



News Release

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CF researchers *Gear Up* for 10-day bike ride from Vancouver to Banff to raise money for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Researchers cycling on behalf of children with CF

(Vancouver, BC – Tuesday, June 16, 2009) – Two scientists and one laboratory technician at the Child & Family Research Institute (CFRI) are taking part in GearUp4CF, a grueling 1200-kilometer bike ride over the Selkirk, Purcell and Rocky Mountains to raise money for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. The Foundation supports research and therapy to improve the lives of people with cystic fibrosis (CF).

Dr. James Zlosnik and Christoph Blohmke are representing the BC Children's Hospital CF Clinic and are riding on behalf of two children with CF. Dr. Zlosnik is a University of British Columbia (UBC) postdoctoral fellow at CFRI and Blohmke is a UBC PhD candidate at CFRI. Joining them is Trevor Hird, research technician, who is also riding on behalf of a child with CF.

Dr. Zlosnik calls GearUp4CF "the longest and most challenging charity bike ride." The nine-day ride starts in Delta on Saturday, June 20 and ends in Banff on Monday, June 29.

Since its inception three years ago, GearUp4CF has raised half a million dollars for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. The Foundation is a major supporter of CF research at CFRI.

CF is the most common, fatal inherited disease affecting young Canadians. A multi-organ disease, CF causes a build up of thick mucus in the lungs and pancreas, increases vulnerability to lung infections, and makes it difficult to breathe and to digest and absorb nutrients.

Research has made a huge difference in the lives of people with CF. In 1960, a child with CF rarely lived four years. Today, half of all Canadians with CF are expected to live 37 years or longer. One in 25 Canadians carry the CF gene and, every year, one in 3,600 babies born in Canada have CF.

Dr. Zlosnik is riding for Alex Stedman, 13, who was diagnosed with CF when he was just three months old.

"Research is a good thing because they might find a cure," says Alex. If there was a cure today, he says, he would be able to go on more sleepovers and would be able to hang out with his friends after school instead of having to go home for physiotherapy. Alex has to do 40 minutes of breathing exercises three times a day to reduce the build up of mucus in his lungs.

Both Dr. Zlosnik and Blohmke are researching how the lungs of people with CF respond to infection. Dr. Zlosnik is studying *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, a bacterial infection. He aims to understand why these infections cause mild symptoms in some CF patients and serious lung damage in others. Blohmke is examining how the airways of people with CF respond to infections from certain bacteria such as *P. aeruginosa*.

"The cyclists have made an extraordinary commitment to improving treatment and quality of life for children with CF, both through their work and by taking on the tremendous physical and fundraising challenge of GearUp4CF," says Dr. Mark Chilvers, Director, BC Children's Hospital CF Clinic.

Dr. Zlosnik and Blohmke are aiming to raise \$15,000 together for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and Hird is aiming to raise \$5,000. Donations can be made online at www.gearup4cf.org.

GearUp4CF was initiated in 2006 by Dr. David Speert, head of the Centre for Understanding and Preventing Infection in Children at CFRI and of the Division of Infectious and Immunological Diseases in UBC's Department of Pediatrics. In addition, Dr. Speert holds the Sauder Family Professorship in Pediatric Infectious Diseases at UBC. He participated in the 2006-2008 rides.

CFRI conducts discovery, clinical and applied research to benefit the health of children and families. It is the largest institute of its kind in Western Canada. CFRI works in close partnership with the University of British Columbia, BC Children's Hospital and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre, agencies of the Provincial Health Services Authority, and BC Children's Hospital Foundation. CFRI has additional important relationships with BC's five regional health authorities and with BC academic institutions Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

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The following interviews are available:

- Dr. James Zlosnik, Postdoctoral Fellow, CFRI
- Christoph Blohmke, PhD Candidate, CFRI
- Alex Stedman and his parents, Clare and Ted
- Trevor Hird, Research Technician, CFRI
- Dr. Mark Chilvers, Director, CF Clinic, BC Children's Hospital
- Dr. David Speert, Head, Centre for Understanding and Preventing Infection in Children, CFRI

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