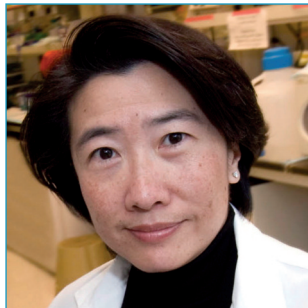


The CAN in UCAN

By Rae S. M. Yeung, MD, PhD, FRCPC

The Understanding Childhood Arthritis Network (UCAN) is a federation of research networks in childhood arthritis and rheumatic diseases, whose unique focus is translational research. Advances in molecular medicine combined with the drive towards precision care provide a tremendous opportunity to accelerate translation of biological understanding to the bedside. UCAN was built on the very Canadian principles of collaboration and compromise, recognizing that uniform approaches are required for robust collaborative research into pathobiology, especially for diseases where patient numbers at single institutions are small. Standardization is also critical to increase reproducibility between centres, which is a requisite step towards clinical implementation based on translational science. This complex task relies on shared resources, input from individuals with different expertise and international collaboration.

With funding from the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN), and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, I started UCAN together with a handful of translational researchers from six countries (Canada, the Netherlands, U.K., U.S.A., Germany, and Italy) in 2009. It has now grown beyond our expectations to enjoy an unprecedented level of international collaboration and is the only network to unite all of the major international organizations involved



in childhood arthritis research, together representing over 50 countries and 300 sites. UCAN is leading development and implementation of standardized biologic sample collection and bioassay performance, together with providing core resources and facility development in partnership with established expertise in clinical research and trial design available from national and international networks.

Together, we are building standardized international research platforms to support rapid translation of basic science findings to improve clinical care. UCAN will provide the opportunity for affected children all over the world to participate in high quality translational research. Our work has culminated in the 2016 London Declaration by leaders of all major research networks in pediatric rheumatology “to improve care and ultimately cure childhood rheumatic disorders through worldwide collaboration.” So very Canadian – eh?

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Best Training in the World...Only in Canada? *(continued from page 19)*

temic lupus erythematosus (cSLE) team in a European project for developing standards of care for children with autoimmune diseases; (ii) having a PhD student studying long-term outcomes of cSLE; and (iii) starting a national cSLE registry in the Netherlands.

Back here in Canada, in addition to the wonderful colleagues and friends that we have all made, we have also expanded our knowledge of food and other customs dis-

tinct to different cultures, while realizing opportunities for combining work with foreign travel to maintain our ties.

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