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UBC professor and scientist, named “Researcher of the Year”

Dr. Michael Hayden, a professor of medical genetics at the University of British Columbia and director of the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics at the Child & Family Research Institute, has been named Canada’s 2008 “Health Researcher of the Year” in the field of biomedical and clinical research – the highest scientific honour from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

The award recognizes innovation, creativity and dedication to health research and honours Hayden’s discoveries into the way gene mutations can cause diseases such as diabetes and Huntington disease. He discovered the gene involved in the development of type 2 diabetes. He has also identified genes responsible for eight other disorders, including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and pain.

Hayden will receive his medal at a ceremony at the National Gallery in Ottawa in the evening on Nov. 19.

“I’m moved that my peers have given me this incredible honour,” said Hayden, who is also a Canada Research Chair in Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine. “I feel like a curator – I’ve been given something to hold, but I really just reflect the environment in which I live and work. Canada’s research community is much more powerful than we look, and that’s because of the collaboration that prevails in the institutions across the country.”

The award includes a research grant of \$500,000, paid over five years. Hayden plans to use the funds, in combination with matching gifts, for trainee awards in Global Health, Mental Health, Rare Diseases and Biotechnology and Entrepreneurship. Hayden has named the initiative Ripples of Hope, a term borrowed from a 1966 speech by Robert F. Kennedy at the University of Cape Town. Dr. Hayden, a native of South Africa, attended the speech as a 15-year-old.

Hayden is also leading an international fund-raising effort to build a community centre for children affected by HIV and AIDS in Cape Town that will promote responsible sexual behaviors among at-risk youth.

Hayden graduated at the top of his medical school class at the University of Cape Town. He completed a post-doctoral fellowship in clinical



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genetics and was an instructor at Harvard before joining the UBC Faculty of Medicine.

Hayden is a University Killam Professor. In addition to leading the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics, which he co-founded, he is the founder of three biotechnology companies: NeuroVir Therapeutics Inc., Xenon Pharmaceuticals Inc., and Aspreva Pharmaceuticals Corp.

The Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics (CMMT) is a synergistic group of scientists and researchers who share a strong sense of commitment to solve the many genetic questions surrounding human illness and well being. Affiliated with the University of British Columbia and the Child & Family Research Institute, CMMT conducts discovery research and translates that research into effective clinical and therapeutic strategies to promote health. For more information, visit: <http://www.cmmt.ubc.ca>.

The Faculty of Medicine at UBC provides innovative programs in the health and life sciences, teaching students at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels, and generates more than \$200 million in research funding each year.

The Child & Family Research Institute (CFRI) conducts discovery research, clinical investigation, and applied health research to benefit the health of children and families. It is the largest research institute of its kind in Western Canada. CFRI works in close partnership with BC Children's Hospital and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre, and BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, agencies of the Provincial Health Services Authority; BC Children's Hospital Foundation; the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. For more information, visit www.cfri.ca.