

For Immediate Release

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Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada

About the Foundation

- The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC) is a voluntary, not-for-profit, medical research foundation dedicated to finding the cure for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, commonly referred to as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).
- To achieve its mission, the foundation is committed to raising funds for medical research.
- M&M Meat Shops has contributed more than \$16.5 million to support research to help find a cure.
- Education is also a part of its mandate. The foundation provides information on IBD to patients, their families, health professionals and the general public through education brochures, its national member publication *The Journal*, local education events and the CCFC web site at www.ccfc.ca.
- CCFC was started in 1974 by a group of concerned parents who saw the need to raise funds for research into IBD and to educate patients and their families about these diseases.
- CCFC has more than 65,000 supporters and includes members in some 80 local volunteer groups across Canada.
- The key to CCFC's success is the interest and work of thousands of volunteers across the country. This network of highly organized volunteers participates in numerous fundraising initiatives throughout the year, including national programs such as M&M Meat Shops Charity BBQ Day and the Heel 'n' Wheel-a-Thon.

About Inflammatory Bowel Disease

- Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, describes two similar yet distinct conditions called Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- There is no known cause or cure for IBD.

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- More than 200,000 Canadian men, women and children suffer from IBD.
- People are most frequently diagnosed between the ages of 15-25, or 45-55.
- These diseases affect the digestive system and cause the intestinal tissue to become inflamed, form sores and bleed easily. Symptoms include abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue and diarrhea.
- **Crohn's Disease** can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract, from the mouth to the anus. Patches of inflammation occur, with healthy tissue between the diseased areas. The inflammation can extend through several layers of affected bowel tissue. Crohn's disease cannot be cured by drugs or surgery, although either or both can help relieve symptoms.
- **Ulcerative colitis** affects only the inner layer of the colon, or large bowel. It always starts in the rectum and may extend as a continuous inflammation from there into the rest of the colon. The disease can be completely eliminated by surgically removing the colon, however, waste material must then be stored and expelled through an external appliance.
- IBD is unpredictable. Most people experience periods of remission but the control and treatment of flare-ups can often require long-term medication, hospitalization or surgery.
- Although IBD is found throughout the world, it seems to be more common in North America and northern Europe. Canada has among the highest incidence and prevalence rates of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis in the world.

About CCFC Research Programs

- Medical research is simply the best hope for finding a cure for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- To date, CCFC has invested \$56 million in a diverse portfolio of research projects making the foundation a world leader in non-governmental funding of IBD research.
- In 2007-2008 CCFC invested \$7.3 million in new and ongoing research, the largest yearly sum to date.
- In 2003 CCFC founded the IBD Research Institute (IBDRI). This "virtual" Institute has the vital role of advising the Foundation on national and international IBD research projects and researchers. Together, CCFC and IBDRI coordinate expanded and innovative research initiatives which allow for international input and

talent sharing. The IBDR is currently funding more than 75 research grants, projects and scientist awards including:

- Producing a Burden of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in Canada report that presents a comprehensive picture of treatment, drug and caregiver costs to highlight the real “burden” of IBD on patients, their families and Canadian society.
- Conducting the first Canadian study on the Genetic, Environmental and Microbial (GEM) interactions that cause IBD. The GEM Project is the largest single research project ever funded by CCFC and will involve the recruitment of 5,000 Canadians with a high risk of developing IBD. Researchers will follow these individuals over several years in an effort to provide new insight into the cause of Crohn’s disease.
- Participating in jointly funded collaborations with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) involving researchers and research centres working to find the cure for Crohn’s disease and UC. These collaborations reinforce the team spirit embodied in Canada’s IBD research community and facilitate world-wide recognition.
- Thanks to the significant research investment made by CCFC, much more is now known about the fundamental biology of the intestine. While much more is known about the mechanisms underlying IBD, the picture is much more complex and further work is needed to develop an integrated understanding of the complete picture.

For more information on the CCFC, visit www.ccfc.ca.

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