



## **The Terry Fox Research Institute, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and BC Cancer Agency launch innovative pilot project to accelerate precision medicine in Canada**

**Friday, February 3, 2017**

**Toronto, ON** – In a national first, today the Terry Fox Research Institute and two leading cancer centres in Canada -- the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto and the BC Cancer Agency in Vancouver -- launched an innovative pilot project to accelerate precision medicine for their cancer patients.

The initiative comes at a time when other developed countries are investing heavily in strategies to improve survival from cancer through precision medicine and increased collaboration. The pilot will provide much-needed evidence on how best to roll out a broader vision for data sharing and collaborative translational and clinical research to enable precision medicine for cancer patients.

The pilot is the first phase for developing and implementing a national program that will link high-performing comprehensive cancer research centres, hospitals and universities and their clinical and laboratory programs across Canada through the Terry Fox Designated Canadian Comprehensive Cancer Centres Network.

“With the support of The Terry Fox Foundation, TFRI is pleased to have provided catalytic funding to bring this novel and innovative research initiative forward. A project of this scope with two leading cancer care and research institutions working together in this way has never been done before,” remarks Dr. Victor Ling, president and scientific director of the Terry Fox Research Institute. “Our ultimate goal through this collaboration is to create a national network of designated Terry Fox comprehensive cancer centres that will be able to deliver excellence in personalized and precision medicine from coast to coast to coast.”

“As a world-leading comprehensive cancer centre, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre has made strategic investments to enable personalized cancer therapy through efforts in immune therapy, genetic sequencing and molecular imaging, thanks to the ongoing support of The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation. We are excited to participate in this new strategic partnership with the Terry Fox Research Institute and the BC Cancer Agency to enable collaborative efforts in these areas and to accelerate the

implementation of effective, targeted therapies for patients,” said Dr. Bradley Wouters, executive vice-president, science and research, University Health Network.

“This project will leverage BC’s pioneering contributions in massively parallel sequencing and cutting-edge research in cancer immunology and molecular imaging. Along with our funding partner, the BC Cancer Foundation, we are committed to excellence in cancer care and research and we are pleased to be a founding partner in this initiative. We will share our expertise and learn from each other to make a substantive difference for cancer patients in British Columbia and across Canada” said Dr. François Bénard, vice-president research at the BC Cancer Agency.

“As a long-time supporter and Terry Fox Run organizer who is inspired by Terry’s selfless example, courage and unwavering determination, I am delighted to witness these world-leading organizations working together, bringing hope and innovative care to help more patients survive their cancers,” said Pam Damoff, Member of Parliament for Oakville North-Burlington. “Terry Fox reminded us that anything is possible if we try. This partnership is an example of that.”

Through the pilot project, these organizations will provide complementary analyses of specimens (e.g. tumour biopsies and blood samples), identify and determine ways to harmonize their research processes, set up an IT infrastructure for data sharing, and develop resources required to conduct multi-centre precision medicine clinical trials. The initial focus will be on colorectal, ovarian, and prostate cancers, with the goal of improving the health outcomes of patients through treatment by precision medicine.

Each organization is contributing \$4 million over the next two years for a \$12-million total investment that will see multidisciplinary teams focus on four specific research thrusts that are institutional priorities: genomics, immunotherapy, molecular imaging and data sharing.

Networking and shared efforts of comprehensive cancer centres already operate in many other countries, including the US and Europe. A multimillion-dollar continuing annual investment from many funding sources is required for the pan-Canadian network to become fully operational.

Several national and international cancer experts have voiced their support for the TFRI-led initiative, saying that Canada already has many elements that would contribute to the network’s success and its aim to transform cancer care so current and future generations will benefit from precision medicine.

### **About The Terry Fox Research Institute (TFRI)**

Launched in October 2007, The Terry Fox Research Institute is the brainchild of The Terry Fox Foundation and today functions as its research arm. TFRI seeks to improve significantly the outcomes of cancer research for the patient through a highly collaborative, team-oriented, milestone-based approach to research that will enable discoveries to translate quickly into practical solutions for cancer patients worldwide. TFRI collaborates with over 70 cancer hospitals and research organizations across Canada. TFRI headquarters are in Vancouver, BC. [www.tfri.ca](http://www.tfri.ca)

### **About Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, University Health Network**

The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre has achieved an international reputation as a global leader in the fight against cancer and delivering personalized cancer medicine. The Princess Margaret, one of the top five international cancer research centres, is a member of the University Health Network, which also includes Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute and the Michener Institute for Education; all affiliated with the University of Toronto. For more information, go to [www.theprincessmargaret.ca](http://www.theprincessmargaret.ca) or [www.uhn.ca](http://www.uhn.ca).

### **About BC Cancer Agency**

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. For more information, visit [www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca) or follow us Twitter [@BCCancer\\_Agency](https://twitter.com/BCCancer_Agency).

For more information, or to schedule an interview with any of the institutional leads, please contact:

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Pilot Project Backgrounder: <http://www.tfri.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pilot-project-backgrounder-f.pdf>

Q&A about The Terry Fox Canadian Comprehensive Cancer Centres Network:  
[http://www.tfri.ca/docs/default-source/research/tf4cn-faq\\_v7\\_online.pdf](http://www.tfri.ca/docs/default-source/research/tf4cn-faq_v7_online.pdf)