

Press release

THE PRESTIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL *NATURE* RECOGNIZES THE SCIENTIFIC WORK CARRIED OUT WITH THE RESEARCH CENTRE OF HOPITAL LAVAL AND AT THE UNIVERSITY LAVAL

MEASURING WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE IS KEY TO ASSESSING CARDIOMETABOLIC RISK

Québec, CANADA – Thursday, December 14th 2006 • Today's issue of *Nature* (Vol # 444) summarizes in an article, signed by both Professor Jean-Pierre Després and Doctor Isabelle Lemieux from the University of Laval, the current issues and status of abdominal obesity and the Metabolic Syndrome. Given the announced pandemic for this syndrome – 300 million people will be diagnosed with diabetes between now and year 2025¹, cardiovascular diseases will have become the world's leading cause of death by 2010², already over one billion people, mainly among the poor in developed nations, are overweight³ –, health policies can no longer ignore the importance of global Cardiometabolic Risk. This term describes a cluster of metabolic abnormalities associated with cardiovascular disease and diabetes type 2 and, in particular, abdominal obesity, whose importance as a risk factor has simply been underestimated for far too long. Yet, measuring it is easy, quick and inexpensive. Any doctor can do it. All they need to do is remember to wrap an ordinary tape measure around the waist of their patients at risk.

For the past 20 years now, Professor Jean-Pierre Després, Director of Research in Cardiology at the Laval Hospital Research Centre, Scientific Director of the International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk and Professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Laval, has conducted numerous studies with his team on this subject. For him, abdominal obesity is a major risk factor for diabetes type 2 and cardiovascular disease. "In light of the alarming increase of these diseases, we need to do everything we can to help doctors who treat such patients change their habits and start integrating, in a more systematic manner, measurements of waist circumference in their daily practice". For Professor Després and his team, waist circumference is as vital a sign as hypertension, smoking and cholesterol for estimating cardiovascular risk. Indeed, their work has allowed them to show that it can help determine levels of abdominal adiposity, now recognized as key contributor to several cardiometabolic dysfunctions.

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In the December 14th issue of *Nature*, Professor Després and his colleague Doctor Isabelle Lemieux, have summarized the current state of knowledge regarding abdominal obesity as a Cardiometabolic Risk factor. According to Professor Després: “There is still quite a lot of controversy around the Metabolic Syndrome and it is precisely this controversial context that has led *Nature* to ask us to present key elements of on-going international debates while putting into perspective the specific areas of our research. He added: “Our position is quite simple, abdominal obesity is by far, for reasons shared in the article itself, the most widespread form of the Metabolic Syndrome.” “Nevertheless, this should not prevent doctors from also focussing their attention on more classical risk factors including age, gender, good and bad cholesterol, high blood pressure, history of tobacco and diabetes, to evaluate cardiovascular risk in a more holistic manner, or more precisely Cardiometabolic Risk”.



Pr. Jean-Pierre Després

This publication in *Nature* underscores the expertise and leadership of the Laval Hospital Research Centre and University of Laval in this area”, mentioned Dr. Raymond Leblanc, Deputy Provost of Research at University of Laval. “Professor Després and his colleagues, scientists, cardiologists and heart surgeons were not only pioneers of these important discoveries on the role of abdominal obesity, but will be increasing their efforts in this area in order to significantly improve worldwide patient management added Dr. Denis Richard, Director of the Laval Hospital Research Centre. According to him, “The new challenge for our center and our university lies now in our ability to provide adequate lab facilities, equipment and resources for all our physicians, scientists and research assistants”.

Keeping in mind these constraints, Dr. François Philippon, Director of the Multidisciplinary Department of Cardiology at Laval Hospital stated that “The work of Dr. Després and his team is a key component of our research activities in cardiology, metabolism and cardiovascular risk factors. Our team’s research and clinical expertise in preventive cardiology has now achieved international recognition”. Dr. Paul Poirier, Medical Director of the Pavilion for the prevention of cardiovascular disease at Laval Hospital commented that “So far, we can be proud of what we have achieved with limited resources which cannot be compared to those of the major American research centres working in the same area”. “However, given that our environment requires so much research and training of qualified personnel, we need important funding, especially if we want to continue to remain on the forefront of knowledge in this field, as is the case today”, he concluded.

Professor Després, who has personally been funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research during most of his career, emphasizes the need to support the establishment and its young research scientists in Québec and Canada. “Knowledge development through research will not only allow us to provide better health care to patients, but also to adapt and implement preventive care strategies that will have been scientifically proven”.

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About the International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk

Founded in 2005 at University of Laval, the International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk is made up of 25 world-renowned international scientists. Their goals are to develop awareness and knowledge around the Cardiometabolic Risk factor in order to improve international patient management. Each year, this group organizes a series of conferences and debates. Starting 2007, they will be providing physicians and patients with various educational materials.

About the Laval Hospital

Founded in 1918, Laval Hospital, the heart and lung institute of University Laval includes cardiology, pneumology, and the surgical management of obesity departments. The Hospital's expertise includes ambulatory and hospital care, teaching, research, and the evaluation of health technologies.



About the Laval Hospital Research Centre

The main goal of the Laval Hospital Research Centre is to slow the obesity epidemic and the progression of cardiac and pulmonary disease through research and prevention. The Laval Hospital Research Centre has focused its development around this vision and aims to become the leading North American research centre in cardiology, pneumology, and obesity.

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- ² <http://www.inserm.fr/fr/recherches/pnr/pnrc.html> – last accessed on December 11, 2006
- ³ <http://www.rfi.fr/fichiers/mfi/sante/744.asp> – last accessed on December 11, 2006