



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

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Human Immunology research gets boost with appointment of U of T Chair

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TORONTO -- Vaccine research and the study of human immunology at the University of Toronto will be significantly enhanced with the appointment of Professor Tania Watts as the new sanofi pasteur Chair in Human Immunology.

“Immunology research is an extremely specialized area, one that is critical in helping us fight challenging diseases that impact public health. Tania Watts’ extensive expertise and experience will make her a tremendous asset in this role. We are pleased she has accepted the position and very much look forward to collaborating with her,” said J. Mark Lievonen, President of Sanofi Pasteur Limited, which contributed \$2 million towards the creation of the chair.

Professor Watts received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the University of Alberta in 1983. Following post-doctoral studies in the Department of Physical Chemistry at Stanford University, she joined the Department of Immunology at the University of Toronto in 1986. Since that time, Professor Watts has become one of Canada’s leading Immunologists and is currently President of the Canadian Society for Immunology. Professor Watts’ research is focused on immune stimulatory molecules that can help activate T lymphocytes to fight infection. Professor Watts leads a national team grant on understanding correlates of protection to influenza, under the auspices of the Canadian Institutes of Health Pandemic Preparedness Strategic Research Initiative (PPSRI).

“I’m honored to accept this position. The immune system plays a pivotal role in determining disease outcome in many illnesses of public health importance. I look forward to helping harness the combined research capability of my colleagues in Toronto to help develop solutions for the issues of disease control which now face Ontario, Canada and the entire global community,” said Professor Watts.

Sanofi Pasteur is a world leader in the research, development and manufacturing of vaccines. The innovative research in immunology to be undertaken by this Chair will advance progress in developing vaccines for deadly diseases.

Sanofi Pasteur has a long standing history with the University of Toronto. “This is a legacy which goes back almost a century to when Dr. John FitzGerald founded Connaught Laboratories in 1914 as a self-supporting part of this university, dedicated to the research, development and production of essential public health products, especially vaccines. Connaught remained a unique part of U. of T. until 1972, after which it was privatized, and since 2004 has been a vital component of the global Sanofi Pasteur organization. From Connaught's birth there has been a commitment to making a difference in the lives of people everywhere,” said Professor Michael Ratcliffe, Chair of the U. of T. Faculty of Medicine's Department of Immunology.

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