News Releases

Quebec's young science prodigies recognized at Sanofi Biogenius Canada Regional Final

Winner to represent Quebec at the SBC National Final in Ottawa in May

Montreal, Quebec - April 3, 2015 – Justin Lessard-Wajcer from Jean-de-Brébeuf College in Montreal has earned top honours at the Quebec edition of the prestigious Sanofi Biogenius Canada (SBC) competition. Justin was chosen by the judges for his research project focusing on the 'CLARITY' technique, which creates highly detailed pictures of the brain in order to investigate the link between heart disease and neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's. This project was completed with the support of mentor Professor Hélène Girouard of the Université de Montréal.

"I am truly honoured to win such a prestigious award and to have been selected from among such a talented group. I'd like to thank Professor Girouard for all her guidance and support, and look forward to presenting my work to the judges at the Canadian SBC final in May," said Justin Lessard-Wajcer.

One of the country's most prestigious student competitions, Sanofi Biogenius Canada pairs exceptional young scientists with academic mentors to pursue real-world research projects, and participants have produced many promising scientific breakthroughs.

The runners-up of the SBC 2015 Quebec regional final:

Second prize was awarded to Eunice Linh You, a student at Marianopolis College in Westmount for a project that explored the use of magnetotactic bacteria (MTB) as medical microbots in the penetration of tumours and delivery of chemotherapy treatment.

Third prize was awarded to Liem Dam-Quang, a student at Vanier College in Montreal for his project exploring the viability of producing chitosane (derived from chitine) with enzymes from *Aspergillus niger* fungus. With the help of bio-informatics tools, a gene generating a chitosane-producing enzyme was cloned and expressed in an *Escherichia coli* and protein activity then tested.

Fourth prize was awarded to Weiting Xiong, a student at Jean-de-Brébeuf College in Montreal for his project using Nhas (a bacterial protein commonly used to capture sodium ions in order to desalinate seawater) by genetically modifying BL21 and Arctic Express E.Coli cells, and inducing them to synthesise a recombinant Nhas protein linked to a polyhistidine tag.

Fifth prize was awarded to Joey Labbé, a student at the *Polyvalente* Sainte-Thérèse, for his project examining the reaction of dendritic cells to allergen exposure in order to better understand the different allergic reactions in the immune system.

Justin Lessard-Wajcer will now progress to the SBC 2015 National Final in Ottawa on May 25 and 26. There, winners of all nine regional SBC competitions will submit their work to a panel of Canada's pre-eminent scientists for a chance at winning the top prize: a place at the 2015 International BioGENEius Challenge in Philadelphia this coming June. Justin also receives a cash prize of \$5,000, a portion of which will go to Jean-de-Brébeuf College. Runners-up in this year's Quebec regional competition were also awarded cash prizes ranging in value from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

About the Sanofi Biogenius Challenge (SBC)

Sanofi Biogenius Canada is a national science research competition open to high school students, which since 1992, has helped almost 4,000 young Canadians pursue real-world scientific research projects that have been the launch pads to future studies and careers. Coordinated by Partners In Research, the initiative is sponsored by Sanofi Pasteur Limited, Sanofi Canada, the Ontario Government (Ministry of Research & Innovation), York University, the National Research Council Canada/Conseil national de recherches Canada (NRC-CNRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research/Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada (CIHR-IRSC) and Genome Canada.

For more information, please visit <u>biogenius.ca</u>, or follow SBC on <u>Facebook</u> (facebook.com/SanofiBiogenius) or Twitter (@biogeniusca) using the hashtag #SBC2015.

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