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Women's brain health receives funding for leading research initiative in Canada

Partners announce the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women's Brain Health and Aging

TORONTO, ON, MARCH 08, 2016 — The Posluns Family Foundation is celebrating International Women's Day by announcing a partnership with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Ontario Brain Institute (OBI), and The Alzheimer Society of Canada (ASC) that will fund the first research initiative of its kind in Canada under the title of the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women's Brain Health and Aging.

The Chair will support an outstanding researcher working to enhance women's brain health through the study of cognitive aging and associated disorders. More specifically, this initiative will build capacity in research that accounts for gender and sex—that is, social and biological influences—on brain health and aging. The Chair holder will work to translate the research results into gender and sex-sensitive policies and interventions that improve brain health and promote wellness in aging.

The Posluns family has a long history of philanthropic work that spans across four generations. Lynn Posluns, founder and president of Women's Brain Health Initiative (WBHI) is spearheading the initiative along with her siblings Wendy Posluns and David Posluns in the name of their parents, Wilfred and Joyce. Wilfred Posluns passed away in 2010 at the age of 78, and this Chair is being established to honour his and his wife's long-standing dedication to community involvement—something that Wilfred was very passionate about.

"Wilfred was always involved in the community, from an early age of 21," said Joyce Posluns. "He has instilled the importance of charity in our three children, Wendy, Lynn and David. And now our grandchildren have also become involved. Wilfred's philanthropic drive has been passed on from generation to generation."

The partnership between CIHR, OBI and the Posluns Family is intended to provide financial support over the next ten years for the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women's Brain Health and Aging. Additionally, a Postdoctoral Award associated with the Chair will be awarded by the Alzheimer Society.

This Chair program is very important in the advancement of health care, a philanthropic area supported by the Posluns family. "Multiple studies have been done on men, but this is the first time in Canada that a research position of this kind will specifically focus on women," said Lynn

Posluns, adding that “women’s issues are often neglected and we need to find answers to progress female brain health initiatives.”

The Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women’s Brain Health and Aging holder, who will be based at an academic institution in Ontario, will consider these differences between the sexes when it comes to brain health. The Chair will work toward understanding how addressing those differences could lead to better treatment options.

Women today suffer from depression, stroke and dementia twice as much as men and an astounding 70% of new Alzheimer’s patients are women.

About the Chair

The Chair will be a researcher of exceptional merit, recruited across Canada or abroad, or a top researcher already established in an Ontario institution who is a leader in her/his field. The goal of the Chair Program is to impact and enhance the understanding of gender and sex differences in brain health. The Chair will engage in activities and speak on behalf of women’s brain health and aging.

Quotes:

“It is wonderful to see the spirit of collaboration that has led to the development of the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women’s Brain Health and Aging. I am proud to see federal, provincial, non-profit and private partners come together to support exceptional research, and I have no doubt that the work of the Chair holder will help us to better understand sex and gender influences on brain health. This type of research could lead to improved treatments for dementia and Alzheimer’s, as well as provide clues about the best ways to prevent these diseases entirely, which is good news for all Canadians.”

Honourable Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health

“It has become increasingly apparent in recent years that we need to account for sex and gender influences in health research. Men and women are similar in many ways, but when it comes to our health, our differences matter. By understanding these differences in brain health—such as why more women are affected by Alzheimer’s than men, which cannot be accounted for by the greater longevity in women—we can work toward better treatments for everyone. We are very proud to support the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women’s Brain Health and Aging, which will lead to valuable research evidence to benefit the research community and people affected by dementia.”

Dr. Yves Joanne
Scientific Director, CIHR Institute of Aging

“We’re tremendously excited to be supporting the work of the Wilfred and Joyce Posluns Chair in Women’s Brain Health and Aging through our Alzheimer Society Research Program. This first-of-a-kind Chair will shine more light on diseases like dementia that largely impact women. Furthering our understanding of women’s brains, may lead to the development of more effective

treatments, preventative measures, and ultimately a cure. This new initiative will benefit everyone living with dementia.”

Mimi Lowi-Young
CEO at the Alzheimer Society of Canada

“As seen in the various areas that OBI focuses on, we know that brain disorders can affect men and women differently with regards to how disorders present themselves and how they are experienced by an individual. We also know that some brain disorders are more prevalent in women than men, for example, Alzheimer's disease. We are proud to be part of this group of partners who are acting on the growing evidence which shows that a better understanding of sex and gender differences will lead to better brain health for everyone. The important work carried out by this new Chair will be poised for maximum impact as it fits into other key research initiatives being driven by OBI and partners.”

Dr. Tom Mikkelsen
President and Scientific Director, Ontario Brain Institute

About the partners:

The **Canadian Institutes of Health Research** (CIHR) is Canada's premier federal funding agency for health research. Its objective is to excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health care system.

The **Posluns Family Foundation** is a private charitable foundation established by the Posluns Family. The Foundation distributes funds for religious, charitable and educational purposes, and in pursuit of those purposes, supports health care programs, medical research, community organizations, educational institutions, and other organizations and agencies making a difference locally and abroad.

The **Ontario Brain Institute** is a provincially-funded, not-for-profit research institution seeking to maximize the impact of neuroscience and establish Ontario as a world leader in brain research, commercialization and care. Convergent partnerships are created between researchers, clinicians, industry, patients, and their advocates to foster discovery and deliver innovative products and services that improve the lives of those living with brain disorders.

The **Alzheimer Society of Canada** is the leading nationwide health charity for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Active in communities across Canada, the Society offers help for today through our programs and services, and hope for tomorrow by funding research into the cause, prevention and a cure. For more information, visit www.alzheimer.ca.

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