

# I am making a difference...

to better understand the causes of diseases



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## A SCIENTIFIC PROJECT COLLECTS HEALTH DATA ON 1 IN 200 QUEBECERS

### Citizens of six cities in Quebec will be called in the coming weeks to participate

Montreal, January 14, 2013 - This is the largest recruitment in the general population for a scientific project on health that Quebec has ever known. Cartagene, the massive project which is currently building a bank of biological samples and detailed information on the health of Quebecers, is currently seeking 17,000 new candidates - men and women aged between 40 and 69 - in 6 regions of Québec: Gatineau, Montreal, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke and Saguenay. Participants will be asked to provide information about their health and their medical history and that of their family, as well as about their lifestyle. They will also be invited to provide a blood sample. All of this data will then be cataloged and stored at the Genome Quebec Chicoutimi Biobank. It will be used by researchers to support the discovery, amongst other things, of better diagnostics, treatments and prevention methods for chronic diseases known to be widespread in Quebec such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

### UP TO 300,000 QUEBECERS MAY BE CONTACTED

A first phase of recruitment, 3 years ago, collected data on 20,000 people. The 17,000 additional participants are needed to ensure a better representation of the population of the province. In total, comprehensive health data and biological material from at least 37,000 people - nearly 1 in 200 Quebecers - will be "banked" by Cartagene.

To reach its recruitment objective, Cartagene estimates that up to 300 000 Quebecers will need to be contacted in total (or 1 in 27 Quebecers), since the average response rate is about 1 in 8.

### HEALTH OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

"The people who will be contacted in the coming weeks will have the opportunity to do something for the health of their children and grandchildren," believes Dr. Philip Awadalla, Scientific Director of Cartagene, and researcher at the CHU Sainte-Justine Research Centre and Université de Montréal. People are free to participate or not, but Dr. Awadalla hopes they will "massively answer" yes "to the call, for the benefit of future generations."

Dr. Awadalla also states that participants can be confident about the security of the information and biological samples they provide. Governed by very strict laws and procedures, Cartagene ensures that the data and

samples will be carefully coded, so they can never be traced back to the participant. Furthermore, data and samples will be accessible only by health researchers approved by an ethics committee.

### **SOME STRIKING FINDINGS ALREADY**

Already, the data collected so far by Cartagene has revealed striking findings. Although 80% of participants in Phase 1 knew they had at least one chronic disease, the analysis of blood and physical measurements revealed that a preoccupying proportion are unaware that they are affected by potentially health threatening conditions. For instance, *1 in 4 and up to one out of 2 people could suffer from hypertension and high cholesterol respectively without knowing it.*

This proportion can even be higher than 90% for people with mild to moderate chronic renal failure, according to a study conducted by Dr. François Madore, Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Montreal, and Director of the Hôpital Sacré-Coeur de Montréal Research center. Knowing that even mild renal failure may aggravate cardiovascular disease and hypertension, and that without treatment, the failure may degenerate to an advanced stage, requiring dialysis or transplantation, Dr Madore thinks that "sooner or later, measures will have to be implemented to better diagnose this condition and to raise awareness about renal diseases in the general population".

Some researchers in Quebec and elsewhere are already using data and samples collected during the first phase of the project. For instance, a large national study led by researchers at McGill University will use Cartagene to learn more about the effectiveness of certain drugs and the true extent of their adverse effects on patients. "A biobank of this size has long been the dream of Quebec researchers in the field of health," states Dr. Sasha Bernatsky, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University, and principal investigator for this study. "This is an unparalleled resource that will certainly help us make giant leaps".

For more information on Cartagene visit [www.cartagene.qc.ca](http://www.cartagene.qc.ca).

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**Source:** Project Cartagene, CHU Sainte-Justine Research Centre

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