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## **New Chair takes aim at arthritis**

*Biostatistician named to \$4 million Chair established to improve treatment and program evaluation, risk factor identification and usability of large databases*



Simon Fraser University (SFU) and Arthritis Research Canada (ARC) have announced Dr. Hui Xie as the new Maureen and Milan Ilich/ Merck Chair in Statistics for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases.

Co-located at ARC and the Faculty of Health Sciences at SFU, Dr. Xie, a biostatistician, will work closely with arthritis researchers to develop statistical methods that improve the evaluation of arthritis treatments and programs. Studies on arthritis and other musculoskeletal disease require large-scale clinical trials and the analysis of large data sets.

The Chair will also focus on enhancing risk factor identification for arthritis and improve the usability of large medical and administrative databases.

The Chair has been established through the generosity of the Milan & Maureen Ilich Foundation, contributing \$1 million, a further \$1 million from Merck Frosst Canada, and \$500,000 from the Lohn Foundation. SFU is contributing \$1.5 million.

“Dr. Xie currently holds a prestigious research grant from the National Institutes of Health, a rare feat for a biostatistician, and his success speaks to the far-reaching impact of his work, his ingenuity and diligence,” says Dr. John Esdaile, Scientific Director of Arthritis Research Canada.

Currently, over 4.6 million adults in Canada suffer from arthritis. “This number is expected to grow to an estimated 7.5 million by 2036. Dr. Xie will work closely with the

largest multidisciplinary arthritis research team in Canada at ARC to combat the alarming prevalence of arthritis and other related diseases.”

Says Dr. Xie: “Medical research relies heavily on the use of statistics, as study results are often statistically illustrated and validated. As the Maureen and Milan Ilich/ Frosst Chair in Statistics for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases, I hope to solve challenging research questions that will aid in the development of more effective treatments for arthritis.”

Dr. John O’Neil, SFU Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, says biostatistics is a foundational discipline in public health, and good research relies on having the best biostatistical advice available.

“We are very fortunate in recruiting Dr. Xie, an outstanding scholar at the cutting edge of advancing statistical methods in the analysis of large datasets,” he says. “These skills will enhance the research excellence at SFU and contribute to finding solutions that will alleviate the prevalence of arthritis, one of the most common and costly chronic conditions in Canada.”

Says SFU President Andrew Petter: “This chair is evidence of the strong partnership between SFU and Arthritis Research Canada, and reflects SFU’s commitment to be an ‘engaged university’ that mobilizes research to benefit society. Dr. Xie will play an integral role in bringing together SFU’s Faculty of Health Sciences and ARC’s interdisciplinary team to improve the lives of those who struggle with this disease.”

#### Arthritis Facts:

- There are over 100 types of arthritis in all (rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, osteoarthritis, gout, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, etc).
- Arthritis affects 350 million individuals worldwide, including 4.6 million Canadians, 600,000 of whom are British Columbians.
- 1 in 6 Canadian adults currently live with arthritis. This number is expected to grow to 1 in 5 by 2036, in which an estimated 7.5 million Canadian adults will have arthritis.
- Arthritis is the most costly chronic disease in Canada, costing the economy approximately \$33 billion each year in health care expenditures and lost productivity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arthritis Community Research and Evaluation Unit (ACREU): Arthritis in Canada (Prepared for The Arthritis Society, 2013) 3 [<http://www.arthritis.ca/document.doc?id=925>]

- 56% of people are affected with arthritis before they are 65 years of age.
- Arthritis is the most common chronic condition in women and the third most in men.
- Children too are affected by arthritis.
- Arthritis represents one in every 10 doctor visits and one in every 16 hospitalizations.
- Arthritis is the most expensive condition for the Canadian economy, yet receives only 3% of the available research dollars in Canada.

#### **ABOUT ARTHRITIS RESEARCH CANADA:**

Arthritis Research Canada (ARC) was created in 2000 in recognition of the tremendous potential that research can bring to arthritis treatment in Canada, and indeed, the world. Building a strong multi-disciplinary research team of outstanding medical doctors and research scientists, ARC has facilities in British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec, dedicated to understanding, advancing and sharing knowledge about the causes of arthritis, and addressing issues that are impacting people with arthritis right now.

Leading research. Finding answers. Saving lives.

#### **ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:**

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded almost 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is a leader amongst Canada's comprehensive research universities and is ranked one of the top universities in the world under 50 years of age. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities—Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby—SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 30,000 students, and boasts more than 130,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

Engaging Students. Engaging Research. Engaging Communities.