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Huntington Society of Canada funds state-of-the-art research which reduces Huntington disease symptoms in mice

(KITCHENER, ON) JANUARY 22, 2018 –Research funded by the Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) and conducted by Dr. Stephen Ferguson, from the University of Ottawa Brain & Mind Research Institute, has shown to reduced Huntington disease (HD) symptoms in mice. Dr. Ferguson's research uses Roche Pharmaceuticals CTEP inhibitor which also reduces Huntington pathology in the brains of treated mice.

"Targeting mGluR5 in the treatment of Huntington disease has great potential," says Dr. Stephen Ferguson. "It works to reduce HD-like symptoms in mice because it affects the levels of huntingtin and the inclusions of mutant huntingtin in mouse brains. This state-of-the-art model for HD drug development turns on the pathways that are supposed to clear mutant huntingtin. These pathways are currently turned off in someone who has Huntington disease." Dr. Ferguson's research was published in *Science Signaling* http://stke.sciencemag.org/content/10/510/eaan6387

"The Huntington Society of Canada is proud to fund such leading edge research," says Bev Heim-Myers, CEO of the Huntington Society of Canada. "Where a mouse model is different than a human brain, in principle this work could lead to treatments for humans in the future. The hope is to bring this research to clinical trials."

Dr. Ferguson's research was funded through HSC's Navigator Research Program which supports basic scientific research of direct and immediate relevance to Huntington disease in Canada. The aim of the research program is to provide a platform for the recruitment of outstanding investigators to HD research, to facilitate research collaboration nationally and to support research that is relevant to other neurodegenerative disorders. The competition is run annually and is currently accepting letters of intent.

"This is an exciting time in Huntington disease research," explains Bev Heim-Myers. "For the first time ever, human clinical trials are taking place that address the root cause of Huntington disease. Dr. Ferguson's research is complementary and adds value to current research that is in clinical trials as it uses a separate pathway to deliver the treatment; as such it could be used in conjunction with ASOs. Innovative research initiatives, such as the work being done by Dr. Ferguson and his team, have the potential to transform HD research, and the answers we find for Huntington disease will likely lead to better understanding of treatments for other neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and ALS."

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Huntington disease (HD) is a debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease. Many more are touched by HD whether as a caregiver, a family member, or a friend. HD causes cells in specific parts of the brain to die. As the disease progresses, a person with Huntington disease becomes less able to manage movements, recall events, make decisions and control emotions. Many describe the symptoms of HD as having ALS, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's – simultaneously.

The **Huntington Society of Canada (HSC)** is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada.

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