

**Press release
For immediate release**

**Michael Meaney and Gustavo Turecki:
Douglas Institute researchers and McGill University professors
receive double honours**

Montreal, January 12, 2010 – Michael Meaney, PhD, C.Q., FRSC, and Gustavo Turecki, MD, PhD, both of whom are researchers at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute and professors in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University, have been awarded the title of Radio-Canada Scientist of the Year 2009. Their work in epigenetic, carried out with McGill colleagues Moshe Szyf, PhD, and postdoctoral researcher Patrick McGowan, has also been selected for *Québec Science* magazine's top ten discoveries of 2009.

"Michael Meaney and Gustavo Turecki have had great success as researchers and deserve to start the year with this kind of recognition," stated Rémi Quirion, OC, PhD, CQ, FRSC, Scientific Director of the Douglas Institute and Vice-Dean (Life Sciences and Strategic Initiatives), Faculty of Medicine, McGill University. "They have both excelled internationally in their field, and I know that being acknowledged locally for their contributions will give them particular satisfaction. We are extremely proud of their achievements, and I would like to congratulate them not only on behalf of the Douglas but on my own behalf as well," he added.

2009 Scientists of the Year - Radio-Canada

The team from the radio science magazine *Les années lumière* awarded the title of Radio-Canada Scientist of the Year 2009 to Michael Meaney **and** Gustavo Turecki for their discovery of the epigenetic effects of child abuse on the human brain. Michael Meaney directs a research team on behaviour, genes and the environment at the Douglas Institute, while Gustavo Turecki serves as Director for the McGill Group for Suicide Studies and the Réseau québécois de recherche sur le suicide. Awarded for the 23rd consecutive year, the title of Scientist of the Year is given to a scientific personality or team who stood out in a specific discipline in the past year through a remarkable scientific and international discovery, publication or achievement.

Top Ten Discoveries of the Year - Québec Science

The 17th top ten discoveries list from *Québec Science* magazine also made room to honour the team of Michael Meaney and Gustavo Turecki. Their work, carried out in collaboration with Moshe Szyf, PhD, James McGill Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, and Patrick McGowan, post-doctoral fellow at McGill University, was chosen along with that of nine other Quebec teams from a pool of 75 applications

About the discovery of Michael Meaney, Gustavo Turecki and their team

Scientists have known for a long time that traumatic life experiences, particularly those that occur during childhood, influence the development of psychiatric disorders. They also know that genes, such as those responsible for the stress response, play a major role in the manifestation of these disorders. What they did not understand were the biological mechanisms through which life experiences change the expression of these genes. Michael Meaney discovered some of these mechanisms a few years ago in studies on rats. More recently with the help of their team, Michael Meaney and Gustavo Turecki proved for the first time that these mechanisms are also at work in human beings. Using the brains of people who had committed suicide, their study showed that mistreatment experienced during childhood causes lasting changes in stress-response genes.

Their discovery was published in March 2009 in the prestigious journal *Nature Neuroscience*

The study was financed by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (United States)

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Marie france Coutu
Communications and Public Affairs
Douglas Mental Health University Institute
Phone: 514-761-6131, extension 2769. Cell: 514-835-3236
marie-france.coutu@douglas.mcgill.ca

Cynthia Lee
Media relation officer
McGill University
Tel. :514 398-6754 Cell. : 514 238-7793
cynthia.lee@mcgill.ca