



CARTaGENE Project: New scientific director and 5,500 participants

Montreal, April 1, 2010 – Philip Awadalla is the new scientific director of the CARTaGENE Project, an infrastructure devoted to genetics research. The objective of CARTaGENE is to improve the health of Quebecers through the development of better diagnosis, treatment and disease prevention programs.

Dr. Awadalla is a professor of pediatrics at the Université de Montréal and a researcher at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center. He has developed new approaches to population genomics that have garnered international recognition. His work has helped determine genomic and environmental control points of medical and population study groups.

His contributions to large-scale projects, such as *The 1000 Genomes Project* and next-generation sequencing, will provide a precious expertise to the development of CARTaGENE's next phase. Professor Awadalla will remain co-director of the Centre for Child Health Genomics at the Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center.

2010 recruitment

"CARTaGENE activities are speeding up with 10 recruitment sites throughout Quebec and more than 25 percent of participants already registered. We can now establish clinical and genetic databases that researchers can utilize," says Professor Awadalla.

"Of the 20,000 Quebecers to be recruited for this first phase of the project, more than 5,500 participants, between ages 40 and 69, have signed up to be a part of this vast investigation on determinants of health: lifestyle, genetics, environment and nutrition. Our advances have been achieved thanks to the hard work and devotion of professors Bartha Knoppers and Claude Laberge, who along with participants have contributed to the progress of genomics in Quebec since 2000. Thanks to the support of the population and the tireless work of our partners, we plan on completing our recruitment in 2010."

The CaG-RAMQ Service (an office established by the *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec* in support of the CARTaGENE project) randomly selects potential participants from four metropolitan recruitment regions in Quebec. Selected candidates will receive an invitation to participate, which they can accept or refuse.

Next Phase

"The next phase of CARTaGENE promises to be enthralling as we will develop the scientific axis of the project by accelerating the analysis of clinical and genomic data collected in the initial phase while expanding data and sample collection throughout Quebec," says Professor Awadalla. "Many research groups have already expressed interest in using the CARTaGENE data and samples to test various scientific hypotheses."

Participant consultation and confidentiality

CARTaGENE cares about the well-being of its participants and has created a survey to collect their comments. To date, more than 2,300 respondents have expressed their interest and satisfaction. “We are proud of the protocol we created to accommodate our participants and to keep their data confidential,” says Dr. Claude Laberge, scientific advisor to CARTaGENE.

Importance of keeping appointments

“The success of this research project relies on the answers of the participants. We invite people who receive an invitation from the CaG-RAMQ Service to actively participate in this internationally recognized and important research project and to honor their appointments in order to maximize the precious nursing resources made available to CARTaGENE,” stresses Dr. Laberge.

Team work, national and international scope

The Université de Montréal is host of the CARTaGENE Project, which is actively supported by several public institutions and organizations. The conservation of samples is guaranteed by the Genome Quebec Biobank and by the *Centre hospitalier affilié universitaire régional de Chicoutimi* (GQ-CAURC Biobank). The *Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec* (RAMQ) is involved in the selection and recruitment of participants. The BALSAC Project of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC) will keep all genealogical information and guarantee its confidentiality.

CARTaGENE is also a founding member of the Public Population Project in Genomics (P3G) that facilitates the collaboration and harmonization of more than 25 similar projects throughout the world. CARTaGENE is partner with the Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project, a broad pan-Canadian initiative to create a research platform including 300,000 participants. Genome Canada and Genome Quebec are the principal funding organizations of CARTaGENE.

On the Web:

- CARTaGENE: www.cartagene.qc.ca
- Université de Montréal Faculty of Medicine: www.med.umontreal.ca
- Sainte-Justine University Hospital Research Center: www.recherche-sainte-justine.qc.ca/en

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