

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Parkinson Society gives \$90,000 to support Laurier's Movement Disorders Research and Rehabilitation Centre

For Immediate Release

September 22, 2006

60-06

Contact: Dr. Quincy Almeida
Director, Movement Disorders Research and Rehabilitation Centre
(519) 884-0710 ext. 2840
qalmeida@wlu.ca

or Lori Chalmers Morrison
Public Affairs
(519) 884-0710 ext. 3070
lchalmersmorrison@wlu.ca

WATERLOO –Parkinson Society Canada will be presenting Dr. Quincy Almeida, director of Wilfrid Laurier University's Movement Disorders Research and Rehabilitation Centre (MDRC), with a cheque for \$90,000 to fund research on exercise rehabilitation for people with Parkinson's disease. The cheque will be presented at the Parkinson Society's 2006 SuperWalk in Victoria Park at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 23, 2006.

"Our goal is to establish exercise recommendations for all Canadians suffering from Parkinson's," said Almeida. "Parkinson Society Canada's support will enable us to scientifically evaluate the benefits of exercise for these individuals."

The grant will support the MDRC's development and evaluation of new rehabilitation programs, which are aimed at improving the balance, gait and coordination of patients with Parkinson's disease. These improvements allow patients to live more independently and actively participate in many aspects of their lives.

"We are thrilled to be able to support Dr. Almeida's work through the proceeds of our local SuperWalks," explained Carolyn Connors, executive director, Parkinson Society Canada. "People with Parkinson's are telling us more and more that they want to support

- more -

endeavours such as this – endeavours that will ultimately help them live better with Parkinson’s now. This represents the ‘ease the burden’ side of our mandate.”

While the MDRC is focused on research, Almeida also tests state-of-the-art tools and inventions from throughout the world on patients from Waterloo region. These tools have a direct impact on local patients, often improving their quality of life long before the tools become widely available for use.

Laurier’s Movement Disorders Research and Rehabilitation Centre is the first and only centre of its kind in Canada, designed predominantly to focus on evaluating the latest strategies from around the world to treat Parkinson’s disease. Almeida is a professor and researcher with the faculty of science at Laurier, in the department of kinesiology and physical education.

Parkinson’s is a chronic, degenerative neurological condition with no known cause or cure. There are currently 100,000 Canadians living with the disease. The annual SuperWalk for Parkinson’s takes place in seven locations across southwestern Ontario.

BACKGROUND

Wilfrid Laurier University



MOVEMENT DISORDERS RESEARCH & REHABILITATION CENTRE

Imagine fighting an enemy who slowly robs you of your mobility, your balance, your speech, and even your ability to smile. An enemy who threatens to take away your independence and reduce your quality of life. For more than 100,000 Canadians with Parkinson's disease, the enemy is very real.

Dr. Quincy Almeida, a professor and researcher with The Faculty of Science (Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education) at Wilfrid Laurier University is establishing the first and only Movement Disorders Research & Rehabilitation Centre (MDRC) in Canada, designed predominately for Parkinson's disease. The MDRC evaluates the latest and most cutting-edge strategies to treat Parkinson's disease from across the world.

Wilfrid Laurier University recruited Dr. Almeida to establish the Movement Disorders Research & Rehabilitation Centre. Dr. Almeida is an expert in exercise rehabilitation for Parkinson's disease and he continues to research how the brain (and specifically the basal ganglia) influences the control of movement. He has won several awards for his research on Parkinson's disease, including the Franklin Henry Young Scientist Award, the Petro-Canada Innovators Award and most recently Dr. Almeida has been honoured with the Parkinson's Society of Canada New Investigator Award worth over \$90,000. These funds will be dedicated to developing and evaluating new rehabilitation programs across 3 pilot cities, with a plan to implement the program across all of the YMCA's in Canada.

The MDRC's strategy is to examine the top exercise recommendations for Parkinson's disease, and scientifically evaluate which exercises have any proven benefit for Parkinson's disease.

