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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Vancouver researchers part of new “Pediatric Cancer Dream Team”**

(Vancouver – April 7, 2013) – Vancouver researchers are playing a central role in a new international “Pediatric Cancer Dream Team.”

This dynamic consortium is being announced today by Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C) and the St. Baldrick’s Foundation at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting 2013 in Washington D.C.

The “Dream Team” is receiving \$14.5-million in funding over four years from the SU2C-St. Baldrick’s Pediatric Dream Team Translational Cancer Research Grant.

The Vancouver team is led by Dr. Poul Sorensen, Senior Scientist at the BC Cancer Agency Research Centre, Scientist at the Child & Family Research Institute (CFRI) at BC Children’s Hospital, the Johal Chair in Childhood Cancer Research and Professor of Pathology at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

“The team’s objective is to investigate genomic data to discover which proteins are present on the surface of tumour cells but not on normal cells,” says Dr. Sorensen. “Then antibodies could be developed to target the tumour proteins while sparing normal cells.”

The role of the Vancouver team is two-fold. Firstly, the team has discovered a set of proteins that appear to be expressed on the cell surfaces of a type of high-risk childhood tumours called sarcomas. The team is working on developing therapeutic antibodies that target these proteins only on cancer cells and not on normal cells.

“We are very excited about the potential of this approach as a new therapy for childhood sarcomas such as osteosarcoma,” says Dr. Sorensen.

In addition, the Vancouver group is evaluating cell surface proteins received from team collaborators at Baylor College of Medicine, SickKids, Seattle Children’s Research Institute, and the University of Wisconsin. Vancouver researchers at the BC Cancer Agency are performing additional genetic sequencing of selected tumour types to discover new surface markers of childhood cancers.

“In this way, the Vancouver team will function as the central validation centre for incoming data from other centres involved in the grant,” says Dr. Sorensen. “In effect, to decide which of the potential targets to move forward with for therapeutic targeting development. Our team

will play a central role in plotting the ultimate course for clinical development of targets emerging from genomic data in these high-risk tumours.”

The research project is anticipated to start July 1, 2013 with clinical trials scheduled to open during the first year.

The Vancouver team also includes:

- Dr. Mads Daugaard, young investigator, research associate, BC Cancer Agency Research Centre, Department of Molecular Oncology.
- Dr. Marco Marra, director and scientist, BC Cancer Agency Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre, professor, UBC Department of Medicine Genetics, Canada Research Chair in Genome Science, and adjunct professor, Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Simon Fraser University (SFU).
- Dr. Rob Holt, head of sequencing, BC Cancer Agency Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre, associate professor, UBC Department of Medical Genetics, and associate professor, SFU Department of Molecular Biology & Biochemistry.
- Dr. Kirk Schultz, clinician scientist and head, Childhood Cancer & Blood Research at CFRI, pediatric oncologist at BC Children’s Hospital, and professor, UBC Department of Pediatrics.

The **BC Cancer Agency**, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. [www.bccancer.ca](http://www.bccancer.ca).

The **Child & Family Research Institute** conducts discovery, translational and clinical research to benefit the health of children and their families. CFRI is supported by BC Children's Hospital Foundation and works in close partnership with the University of British Columbia, BC Children’s Hospital, and BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre (agencies of the Provincial Health Services Authority). For more information, visit [www.cfri.ca](http://www.cfri.ca).

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