



## **Dr. Robert Korneluk Honoured as a 2011 Champion of Genetics**

July 25, 2011, Victoria BC - The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation (CGCF), a national, charitable foundation committed to enabling Canadians to lead the world in the discovery and advancement of cures for inherited diseases, has honoured Dr. Robert Korneluk by naming him a 2011 Champion of Genetics.

The Champion of Genetics award recognizes the scientific excellence of Canada's most respected and successful senior genetic scientists. Canadian scientists are world leaders in human genetic research and gene discovery. They have been credited with discovering genes related to hundreds of inherited, gene related diseases such as cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, muscular dystrophy, Huntington's, Alzheimer's, breast cancer, colon cancer and cardiovascular disease.

This year, the (CGCF) Champions of Genetics nominating committee is honouring Dr. Robert Korneluk, along with four other scientists, for the role they played in establishing the dynamic Canadian Genetic Disease Network. The Network is one of Canada's successful and highly productive Networks of Centres of Excellence that has transformed the culture of genetic science from one of isolation to one of cooperation. It has an impressive array of scientific accomplishments including the discovery of more than 50 medically significant genes and development of state-of-the-art research facilities and biotechnology companies. The Network has also led to the formation of a charitable legacy, the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation, which continues the role of supporting Canadian scientists and their contributions to human genetics research.

Dr. Korneluk is one of the early champions of genetics who paved the way for genetic research in Canada and played a key role in the development of the Network. He is also being honoured for his work in the understanding and modulation of cell death, and its potential therapeutic applications in diseases including myotonic dystrophy, diabetes, neurodegeneration and cancer. He had identified a family of proteins that inhibits apoptosis, and is investigating their role in normal and disease states.

To be honoured a Champion of Genetics, scientists must also have demonstrated a history of mentorship. "Dr. Korneluk is a creative thinker and motivated mentor who takes time to listen to his students", says Dr. Anny Fortin, CGCF board member. As part of the honour of being named a Champion of Genetics, Dr. Korneluk was given the opportunity to nominate an individual he has personally mentored to apply for a \$90,000 Champions of Genetics: Building the Next Generation Research Grant. The grant will provide much needed funding for the chosen young scientists to advance their own exciting genetic research and discoveries and to mentor yet the next generation of scientists; thus perpetuating Canada's level of excellence in genetic research.

The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation recently honoured Dr. Korneluk and four other Champions of Genetics at the Canadian Human Genetics Conference in Banff, Alberta. Sharing this honour with Dr. Korneluk were:

**Dr. Michael Hayden**, Killam Professor of Medical Genetics, Canada Research Chair in Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine, and Director of the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics at the University of British Columbia.

**Dr. Roderick McInnes**, Director of the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital, Canada Research Chair in Neurogenetics, and Professor of Genetics and of Biochemistry at McGill University.

**Dr. Brenda Gallie**, Professor in the Departments of Medical Biophysics, Molecular and Medical Genetics, and Ophthalmology at the University of Toronto and the Hospital for Sick Children and Senior Scientist in the Division of Applied Molecular Oncology at the Ontario Cancer Institute at Princess Margaret Hospital.

**Dr. Philippe Gros**, Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Complex Traits Program at McGill University.

**Dr. Robert Korneluk** is a Director of the Solange Gauthier Karsh Laboratory and Director of the Apoptosis Research Centre at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and a Professor in both the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ottawa.

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## **Background:**

### About the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation:

The Canadian Gene Cure Foundation (CGCF) is a registered Canadian charitable organization, formed in 1999 to raise much-needed funds for medical genetics research in Canada.

The Foundation's primary goal is to raise funds to enable Canadian scientists to discover cures and treatments for inherited diseases. In addition to the annual research grants awarded, the Foundation recognizes the importance of mentoring Canada's future scientists and hosts the annual Gene Researcher for a Week program aimed at providing unique educational opportunities for high school students across the country. The Foundation also supports networking opportunities in which scientists can exchange ideas and work cooperatively, linking advances in different disease areas. Specifically, the CGCF supports the annual Canadian Human Genetics Conference in partnership with the CIHR Institute of Genetics.

Canadian scientists are world-leaders in gene discovery and genetic research and have discovered genes relating to hundreds of disorders, including cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, muscular dystrophy, dyslexia, Huntington disease, Alzheimer's disease, breast cancer, colon cancer, cardiovascular disease and epilepsy. Through active fundraising, the Canadian Gene Cure Foundation can continue to support Canadian Scientists and their contributions to human genetics research.

[www.genecure.ca](http://www.genecure.ca)

### Dr. Robert Korneluk Biographical Sketch

Robert G. Korneluk obtained his Ph.D. in developmental biology from the University of Toronto in 1982. He trained from 1982 to 1985 as an MRC post-doctoral fellow in molecular genetics at the Hospital for Sick Children, Research Institute in Toronto. He is currently a Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Ottawa and is cross-appointed to the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology. He is a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Senior Scientist, Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) International Research Scholar and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (FRSC).

Dr. Korneluk, along with Dr. Alex MacKenzie, are co-founders of the biotech company AEgera Therapeutics Inc. Significant intellectual property of the Company is based upon the discovery by Drs. Korneluk and MacKenzie of a family of genes encoding inhibitor of apoptosis proteins (IAPs). AEgera has a current market capitalization of \$45 million and is a drug discovery company whose mission is to identify compounds that will modulate apoptosis and have utility in neurodegeneration and cancer.