



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

### **AmorChem, Université Laval and CHU de Québec collaborate on a Friedreich's Ataxia project**

**Montreal, July 21, 2014** – AmorChem, Université Laval and the CHU de Québec are happy to announce the start of a collaboration focusing on the discovery of a new treatment to help patients suffering from Friedreich's Ataxia. The project was initiated by Jacques P. Tremblay, professor at the Université Laval Faculty of Medicine and researcher at the CHU de Québec Research Centre, and his team.

"AmorChem is proud to be working with Jacques P. Tremblay to help patients suffering from this debilitating disease against which there is currently no treatment. Dr. Tremblay's approach is focused on using a novel gene therapy technology and we are eager to be part of the cutting edge research in this field" says Inès Holzbaur, general partner at AmorChem.

Friedreich's Ataxia is an orphan disease which affects 1 out of 50 000 people. It is characterised by motor and cardiac symptoms. The cause of the disease is a genetic defect which results in low levels of the protein frataxin. Diminished levels of frataxin impair iron metabolism and mitochondrial function in patients. Jacques P. Tremblay is using a new tool called "Transcription Activator-Like Effector (TALE)", which works by inserting itself in the desired gene promoter site in order to boost the expression of frataxin in a selective manner. Since early 2014, TALEs and other similar gene editing tools have been garnering a lot of attention on the part of the research community and venture capital groups because of their innate ability to modify genes in a very precise way.

"Université Laval is pleased to launch this collaboration with AmorChem and to highlight the support provided to this project by SOVAR, our technology development and commercialization company. We are convinced that the results of the work accomplished by Jacques P. Tremblay will be of great benefit to patients suffering from Friedreich's Ataxia" says Sophie D'Amours, Université Laval Vice Rector, Research and Innovation.

"This project was one of those selected for our 2013 edition of the Knock-Out Event. We are very pleased to have been able to attract a researcher such as Jacques P. Tremblay through this platform. It allows us today to enter into a new partnership with Université Laval, CHU de Québec and SOVAR" says Elizabeth Douville, general partner at AmorChem.

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**ABOUT AMORCHEM L.P.**

AmorChem L.P. ([www.amorchem.com](http://www.amorchem.com)) is a venture capital fund located in Montreal focused on investing in promising life science projects originating from Quebec-based universities and research centres. The principal limited partners of this fund are Investissement-Québec, FIER Partenaires, Fonds de solidarité FTQ and Merck & Co. This fund is the latest addition to the GeneChem portfolio of funds, a fund manager in existence since 1997. AmorChem's innovative business model involves financing research-stage projects to enable them to reach pre-clinical proof-of-concept ("POC") in a semi-virtual mode within 18-24 months. The fund seeks to generate returns through a two-pronged exit strategy: sell projects having reached POC to large biotechnology or pharmaceutical companies; or bundle them into new spin-out companies. AmorChem using external resources will manage the projects. To that effect, AmorChem has established a strategic partnership with the Biotechnology Research Institute in order to access its R&D platforms. In addition, to enabling projects requiring small molecules as tools or drug leads, AmorChem has founded NuChem Therapeutics Inc., a medicinal chemistry contract-research company.

### **ABOUT UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL**

Located in Quebec's historic capital, a World Heritage City, Université Laval is the first French-language University in North America. It is one of Canada's leading research universities, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> among the country's 94 university-level institutions in terms of research funding with more than \$300 million devoted to research last year. Université Laval's 1,400 professors-researchers share their knowledge with 48,000 students, 10,000 of whom are enrolled in graduate-level programs.

### **ABOUT CHU DE QUÉBEC**

Regrouping the CHUL, L'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec and hospitals l'Enfant-Jésus, Saint-François d'Assise and du Saint-Sacrement, the CHU de Québec is the most important health care institution in the province of Québec and one of the biggest in Canada. The CHU de Québec offers general and specialized care, but mostly ultra-specialized care throughout Eastern Quebec, which represents nearly two million persons. In partnership with Université Laval and focused on the future, the CHU de Québec also has core missions in teaching, in research in many fields of excellence and in the evaluation of health technologies and professional practices. In order to accomplish those missions, CHU de Québec counts 14,000 employees, 1,700 doctors, dentists and pharmacists and also 500 researchers. For more information, visit [www2.chudequebec.ca](http://www2.chudequebec.ca)

### **ABOUT SOVAR**

Founded in 2000 by Université Laval and CHU de Québec, SOVAR is devoted to the development and commercialization of new technologies derived from university research and from partnering research centers. SOVAR also responds to the needs of businesses in search of innovation. Its team of seasoned experts works in close collaboration with researchers helping them through the complex process that transforms innovative concepts into marketable applications. At the same time, it develops partnerships with key players in the innovation system of both Quebec and Canada as well as with potential investors. Institut universitaire en santé mentale de Québec (IUSMQ) and Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC) have joined SOVAR in 2011.

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