

Princess Margaret Hospital Launches New Research Institute

Breast Cancer is focus as top Canadian scientist commits to working towards a cure

(Toronto June 2, 2004) — Canada's leading cancer hospital is launching a new research institute devoted to breast cancer, and it will be led by one of the country's most respected and productive scientists.

Dr. Tak Mak, who has received numerous international accolades for his scientific discoveries, will serve as Director of the Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Princess Margaret Hospital. The Institute aims to become a world-leading program in breast cancer research by leveraging basic, translational and clinical research into dramatic breast cancer breakthroughs.

"I am honored to lead this important new research institute and focus my research on the specific disease of breast cancer," said Dr. Mak, who is most famous for his 1984 landmark scientific paper on the cloning of the T cell receptor genes, a key component of the human immune system. He is a Senior Scientist with the hospital's research arm, the Ontario Cancer Institute, as well as a University Professor with the University of Toronto, an Officer of the Order of Canada, and one of few Canadians elected a Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences (USA) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of London (UK). His international recognition includes the King Faisal Prize for Medicine, the Gairdner Foundation International Award, the Sloan Prize of the GM Cancer Foundation, and most recently Germany's top scientific award, the Paul Ehrlich Prize.

"This year, an estimated 21,400 Canadians will be devastated by the news they have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Another 5,300 will lose their battle with this disease," said Dr. Mak. "This new Institute offers me a leadership role in reducing that risk and working towards a cure."

The launch of the new Institute, with Dr. Mak at its helm, is also garnering support from cancer leaders around the world. "I am delighted to learn that Dr. Tak Mak will be the leader of a new Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Princess Margaret Hospital," said Dr. John Mendelsohn, President of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. "(Dr. Mak) is a pioneer in basic research with a commitment to translating science into new therapies for patients. The citizens of Toronto and Canada will benefit greatly from this expansion of opportunities for him to guide the future of breast cancer research at your fine institution."

"Dr. Mak has an impressive track record as an innovator who tackles important problems – and his success rate is phenomenal," said Dr. Christopher Paige, Vice-President, Research at University Health Network. "With the team of impressive young scientists now joining the new Institute, we are confident that Dr. Mak will make significant progress towards finding new and effective treatments for this serious disease."

The new Institute is being launched with a goal of raising a total of \$125 million. Already, \$60 million is committed to the Institute, with part of the money coming from funds raised by thousands of walkers in the annual Weekend to End Breast Cancer event in Toronto. This year's event, scheduled for September 10-12, has already filled its registration for the 60-kilometre course. The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation is pledging to raise an additional \$65 million from private donors, corporations and other sources to fund the Institute.

Princess Margaret Hospital and its research arm, Ontario Cancer Institute, have achieved an international reputation as global leaders in the fight against cancer. Princess Margaret Hospital is a member of the University Health Network, which also includes Toronto General Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital. All three are teaching hospitals affiliated with the University of Toronto.

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