



# The Vision Health Research Network Annual Research Day, and International Symposium on Retinal and Choroidal Angiogenesis (Montreal)

The Vision Health Research Network of Québec (the Network) was established in 1995 and funded by the Fonds de la recherche du Québec en santé (FRQS). In the past 23 years, it has been the major venue to foster collaborations within Québec's research community and beyond. The Network aims to increase research capacity, improve infrastructure and enhance competitiveness of Québec's vision research on the international stage. Focusing on key matters proposed by Canadian health policy, the Network strikes to improve visual outcomes among patients.

The Network now encompasses more than 130 clinical and fundamental researchers, and financially supports common infrastructures and platforms (such as cells/tissues banks, databases, and multi-user resources). The Network also has a strong mandate to cultivate young researchers. As such, the Vision Research Award for Students was established, hoping to encourage trainees to pursue a fruitful career in vision health. Importantly, the Network helps trainees to become competitive candidates for national and international granting agencies. Meanwhile, the scientific discoveries from our members continue to enrich the understanding on physiological and pathological visual functions, and on the development of advanced therapeutic strategies, including early diagnosis of eye and brain diseases, visual training, behavioural rehabilitation and ophthalmic implants. On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, these achievements were brought together in an Annual Research Meeting (>130 presentations), organized by Dr. Isabelle Brunette—the Network's Director—and the organizing committee.

The 2017 Annual Research Meeting began with a Symposium (November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017) organized by Drs. Sylvain Chemtob, Mike Sapiéha, Bruno Larrivée, Flavio Rezende and Isabelle Hardy. This Symposium was entitled the "International Symposium on Retinal and Choroidal Angiogenesis". Notably, retinal and choroidal angiogenesis has taken a major dimension in the clinical setting as it applies to vasoproliferative retinopathies and macular degeneration. Studies in developmental biology and disease models have enabled the discovery of new function in guidance cues, cell plasticity, cellular interactions, mechanisms of response to inflammation and metabolic needs, and maladaptive consequences ensuing in senescence and cell death. Technological innovations have been generated to visualize underlying pathogenic processes. Notwithstanding these developments, much remains to be explored in molecular mechanisms that govern vascular growth, to refine selective therapeutics. Accordingly, the International Symposium on Retinal and Choroidal Angiogenesis (held in Montreal), highlighted cutting edge discoveries, technological advances and novel therapeutic options within two major themes: (I) retinal angiogenesis in health and disease, and (II) topics applied to age-related macular degeneration.

The Symposium brought together 5 international leaders from USA, Europe and Canada: Anne Eichmann, an authority in vascular biologist; Florian Sennlaub, a prominent expert on sub-retinal inflammation; Rajendra Apte, a renowned retinal immune scientist; Robert Mullins, a distinguished choroid biologist; David Chow, an expert in retinal imaging approaches. To these, local international leaders/experts in vision science have also participated: Mike Sapiéha, Jean-Sébastien Joyal, Stéphanie Proulx, Bruno Larrivée, Flavio Rezende, and Sylvain Chemtob. In the spirit of the Vision Health Research Network of Québec, the "International Symposium on Retinal and Choroidal Angiogenesis" was organized to foster rich and constructive interactions among experts, trainees, clinicians and basic scientists, and notably provide educational and network opportunities for graduate students and post-doctoral and clinical fellows, as we thrive towards a better understanding of normal and aberrant retinal and choroidal angiogenesis.

Of note, the Annual Research Meeting in 2017 also marked our first collaboration with the *Annals of Eye Science*, the official journal of Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center, Sun Yat-sen University, with a goal to promote Québec's commitment on vision research at an international level in order to attract researchers from around the world. In this Special Issue, over 120 abstracts from both the Symposium and Annual Research Meeting are featured. The Vision Health Research Network of Québec thus welcomes talented clinicians and scientists in future meetings to join a dynamic and diverse research community.

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