

## Inaugural NMIN Board of Directors Meeting

The NanoMedicines Innovation Network (NMIN) Board of Directors held its inaugural meeting on May 7, 2019 in Vancouver, immediately prior to the launch of the network's Research Strengthening Workshop.

At this meeting, the NMIN Board approved the Network's Policies and Procedures, preliminary budget, and Terms of Reference for eight Network committees. The establishment of an NMIN Investment Fund as a source of "seed funding" to accelerate commercialization of Network research outcomes received strong support. Board member Christine Charette was appointed to represent the Board of Directors as an observer on NMIN's Research Management Committee (RMC).

Following the Board meeting, members attended a joint session of the Research Strengthening Workshop, where the Scientific Director and Research Theme Leaders provided a detailed overview of the NCE- and Board-approved strategic priorities and plans for the Network.

NMIN Board and Research Management Committee (RMC) members are profiled on [NMIN's website](#).

## NMIN Research Strengthening Workshop

On May 7 and 8, 2019, NMIN held a Research Strengthening Workshop at the Rosewood Hotel Georgia in downtown Vancouver. This workshop was an important networking opportunity and a vital formative step within the network's research applications process.

The event was designed to benefit researchers preparing an application for NMIN funding, 2019-2021, in response to the Network's first invitational call for applications. The opportunity for invited applicants to meet face-to-face with research leaders and other investigators, and to evaluate and evolve their project planning in advance of the application deadline, will promote the development of well-focused, realistically scoped and strategically aligned research proposals.

Two dozen invited applicants presented preliminary plans for their 28 proposed projects and received, from their peers and NMIN's Research Theme and Core leaders and Scientific Director, constructive criticism and suggestions for potential improvement. The spectrum of feedback spanned changes to methodology, the reconsideration of disease foci, the leveraging of additional or alternative

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## NMIN Research Strengthening Workshop continued...

technologies and network Core Facilities, the incorporation of additional researchers to project teams, and the possible combining of efforts with other investigators and projects.

The proposed NMIN Core Facilities (Nanocore and Pharmacore), described in detail at the workshop by the Core leaders, were greeted with enthusiasm by attendees.

The workshop was undertaken in the spirit of network building and mutual support. It allowed also for broader discussion of such topics as bolstering the visibility and credibility of nanomedicine as a field, identifying strategies to improve the related funding climate, and including diverse researchers, trainees and partnerships within the nanomedicine research community.

In addition to NMIN researchers presenting project proposals, invited guests provided overview presentations highlighting research and capacity-building partnership opportunities for NMIN investigators. These guests included Lisa Carver, the Director of Stakeholder Relations for [Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research](#) (MSFHR), and Sherry Zhao, the Director of Strategic Accounts & Business Development for [Mitacs](#). Brigit Viens, NMIN's NCE liaison, brought greetings and congratulations from the NCE Secretariat.

Two external members of NMIN's RMC also contributed to the discussion: Norbert Maurer, the Director of Research and Development for Evonik Canada, and

JP Heale, the Managing Director of the University-Industry Liaison Office of The University of British Columbia.

Additionally, the following individuals attended as "networking" guests, to offer their perspectives where appropriate and explore opportunities for collaboration: Azita Haddadi (University of Saskatchewan); Nicholas Bertrand (University of Laval); Naomi Matsuura (University of Toronto); Devika Chithrani (University of Victoria); and Sarah Hedtrich (The University of British Columbia).

As follow-up to the workshop, project-by-project feedback from workshop participants, gathered in real time at the workshop, was compiled and provided to each proposed project team. Additionally, a series of theme-specific teleconferences were held between May 22 and 29 to provide applicants with an opportunity to discuss their applications further with Theme Leaders and to ask for clarifications regarding the application guidelines and review process.

**NMIN research project applications are due on June 10, 2019 at 6:00 pm in the time zone of submission and should be submitted to [info@nanomedicines.ca](mailto:info@nanomedicines.ca).**



## Staffing Update

NMIN staff members include:

### **HQP & Events Coordinator**



**Leah Graystone** joins NMIN with experience from the equivalent position in the AllerGen NCE network. With a background in health sciences, Leah was originally an AllerGen

trainee before assuming responsibility for its HQP program. She very efficiently organized that network's highly successful final trainee symposium and final research conference, and she brings her characteristic enthusiasm and resourcefulness to her position with NMIN.

### **Digital Initiatives Consultant**



**Marshall Beck** brings experience from his ongoing role as Digital Initiatives Manager for the AllerGen NCE network, which has completed its 14 years of NCE operations and

is currently in the process of NCE wind-down. In addition to website development, IT support and social media management, Marshall has worked extensively in communications and has skills in desktop publishing, writing, editing, and graphic design.

**On June 17, the following two additional staff members will join the NMIN Administrative Centre team:**

### **Manager, Research and Partnerships**



**Daniel Rogers** is a project leader with 15 years of management experience in implementing complex research initiatives in academic, public healthcare and not-

for profit sectors. He comes to NMIN most immediately from the Rick Hansen Institute where he was Associate Director, Clinical Research Operations. In addition to his experience with running research programs, supporting clinical trials, and managing partnerships and collaborations, his charisma and presentation skills will make him an excellent representative for the network.

### **Executive Assistant**



**María José Barros Rodríguez** has 15 years of experience as an Administrative and Executive Assistant, in support of senior management positions across

various industry settings, and a background in finance. She is currently pursuing professional development in project management.

