

INTERVIEW WITH

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**Recipient of the 2025 CCRA Award for
Outstanding Achievements in Cancer
Research**



**Reflecting on your storied career, what
contributions are you most proud of?**

When I reflect on my storied career, there are several contributions of which I'm very, very, very proud. The first one is advancing the understanding of the molecular tenets of pediatric brain tumours. Those tumours were really considered similar just using pathology as the main tool for initial diagnosis and we introduced molecular techniques. We identified distinct entities that have specific therapeutic needs and responses and we are now starting to have even better diagnoses and tools to improve the way we take care of those kids and young adults. This is something I'm very proud of.

The second part is the collaborative network that I've created. The fact that now it's almost like we are a family within Quebec, within Canada, even internationally! A lot of people speaking together, working together, trainees coming and seeing an environment that fosters collaborative initiatives and this is how we're improving care. It's community work and this is what I love—working together and going faster forward together.

What is the value of team science and how does it affect research progress?

Team science is invaluable in how we can push science, and we could push better answers to the bedside. For me, I'm a physician. I treat kids and I treat young adults with different types of cancer. If I understand, I have better tools to treat.

There's the individual. The individual with their ideas and what they have to bring. The individual as one person is strong but not as strong as a multitude of people who are working together and bringing different pieces of the puzzle, especially when you consider rare diseases like pediatric cancer. This way we can kind of work so much better and faster in getting answers and better treatments to be translated to the bedside.

I think about it like our hands. Our fingers, each one of them is strong on their own, but we play the piano so much better if we have two hands that can work together.

As a researcher with a significant international impact, how can Canadian cancer researchers contribute to advancing cancer research internationally and what are the benefits of international collaboration?

The benefits of international collaboration and how we within Canada can advance research together are numerous. It's impossible nowadays to work on any topic, not even cancer, any business, anything if you work on your own. You bring something, you have to...the individual is very important. At the same time, if the individual work fits within a bigger part, it's more meaningful. It can become more meaningful. Everybody will bring another way of looking at things.

Within Canada, working together is huge and we Canadians are very collaborative. This is something that I have seen ever since I started my career. There are people who you cannot work with and that's true everywhere. There are so many more that are very generous, not only of their time, their ideas, their samples—they want to come and cooperate. This is a beautiful thing within Canada that should continue to be fostered because it makes us strong. Why does it make us strong? Because then we are a critical mass and can push things we identify and would like to see grow while being attractive for big initiatives that are going on elsewhere in the world.

We are citizens of one planet and one advance is not only made in one place. It's taken up and even exceeded in other places, or other advances are in other places that we could benefit from. Having or being a beacon among other beacons is going to be very positive and powerful for Canadian researchers, for Canadian science, but also for our patients and for anyone that has been affected with cancer and other diseases.

In your view what is the most compelling argument for investing in cancer research?

One of the most compelling arguments for investing in cancer research—just see how those patients suffer, how we need to make their lives better.

What career advice would you give to the next generation of cancer researchers?

The career advice I would give to anybody who is embarking on a career in cancer research is to try to grow their wings, to really try to make it work if this is what they want. Despite all the obstacles that people could lay out or they think about, they owe it to themselves to try.

If this is something they want, they have to try. If you try, you see where you succeed and where you fail and our failures build us, teach us so much more. We're not defined by our success, I think. We're more defined by our failures that make us stronger and go faster. They have to try, and they have to learn how to overcome some of the failures they will face.