

ARTHRITIS ALLIANCE OF CANADA

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

UK-based arthritis researchers honoured with Canada Gairdner International Award

Toronto, March 26, 2014 – The Arthritis Society and the Arthritis Alliance of Canada (AAC) are pleased to congratulate London-based scientists Sir Marc Feldmann and Sir Ravinder Nath Maini on receiving a [2014 Canada Gairdner International Award](#) for their groundbreaking discovery of anti-TNF therapy in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and other inflammatory diseases.

In the 1980s, the pair successfully demonstrated that joints affected by RA have high levels of inflammatory “cytokines” (a type of small protein) and that blocking one of them – the tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNF α) – could reduce inflammation and help treat RA. This spurred major drug research and led to eight currently approved anti-TNF medications used not only to stop the destructive pathways of RA, but also other autoimmune diseases such as psoriatic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.

“Theirs was one of those rare monumental discoveries that changed rheumatoid arthritis treatment forever giving rise to biologics as a therapeutic force,” says Janet Yale, AAC chair and Arthritis Society president and CEO. “We are thrilled that Drs. Feldmann and Maini are receiving this well-deserved honour, and it provides an ideal moment to thank them for their pursuit of a new treatment target that has changed tens of millions of lives.”

Anti-TNF therapy helps people with arthritis reduce pain and improve mobility and, when compared with conventional drug treatments, reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes and increases life expectancy. The medication also plays a role in protecting joints from degeneration, so they retain good physical function and delay or prevent joint surgery.

The Canada Gairdner Awards are among the world’s most esteemed medical research prizes, awarding \$100,000 to each scientist. They are issued by the Toronto-based Gairdner Foundation, which since 1959 has delivered 321 awards to scientists from 15 countries, 82 of whom subsequently won a Nobel Prize.

ABOUT THE ARTHRITIS SOCIETY

The Arthritis Society has been setting lives in motion for over 65 years. Dedicated to a vision of living well while creating a future without arthritis, The Society is Canada’s principal health charity providing education, programs and support to the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis. Since its founding in 1948, The Society has been the largest non-government funder of arthritis research in Canada, investing more than \$185 million in projects that have led to breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arthritis. The Arthritis Society is accredited under Imagine Canada’s Standards Program. For more information and to make a donation, visit www.arthritis.ca.

ABOUT THE ARTHRITIS ALLIANCE OF CANADA

The Arthritis Alliance of Canada is a coalition of over 35 organizations representing patient groups, arthritis consumer organizations, professional organizations, not-for-profits, government, industry and researchers. The Alliance's goal is to improve the lives of Canadians with arthritis. While each member organization continues its own work, the Alliance provides a central focus for national arthritis-related initiatives. For more information, please visit the Arthritis Alliance of Canada website at <http://www.arthritisalliance.ca/home/index.php>.

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For more information:

Douglas Emerson
National Manager, Communications – The Arthritis Society
Tel: 416-979-7228 x3348
cell: 647-706-0440
email: demerson@arthritis.ca

Kelly Lendvoy
Chair, Advocacy and Awareness Committee- Arthritis Alliance of Canada
Tel: 604.379.9898
Email: lendvoy@jointhehealth.org
www.arthritisalliance.ca