
Michael Bernstein	Axcan	University of Toronto	J Irvine
Dana Moffat	Axcan	University of Manitoba	C Bernstein
Charlie Shihn Wang	Axcan	University of Toronto	E Yoshida/J Tinmouth
Alexander Ford	Novartis	McMaster University	P Moayyedi
Adriana Lazarescu	Novartis	Queen's University	W Paterson
Jonathan Wyse	Novartis	McGill University	A Barkun
Samuel Asfaha	Procter & Gamble	University of Calgary	N Vergnolle

Congratulations

Congratulations to all the successful awardees. We look forward to your contributions and your continued participation in Canadian GI research and CAG activities. And again, many thanks to CIHR and the CAG partners – the 18 summer studentships, seven resident research awards, 14 fellowships, and five grants add up to a research dollar commitment in 2007 of \$2,543,000. Simply outstanding!

Canadian Digestive Diseases Week 2007 and Third Annual Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver Winter Meeting

In addition to reviewing research applications, the other main role of the research committee is to review abstracts submitted to Canadian Digestive Diseases Week (CDDW), which showcases the best of Canadian GI research. A total of 279 abstracts were accepted to the core CDDW/Canadian Association for the Study of the Liver (CASL) Winter Meeting scientific program; 42 as CAG or CASL oral presentations and the remainder in one of two poster sessions.

The following are the 2007 recipients of CAG awards:

- Dr Andre Buret (University of Calgary) – Research Excellence Award;
- Dr Bruce Vallance (University of British Columbia) – Young Investigator Award;
- Dr John Wallace (University of Calgary) – Visiting Professor;
- Dr Alan Thomson (University of Alberta) – Education Excellence Award;
- Dr Jamie Gregor (University of Western Ontario) – Young Educator Award; and
- Professor John Dent (University of Adelaide) – The RD McKenna Memorial Lecturer.

This year's student research prizes were awarded, based on the quality of submitted CDDW abstracts, to: Mr A Flynn, University of Calgary, Mr M Lejeune, University of Calgary (CAG sponsored), Ms N Godwin, University of

Ottawa and Mr T Murdoch, University of Alberta (CCFC sponsored).

The Implementation Committee has already convened and plans are underway for CDDW 2008.

Research Topics VI Meeting

Held in October 2006 at Kingbridge Centre, King City, Ontario, 37 students and trainees, both basic science and clinical, were invited to give oral presentations and six established or junior faculty served as mentors (see *Can J Gastroenterol* 2007;21:125-126). 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 and the scientific program was reviewed by Drs G Greenberg (University of Toronto), K Croitoru (McMaster University) and K Chadee, with the CAG National Office coordinating the abstract submission, meeting management and event.

Research Topics VII is set for October 12 to 14, 2007 and abstracts are now being accepted online at <www.cag-acg.org>. Any area of GI research is eligible (independent of the broad topics identified on the abstract form) and abstracts are selected for presentation based on review of scientific merit.

It has once again been an excellent year for Canadian GI 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.

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