

Canada Gairdner awardees headline Arthritis Alliance of Canada research symposium

Honourees Feldmann and Maini revolutionized inflammatory arthritis care

TORONTO, October 30, 2014 – The [2014 Canada Gairdner International Award Laureates](#) Sir Marc Feldmann and Sir Ravinder N. Maini are the featured guests at the Arthritis Alliance of Canada's 2nd Annual Conference and Research Symposium. The event, titled "Arthritis Unmasked: Genetics, Treatments and Partnerships", is being held in Toronto this week in collaboration with the Gairdner Foundation and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (CIHR-IMHA). It brings together close to 300 arthritis stakeholders – including researchers, clinicians, healthcare experts, and especially patients – to share the latest in research, policy and program developments impacting the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis.

While the future of arthritis care, prevention and cures is the focus of the three-day conference agenda, the undisputed highlight is Friday's celebration of Sirs Feldmann and Maini. Their landmark discovery of anti-TNF therapy in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and other inflammatory diseases led to the creation of a new class of medications called "biologics", treatments which can interrupt the process of the inflammatory response in the body's autoimmune system, effectively halting the progress of joint damage, pain and inflammation.

"Twenty years ago someone living with rheumatoid arthritis might have been confined to a wheelchair due to crippling pain and joint damage. Now, thanks to this discovery, people are effectively managing their disease through new treatments and are living full, rewarding lives," explains Janet Yale, Chair of the Arthritis Alliance of Canada. "We welcome this opportunity to join our partners in celebrating the great minds whose work made these treatments possible. Our hope is that it helps inspire the next wave of bold innovation and groundbreaking research."

That's a message that resonates with the Alliance's partners.

"Our founder James Gairdner lived with severe arthritis, and it inspired him to create this legacy for future generations," says Gairdner President and Scientific Director Dr. John Dirks. "By recognizing leaders in biomedical research, and having them share their experience with researchers around the world, we seek to encourage more investigation, more innovation and ultimately contribute to the conquest of disease and human suffering."

"The impact of arthritis on Canadians, and on Canada as a whole, is staggering," says Dr. Hani El-Gabalawy, Scientific Director of CIHR-IMHA. "Research is the key that will help us further unlock the secrets of arthritis, and open the door to groundbreaking developments to ease the pain and suffering of Canadians. We're proud to partner with Gairdner and The Arthritis Alliance to bring this focus to arthritis research."

The conference runs from Thursday October 29 to Saturday October 31.

ABOUT THE ARTHRITIS ALLIANCE OF CANADA

The Arthritis Alliance of Canada is a coalition of over 35 organizations representing patient groups, arthritis consumer organizations, professional organizations, not-for-profits, government, industry and researchers. The Alliance's goal is to improve the lives of Canadians with arthritis. While each member

organization continues its own work, the Alliance provides a central focus for national arthritis-related initiatives. For more information, visit www.arthritisalliance.ca.

THE GAIRDNER FOUNDATION – MAKING SCIENCE MATTER

The Canada Gairdner Awards were created in 1959 to recognize and reward the achievements of medical researchers whose work contributes significantly to improving the quality of human life. They are Canada's only globally known and respected international science awards, and Gairdner is the only national organization that consistently brings the world's best biomedical researchers to Canada to share their ideas and work with scientists across the country. In so doing, it enlarges networks and enhances Canada's international reputation, while providing a realistic and unbiased benchmark for Canada's leading scientists. All winners are chosen by an adjudication committee and all choices are deemed final. For more information, visit www.gairdner.org.

ABOUT THE CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada's health research investment agency. CIHR's mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 14,100 health researchers and trainees across Canada. For more information, visit www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

- 30 -

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Kelly Lendvoy
Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs
Arthritis Consumer Experts
Mobile: 604.379.9898
Email: lendvoy@jointhehealth.org