



## NEWS RELEASE

### TOP NEUROPHYSIOLOGIST TO LEAD STRUCTURAL GENOMICS CONSORTIUM'S CHEMICAL BIOLOGY EFFORT

*International public-private partnership appoints new Chief Scientist at Oxford laboratory*

31 January 2008, Oxford — The Structural Genomics Consortium (SGC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Chas Bountra to the position of Chief Scientist of its laboratory at the University of Oxford. Dr. Bountra will lead a team of 65 scientists at the SGC Oxford site and will oversee several new scientific initiatives including the Consortium's new chemical biology effort.

Dr. Bountra has worked in the pharmaceutical industry for twenty years, most recently as the Vice President of Biology at GlaxoSmithKline (UK) within the Neurology Center for Excellence in Drug Discovery. An electrophysiologist by training, he has played a major role in advancing more than 30 drug candidates into the clinic for disorders including post-operative pain, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, stroke, motor neuron disease and epilepsy. Dr. Bountra was involved in the launch of the first novel treatment for IBS, and his group was the first to show that neurokinin NK1 receptor antagonists are anti-emetic — a discovery that directly influenced drug development. During his tenure at GlaxoSmithKline, he held Visiting Professorships at both Imperial College (Neuroscience and Mental Health) and University of Oxford (Translational Medicine).

Dr. Bountra's extensive experience in managing complex scientific collaborations among different scientific disciplines will be invaluable to the SGC, as he will be called on to lead the Consortium's new effort in chemical biology. This initiative will exploit the SGC's expertise in the functional and structural biology of human proteins and apply the expertise to create chemical probes for use in target validation.

"One of the best ways to validate a drug target is by using a chemical probe of function," explains Dr. Bountra. "And one of the best techniques to generate chemical probes is to use protein and structure-based methods for which the SGC is renowned. Having purified more than 1500 human proteins of therapeutic relevance and determined the three-dimensional structures of more than 500 of them, the SGC is a world leader in this structure-based approach. My aim is to capitalize on this phenomenal resource and collaborate with chemists in the public and private sectors to create potent, selective and bioavailable inhibitors for the SGC's proteins. Like our protein structures, the chemical probes generated by the SGC will be made freely-available for scientists in academia and industry."

Dr. Bountra's appointment is welcomed by the SGC's Director, Dr. Aled Edwards. "We are thrilled to have someone of Dr. Bountra's experience come on board to lead our Oxford laboratory," said Edwards. "Chas is special. He has overseen dozens of successful trans-disciplinary collaborations, and programs that reach across disciplines — to biologists and chemists in both academia and industry — are exactly where the SGC's science is headed in the future."

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## Notes for editors

1. **The Structural Genomics Consortium** (SGC) is a not-for-profit organization formed in July 2004 to determine the three-dimensional structures of proteins of medical relevance, and place them in the public domain immediately and without restriction. The SGC's 165 scientists work out of the Universities of Oxford and Toronto and Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm. [www.thesgconline.org](http://www.thesgconline.org)

The SGC receives funding from Canadian, Swedish and British sponsors representing both the public and private sectors: the Canada Foundation for Innovation ([innovation.ca](http://innovation.ca)), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) ([cihr-irsc.gc.ca](http://cihr-irsc.gc.ca)), Genome Canada ([genomecanada.ca](http://genomecanada.ca)) through the Ontario Genomics Institute (OGI) ([OntarioGenomics.ca](http://OntarioGenomics.ca)), Karolinska Institutet ([ki.se](http://ki.se)), the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation ([wallenberg.org](http://wallenberg.org)), the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA) ([vinnova.se](http://vinnova.se)), Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research ([stratresearch.se](http://stratresearch.se)), the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation ([mri.gov.on.ca](http://mri.gov.on.ca)), the Wellcome Trust ([wellcome.ac.uk](http://wellcome.ac.uk)), GlaxoSmithKline plc. (GSK) ([gsk.com](http://gsk.com)), Merck ([merck.com](http://merck.com)) and Novartis ([novartis.com](http://novartis.com)).

2. **SGC Toronto** – The SGC Toronto laboratories seek to determine the three dimensional structures of human proteins of therapeutic relevance to diseases such as cancer and malaria. The SGC is housed within the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. The Chief Scientist at SGC Toronto is Dr. Cheryl Arrowsmith. [www.sgc.utoronto.ca](http://www.sgc.utoronto.ca)

3. **SGC Oxford** – The other original SGC site, part of the University of Oxford, specializes in determining the structures of protein families involved in cancer and metabolic diseases. 65 scientists work from the Oxford site. The Chief Scientist at the SGC Oxford is Dr. Chas Bountra. [www.sgc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.sgc.ox.ac.uk)

4. **SGC Stockholm** – The Stockholm laboratory was established in 2005 by Professor Pär Nordlund and is hosted by the Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics at Karolinska Institutet. Currently 25 researchers are employed by the project and seek to determine the three dimensional structures of proteins involved in metabolism and neurobiology. The Chief Scientist at SGC Stockholm is Dr. Johan Weigelt. [sgc.ki.se](http://sgc.ki.se)

