

For Immediate Release

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## Reproductive health and pediatric gastroenterology scientists appointed as Canada Research Chairs

**Vancouver** – Two scientists with the BC Research Institute for Children's & Women's Health were appointed Canada Research Chairs by the federal government this week. Dr. Geoff Hammond was named Canada Research Chair in Reproductive Health, and Dr. Bruce Vallance appointed Canada Research Chair in Pediatric Gastroenterology.

**Dr. Geoff Hammond**, appointed as Canada Research Chair in Reproductive Health, is an expert in steroid hormones, which control almost every aspect of human reproduction. Sex steroids control sexual development even before birth, and throughout the lifespan influence emotions and behaviours as well as susceptibility to various diseases. Their access to tissues is controlled by steroid-binding plasma proteins that Dr. Hammond has characterized extensively at the molecular level. His recent work involves examining how the protein activities can be modulated in novel strategies for the treatment of diseases such as inflammation, ovarian dysfunction and cancers of reproductive tissues, and the control of reproduction (contraception) and reproductive mood disorders.

Canada Research Chair in Pediatric Gastroenterology **Dr. Bruce Vallance** is an expert in inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs). IBDs such as Crohn's disease can affect both adults and children, causing intestinal tissue to become inflamed, resulting in chronic abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue and diarrhea. It is believed such diseases are caused by inappropriate immune responses to bacteria, even those that normally inhabit the gastrointestinal tract with no harmful effect. Dr. Vallance's recent research includes studying how epithelial cells lining intestines respond to bacterial pathogens such as E. coli, and how dendritic cells, the body's sentinel immune cells, may be co-opted by both invasive and non-invasive bacteria to cause intestinal inflammation.

Canada Research Chairs are federally funded research positions designed to build Canada's research capacity. \$900 million will be invested to establish 2,000 Chairs at universities across the country by 2005. Chair appointments provide research and salary support. Dr. Hammond's & Dr. Vallance's appointments are through the University of British Columbia.

The BC Research Institute for Children's & Women's Health is dedicated to world-class research spanning the entire range of children's and women's health concerns. It operates in partnership with the University of British Columbia and the Children's & Women's Health Centre of BC, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

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