THE GOALS OF THE CENTRE ARE:

- Understand brain dysfunction and how it affects movement control in Parkinson's disease
- Evaluate novel and alternative treatment strategies for neurodegenerative disorders
- Identify appropriate and approve all exercise rehabilitation for movement disorders across Canada.

PARTNERS

Laurier will be the first university in Canada to integrate community based research and rehabilitation for movement disorders through the development of the MDRC. This collaboration will foster a link to community groups such as the Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton and London Chapters of the Parkinson's Society of Canada, as well as London Health Science Centre, McMaster-Chedoke and Grand River Hospital and YMCA communities.

Laurier recognizes that involvement of local, provincial, national and global partners in this research program is vital to its success. Movement disorder neurologists, social workers, psychologists, exercise and music therapists as well as researchers specializing in motor control, gait, balance and speech will all be supported at the Centre. These health care professionals have expressed a strong interest in the Centre and will conduct further investigations of the disorders.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS: REHABILITATION

For people suffering with Parkinson's disease, walking and balance problems limit independence and reduce the quality of life. By maintaining safe movement control, more people with Parkinson's will

- more -

have the opportunity to continue gainful employment, remain in independent living situations, and actively participate in all aspects of our society. What sets the MDRC apart from other Centres is its direct impact on patients in our region. While the focus of the centre is research-based, Dr. Almeida delivers state-of-the-art rehabilitation tools and inventions developed across the world to be tested on patients in the KW region. Many of these novel tools improve the quality of life of the KW patients long before the research findings become available to the rest of the world.

Each week, the MDRC opens its doors to all people from the Kitchener-Waterloo Region who suffer from Parkinson's disease. Tim Thaler, a patient of the MDRC, has already been involved in studies evaluating new treatments for his Parkinson's disease and is also a member of a support group that helps young people who suffer from the disease. Tim as a young-onset patient – is an anomaly similar to the popular Canadian actor, Michael J. Fox. It is rare that Parkinson's disease affects patients at such a young age, but it does happen. Each year, there are thousands of Canadians that are diagnosed with early-onset Parkinson's disease. Tim and his family will also participate in the K-W 2006 SuperWalk.

PARKINSON SOCIETY OF CANADA

The Parkinson Society of Canada will award a \$90,000 grant to support research on exercise rehabilitation to identify recommendations to all Canadians with Parkinson's disease. Dr. Almeida will aim to improve balance, gait and coordination in patients with PD. This first-of-its-kind research project will focus on symptoms, functional outcomes, as well as motor outcomes and physiological measures which will be evaluated over an 18-month period.

On September 23, 2006, Dr. Almeida will be presented with a \$90,000 cheque from the Parkinson Society of Canada at the 2006 SuperWalk for Parkinson's, being held in Kitchener at Victoria Park at 10 a.m.

SUPERWALK 2005

Last year, proceeds in excess of \$1.72 million were raised in this annual event. Funds went to support:

- Advocacy to municipal, provincial and federal governments - and other organizations that impact people with Parkinson's
- Education for the general public, educational institutions, health care professionals, caregivers and those suffering with Parkinson's
- Patient Services including counseling, training and workshops for patients, caregivers and health professionals
- And to fund Research into the cause, treatment and ultimately a cure

ONTARIO:

- Last year, over \$214,000 was raised in Southwestern Ontario
- SuperWalk anticipates over 300 people participating at this year's Kitchener walk
- There are over 1,400 people in Southwestern Ontario who are actively raising pledges for the Walk
- Over 400 volunteers in the Southwestern Ontario region

GRADUATE STUDENTS (FALL 2006)

With the launch of the brand new Masters program in Kinesiology at Laurier, two new graduate students will be dedicating their research to improving the quality of life for people with PD. Under the supervision of Dr. Almeida, Chad LeBold and Rose Johnson have begun their research this fall.

For further information on the MDRC or on how to make a donation, please contact:

Dr. Quincy Almeida
519-884-0710 ext. 3924 or 2840

Kristen Porritt
519-884-0710 ext. 3719

- more -

For further information on the 2006 SuperWalk for Parkinson's, please contact:
Carolyn Conners
Executive Director
Southwestern Ontario Region
(519) 652-9437