



# WESTON FAMILY FOUNDATION SCALING UP ANNOUNCEMENT

Media Release

**High Stakes, High Impact: \$20 million from the Weston Family Foundation awarded to cutting-edge health research projects at the forefront of innovation**

*McGill University and University of Alberta each awarded \$10M to pursue bold research with transformational potential to redefine health outcomes for Canadians*

**Canada, September 23, 2025** — In a move to take bold, calculated risks to transform health innovation in Canada, the Weston Family Foundation today announced \$20 million in funding to support two pioneering projects, each receiving a \$10 million grant. The funding will support highly ambitious scientific endeavors under the Foundation's Healthy Aging Strategy, comprised of the Weston Brain Institute and the Weston Family Microbiome Initiative.

“This level of investment reflects our belief that bold ideas, supported by rigorous science and the opportunity to make real-world change, can alter the trajectory of health care and improve lives for Canadians,” said **Garfield Mitchell, Chair, Weston Family Foundation**. “These projects are tackling pressing challenges that impact Canadians, and we are proud to support homegrown research that could lead to entirely new paradigms in treatment, prevention, and care.”

Spanning multiple years, the funded projects are:



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- **The Next Generation of Biomarkers – Led by Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto, McGill University**

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, characterized by progressive memory loss and cognitive decline. According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada, more than 750,000 Canadians are living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. Effective personalized treatments for Alzheimer's disease depend on the availability of accurate and accessible biomarkers for diagnosing and staging the disease, as well as identifying optimal treatment strategies.

Dr. Pedro Rosa-Neto's groundbreaking project aims to leverage and enhance the existing infrastructure at the McConnell Brain Imaging Centre of The Neuro by acquiring a new Panorama GS tomograph from United Imaging; the first ultra-high-sensitivity whole body PET/CT scanner in Canada. The Panorama empowers the development of the next generation of Alzheimer's biomarkers, with a particular focus on neuroinflammation—a key driver of cognitive decline in neurodegenerative conditions. By advancing novel biomarkers of neuroinflammation, this work holds the promise of transforming Alzheimer's research and care, enabling earlier diagnosis, more precise monitoring of disease progression, and the development of personalized therapies. Ultimately, these innovations could lead to improved outcomes and quality of life for the growing number of Canadians affected by Alzheimer's disease.

- **Microbiome-Based Precision Nutrition for Optimal IBD Health – Led by Dr. Heather Armstrong, University of Alberta and Dr. Alain Stintzi, University of Ottawa**

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a lifelong, chronic disease linked to alterations in the gut microbiome. According to Crohn's and Colitis Canada, it affects more than 300,000 Canadians and has significant negative impacts on health and well-being. Research has demonstrated that personalizing diets to an individual's gut microbiome can improve IBD symptoms and drive improvements in disease outcomes.

Dr. Armstrong and Dr. Stintzi's project will develop a new tool that is able to predict a patient's individual responses to dietary carbohydrates (fibres and starches) and can provide personalized guidance on the proper diet to treat symptoms of IBD. The new tool will empower Canadians to take greater ownership of their health, supporting both patients and healthcare providers. This tool will also enable healthcare providers to incorporate dietary recommendations into treatment plans. This project will involve interdisciplinary collaboration between the University of Alberta and the University of Ottawa.



Selected through a highly competitive review process, the two projects were recognized for their visionary approaches, scientific rigour, and potential to make a significant and measurable impact on the well-being of Canadians within an aggressive time horizon and at-scale.

These scaling investments align with the Weston Family Foundation's mission to catalyze innovation in health research, particularly in areas where initial funding has shown promising results. By scaling up funding, projects can expand their scope, accelerate progress, and most importantly, have a more significant impact.

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#### **ABOUT THE WESTON FAMILY FOUNDATION:**

At the Weston Family Foundation (formerly The W. Garfield Weston Foundation), more than 60 years of philanthropy have taught us that there is a relationship between healthy landscapes and healthy people. Which is why we champion world-class health research and innovation with the same passion that we support initiatives to protect and restore biodiversity on Canada's unique landscapes. Our spark, shepherd, scale approach to research ensures the best ideas have the best chance of success. We take a collaborative approach to philanthropy, working alongside forward-thinking partners to advance Canada and create lasting impacts. We aspire to do more than provide funding; we want to enable others to find transformational ways to improve the well-being of Canadians.

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