# NMIN Networking and Promotion

NMIN was well represented at the [2019 Canadian Society for Pharmaceutical Sciences \(CSPS\) Annual Symposium](#), held jointly with the Canadian Chapter of Controlled Release Society (CC-CRS), on May 21-24, 2019, in Vancouver, BC.

Numerous NMIN members attended and delivered presentations, and in various ways the fledging NMIN network was highlighted to event delegates.

NMIN HQP Dominik “Dom” Witzigmann displayed copies of NMIN’s Fast Facts flyers, which attracted considerable interest, especially from early-career delegates, and numerous students expressed interest in the network’s planned training program.

Dom felt the exercise was very effective in raising awareness about NMIN and the status of its members as world leaders in the field of nanomedicines. The NMIN Fast Facts flyer is available from the [NMIN website](#).

NMIN’s Scientific Director Dr. Pieter Cullis also opened his scientific presentation on gene therapies with a series of slides about the network.

A template of slides by which to introduce NMIN is under preparation and will soon be made available to network members for customizing and presenting at conferences and other events.



The flyer is titled "NMIN FAST FACTS 2019" and "NANOMEDICINES INNOVATION NETWORK RESEAU D'INNOVATION NANOMEDICINES". It is divided into several sections: Scientific Director (Dr. Pieter Cullis), Associate Scientific Director (Dr. Gilbert Walker and Dr. Christine Allen), VISION, MISSION, GOALS, FUNDING, RESEARCH THEMES, CORES, and contact information for NMIN ICI Inc. The flyer also includes logos for NMIN and NCI ICI.

**Scientific Director**  
Dr. Pieter Cullis  
Professor, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology  
University of British Columbia (UBC)

**Associate Scientific Director**  
Dr. Gilbert Walker  
Professor, Chemistry  
University of Toronto (UTORONTO)  
Dr. Christine Allen  
Professor, Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto (MSP & Cassidy Building)

**VISION:** to establish and mobilize a network drawn from academia, industry, and other not-for-profit research enterprises to maintain and improve Canada's position as a global leader in developing next generation nanomedicines

**MISSION:** to develop novel therapeutics to cure high-burden human diseases and new diagnostics to detect disease more precisely; to commercialize those products to bring health and economic benefits to Canadians; and to train the skilled workforce required by the growing nanomedicines industry

**GOALS:**

- to develop nanomedicines that enhance the therapeutic properties of small molecule drugs
- to develop nanomedicines that enable gene therapy
- to develop new diagnostics based on nanotechnology
- to train scientists in the technology and business of nanomedicines
- to implement a cohesive nanomedicines IP and commercialization strategy
- to translate nanomedicine products and technologies to benefit patients, new companies, the Canadian economy, and patients worldwide

**FUNDING:** NMIN was awarded \$18,532,000 in funding over 5 years (2019-2024) by the Government of Canada through the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program.

**RESEARCH THEMES:**

- Targeted Drug Development  
Leaders: Dr. Marcel Bally, University of British Columbia  
Dr. Shyh-Der Li, University of British Columbia
- Enabling Gene Therapies  
Leaders: Dr. Pieter Cullis, University of British Columbia  
Dr. Christian Kastrop, University of British Columbia
- Diagnostics  
Leaders: Dr. Shama Kelly, University of Toronto  
Dr. Gilbert Walker, University of Toronto
- HQP and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion  
Leader: Dr. Christine Allen, University of Toronto

**CORES:**

- NANOCORE**  
Nanomedicines Formulation and Characterization Core Facility  
Leader: Dr. Pieter Cullis, University of British Columbia  
Co-leader: Dr. Dominik Witzigmann, University of British Columbia
- PHARMACORE**  
Pharmacology/Toxicology and Scale-up Core Facility  
Leader: Dr. Marcel Bally, University of British Columbia  
Co-leader: Dr. Nancy Dos Santos, University of British Columbia

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RESEAU D'INNOVATION NANOMEDICINES

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## SAVE THE DATES

### *Vancouver Nanomedicine Day 2019— September 12, 2019*

Across Canada, leading experts are conducting significant research in the area of nanomedicines, and this emerging field is expected to contribute to the future of health care and personalized medicine in a significant way. With the formation of NMIN, these research endeavours and their socio-economic impacts are about to increase.

To make these efforts more visible, to engender greater collaboration, and to share available resources and knowledge, NMIN and The University of British Columbia will jointly host the fifth Vancouver Nanomedicine Day on September 12, 2019.

Download an [event flyer](#) from the NMIN website. Additional event details will be posted as they are confirmed



### *NMIN's Scientific Meeting – September 13-14, 2019*

Immediately after Vancouver Nanomedicine Day, NMIN investigators are invited to participate in the first NMIN Scientific Meeting, to be held at the Sheraton Wall Centre on September 13 and 14, 2019.

This meeting will allow NMIN members to network, explore opportunities for collaboration, and further advance the network's emerging strategic plans for research, commercialization and capacity-building.

***Please note that if your proposed NMIN project is awarded funding, a portion of the project budget will be available to cover the costs of attending this event.***

***Please send newsletter enquiries  
or comments to the editor: Marshall Beck,  
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[info@nanomedicines.ca](mailto:info@nanomedicines.ca)***