



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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## **Michael Hayden bestowed premier award for leadership in medicine**

Dr. Michael Hayden has received the Canada Gairdner Wightman Award, the premier honour for leadership in medical science in Canada.

Hayden, a professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia and director and senior scientist at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics at the Child & Family Research Institute, was selected for his leadership in medical genetics, entrepreneurship and humanitarianism.

“I am thrilled to receive this award.” said Hayden during the award ceremony this morning in Toronto. “As a physician scientist, to whom chance has given unusual opportunities, I am deeply aware of the degree to which my own success today is built upon the work, cooperation and struggles of others.”

With more than 600 publications, Hayden is the most cited author on Huntington disease in the world. Best known for developing a predictive genetic test for Huntington disease – the first ever predictive test for any genetic disorder – he has also identified genes associated with rare disorders such as Tangier disease, juvenile hemochromatosis and congenital insensitivity to pain. These discoveries have since informed research in other common diseases such as type 1 diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and chronic pain.

The Wightman Award follows a series of other major honours Hayden has received so far in his career, including appointments to the Order of Canada and Order of British Columbia, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research’s Health Researcher of the Year award, LifeSciences BC’s Genome BC Award for Scientific Excellence, and the Prix Gailen Canada (Research).

“We are extremely proud of Dr. Hayden and his enormous achievements and contributions to bettering the lives of people around the world through medical research,” says UBC President Stephen Toope. “His tenacity, resourcefulness and generosity of spirit are well known to those who have the good fortune of working with him, and will now be further celebrated through the Wightman Award.”



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“Dr. Hayden’s receipt of the prestigious Gairdner Wightman Award is wonderful recognition of his immense contributions to medical science in Canada and, indeed, throughout the world,” says Dr. Jan Friedman, Acting Executive Director, Child & Family Research Institute.

Created in 1959, the Gairdner Awards are Canada’s only globally known and respected international biomedical prizes. Nineteen of the last 26 Nobel Prizes in medicine or physiology in the past 10 years have gone to past Gairdner recipients. Prior to Hayden, the only British Columbian to receive a Gairdner Award was the late UBC Chemistry Prof. Michael Smith, who won the 1986 Gairdner Foundation International Award and went on to win the 1993 Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

Established in 1976 in honour of K.J.R. Wightman, a Toronto physician and the second president of the Gairdner Foundation, the Wightman Award is given to a Canadian who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in medicine and medical science. Hayden is the 15<sup>th</sup> recipient of the prestigious award and the first British Columbian to be bestowed this honour.

“I am hard pressed to imagine anyone else more deserving of this honour than Dr. Hayden,” says Prof. Max Cynader, director of the Brain Research Centre at UBC and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute and a frequent collaborator of Hayden’s. “His work with rare genetic diseases not only addresses the needs of underserved individuals but has wide-reaching implications for other conditions that affect millions of people world-wide.”

Hayden has co-founded three biotechnology companies to develop treatments based on his genetics research: NeuroVir, Xenon Genetics, Inc., and Aspreva Pharmaceuticals, Inc., which tests existing medications as potential treatments for people suffering from rare and overlooked diseases.

He is also founder of three national research networks, the Canadian Collaborative Network for Huntington’s Disease, the Canadian Genetics Disease Network and the Canadian Pharmacogenomics Network for Drug Safety, which identifies genetic factors of patients with severe drug reactions and develops prevention strategies.

“Dr. Hayden has shown, through a consistent and impressive track record of entrepreneurial and collaborative efforts, his enviable ability to motivate and mobilize exceptional individuals around a common goal,” says Alan Winter, president of Genome British Columbia. “The positive impact he has had on the biotechnology industry and the knowledge-based economy in B.C. and Canada is tremendous.”



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Hayden relocated to Canada in 1983, during a time of turmoil in his native South Africa. Calling Canada “a place of comfort and refuge, and a place to build my dreams,” he maintains strong ties to his homeland by spearheading the establishment of a youth-friendly recreation, counseling, and learning centre in Masiphumelele, a township near Cape Town that promotes responsible sexual behaviors among at-risk youth and empowers HIV/AIDS-affected youth.

**The Centre for Molecular Medicine & Therapeutics** 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 [www.cmmt.ubc.ca](http://www.cmmt.ubc.ca).

**The Child & Family Research Institute** 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 UBC; BC Children’s Hospital and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children, BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre, agencies of PHSA; and BC Children’s Hospital Foundation. CFRI has additional important relationships with British Columbia’s (B.C.’s) five regional health authorities and with B.C. academic institutions Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology. For more information, visit [www.cfri.ca](http://www.cfri.ca).

**The University of British Columbia** is one of Canada’s largest public research and teaching institutions, and one of only two Canadian institutions consistently ranked among the world’s 40 best universities. Surrounded by the beauty of the Canadian West, it is a place that inspires bold, new ways of thinking that have helped make it a national leader in areas as diverse as community service learning, sustainability and research commercialization. UBC offers more than 50,000 students a range of innovative programs and attracts \$550 million per year in research funding from government, non-profit organizations and industry through 7,000 grants. For more information, visit [www.ubc.ca](http://www.ubc.ca).