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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CELL RESTORATION LABORATORY OPENS:
RESEARCHERS TO USE STEM CELLS TO RESTORE CELL FUNCTION IN BRAIN
INJURY AND DISEASE**

Halifax, NS: 4 MARCH 2004 - The official opening today of the new Cell Restoration Laboratory at Dalhousie Medical School highlighted exciting new research with stem cells that could benefit millions of people who suffer from brain and spinal cord injury and disease.

Stem cells are cells that have the ability to divide for indefinite periods of time and give rise to specialized cells that may replace those that die as a result of aging, disease or injury. The Cell Restoration Laboratory is a unique Canadian infrastructure exclusively dedicated to stem cell applications for brain repair. The lab and its state-of-the-art infrastructure are the cornerstone of the "Stem Cells for Brain Repair Project," which is part of the Brain Repair Centre (BRC), the largest research collaboration in Atlantic Canada.

"The Cell Restoration Laboratory is a world-class resource for the region and for Canada, which will help us bring to reality new innovations in brain repair using stem cell technology," said Dr. Ivar Mendez, Professor and Head of the Division of Neurosurgery at Dalhousie University, Chair of the BRC, and one of the scientists who will perform research in the new lab. "The lab will also play a key role in helping us attract and retain the brightest research scientists in this field."

The Cell Restoration Laboratory was made possible through the collaboration of its funding partners: the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA) Atlantic Innovation Fund contributed \$2.1 million to the project; contributions of \$1.1 million from the QEII Foundation's Working Miracles Capital Campaign and \$500,000 from the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation (DMRF) were pivotal in leveraging AIF funding; and Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine provided space for the lab.

"Building a strong economy and restoring Canada's role in the world are among the federal government's top priorities. Investments into world class research, such as the work done by the Brain Repair Centre, not only advance these priorities, but further our ability to improve the lives of Canadians," said the Honourable Geoff Regan, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on behalf of the Government of Canada.

The Government of Canada has invested more than \$8 million in the Brain Repair Centre, and Minister Regan said today's opening is an indication that leading-edge research and development work can occur in Atlantic Canada if government adopts a more aggressive leadership role.

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"Every investment in research and development initiative in Atlantic Canada helps the region attract and retain the brightest minds to the region, and we must help increase those efforts to ensure Atlantic Canada participates fully in the 21st century economy," said Minister Regan.

"It has long been an important role of the QEII Foundation to put into the hands of its medical experts the tools they need to bring change to research, diagnosis and treatment," said Ms. Gwen Haliburton, Chair of the QEII Foundation Board of Trustees. "We are honoured to provide our Cell Restoration Lab with a key piece of research equipment - a Multi-photon Microscope, which is considered the gold standard in the work that our medical scientists will carry out."

"We must consciously raise the bar on self-imposed limitations," said Mr. Frank Sobey, Chair of the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation. "We do this by investing in innovation and potential, like what we see at the Brain Repair Centre. Through collaborative funding partnerships, we must seek to recognize and support these kinds of opportunities in our region."

"The Cell Restoration Laboratory is an important milestone in the unprecedented growth of the life sciences sector in Nova Scotia," noted Dr. Harold Cook, Dean (Interim) of Dalhousie Medical School. "Through collaboration, Dalhousie and other partners are building new research infrastructure, which enables high calibre research that directly affects the health, economy and social well-being of the region."

Innovative research at the Cell Restoration Laboratory will focus on stem cell restoration strategies for repairing neuronal circuitry in patients with disorders such as Parkinson's disease, ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury and optic nerve injury. This newly expanded stem cell research facility includes state-of-the-art equipment for stem cell and animal behavioural testing systems, including an electrophysiological imaging module.

The Laboratory complements the existing neural transplantation program, which is unique in Canada and one of only four worldwide. The investigators collaborate closely with labs across Canada, the United States and Europe in search of ways to improve cell survival, safely transplant cells into the brain and discover new types and sources of cells.

As part of the event today, researchers Dr. Steve Barnes (Dalhousie and Capital Health departments of Ophthalmology, Physiology & Biophysics and Director of the Dalhousie Neuroscience Institute); Dr. Robert Brownstone (Dalhousie and Capital Health Department of Anatomy & Neurobiology, Division of Neurosurgery and Director of Motor Control Laboratory); Dr. David Clarke (Dalhousie and Capital Health Department of Anatomy & Neurobiology, Division of Neurosurgery); Dr. Mendez; and Dr. Harold Robertson (Head, Dalhousie Department of Pharmacology) discussed the specific research they will each carry out in the new Cell Restoration Laboratory.

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