

## **The Montréal business community supports research on brain aging and Alzheimer's Disease prevention**

**Montréal, March 25, 2010**— *Healthy Brain Aging* was the theme of the Douglas Institute Foundation's 13<sup>th</sup> annual *Open Minds Benefit*, held March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Hilton Montréal Bonaventure.

The Honorary president of the event, **Wayne Quigley**, President and General Manager of Bristol-Myers Squibb Canada, kicked off the evening, with a call to action to treat or prevent Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Marguerite Blais, Minister responsible for Seniors, a special guest at the Benefit, echoed Mr. Quigley's sentiments, saying that it was long overdue that the community attend to the needs of seniors and promote healthy brain aging. Mrs Blais added: "I am very sensitive to the reality and situation of people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and all the care they require from their close relatives. This is why 75% of the *Fonds des proches aidants* that our government set up in partnership with the Chagnon family will be allocated for them. The efforts of the Douglas Institute Foundation, combined with those of our government, are a guaranty for a better future for people suffering from this illness and for the home care workers who support them".

### **Early intervention for better results**

The most common form of Alzheimer's begins to manifest itself around normal retirement age. By age 80, 40% of people develop the disease — an incidence that doubles every nine years thereafter. As Judes Poirier, Ph.D., McGill University Professor and internationally renowned Douglas Institute scientist, explains: by the time a patient walks into a doctor's office complaining of memory loss, 60 to 70% of the brain cells involved in the disease process are already dead and it's too late. However research indicates that if we could delay Alzheimer's onset by 5 years, 50% of cases would disappear within less than a generation. It would reach 95% if we could delay onset by 10 years.

### **Funds for healthy aging**

The Douglas Institute Foundation's Open Minds Benefit raised **\$264,475** towards its research initiatives in preventing Alzheimer's Disease. The Douglas Institute is home to one of the world's top Alzheimer's research teams. It has recently established a centre for the early intervention and prevention of Alzheimer's – the first of its kind in Canada. The Douglas has also begun construction of Quebec's first neuroimaging centre dedicated to mental health – a \$20 million dollars public investment that will advance our understanding of Alzheimer's and help prevent unhealthy brain aging, among other things.

### **Recognizing contributions by the media and by scientists**

The Foundation paid tribute, at Open Minds, to TVA journalist Maryse Gagnon. The Foundation highlighted, for a second year in a row, how important the media is in disseminating accurate and reliable information on mental health issues rather than fostering myths and stigma. Marie Giguère, Foundation Board Chair, described the remarkable mix of Ms. Gagnon's professionalism, compassion and respect for patients.

At the Open Minds Benefit, the Douglas Institute Foundation singled out Martin Lepage, Ph. D., to receive its Heinz Lehmann Award. The Award recognizes a scientist's special contributions to the

Douglas' mission of care, teaching and research. Mr. Lepage is a clinical psychologist and researcher who is leading the development of the Douglas' new brain imaging centre and advancing our understanding of illnesses such as schizophrenia.

**It happens with the help from so many people**

The Foundation deeply appreciates the support of its Open Minds sponsors, guests, and donors. Just as important are the 45 volunteers who were involved with the event. The Foundation extends a warm thank you to all involved, in particular:

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— 30 —

**Information**

Douglas Mental Health University Institute Foundation

Tel. : 514 762-3003

[Fondation@douglas.mcgill.ca](mailto:Fondation@douglas.mcgill.ca)