The Canadian Vasculitis Network

By Christian Pagnoux, MD, MSc, MPH

The Canadian Vasculitis Network (CanVasc) is a national scientific and clinical research network. It was created in Toronto in November 2010 by Dr. Christian Pagnoux and Dr. Simon Carette (Vasculitis Clinic, Division of Rheumatology, Mount Sinai Hospital and University Health Network, Toronto) and Dr. Nader Khalidi (Division of Rheumatology, St. Joseph’s Healthcare, Hamilton), respectively. The fundamental aims of CanVasc are to help optimize the management of vasculitis, and to conduct and assist with studies on vasculitis in Canada to improve outcomes.

The Network and its Centers

The first task of the CanVasc founders was to identify physicians across Canada with scientific interest and clinical expertise in vasculitis who were willing to be part of CanVasc. A list of referral centers has been established (Table 1). A complete list of centres can be accessed on the CanVasc website at www.canvasc.ca.

Education and Awareness Initiatives

Core members of CanVasc have initiated educational and awareness programs for healthcare providers, including training sessions at conferences (such as workshops at the CRA annual scientific meetings), educational materials (such as the Recent Evidence in Vasculitis Science and Treatment [REVISIT] program) and a website with regularly updated information. CanVasc also holds an annual meeting during which recent vasculitis study results are discussed, and ongoing and future trials are reviewed. The first conference was held in June 2011 in Toronto; the next one was held in November 2012. Program and registration information is available at www.canvasc.ca.

Initiate, Conduct, and Promote Vasculitis Studies

Because vasculitides are rare, studies from CanVasc and from the North American Vasculitis Clinical Research Consortium (VCRC) must be multicentric and/or multinational. The VCRC operates only two centres in Canada at present (Toronto and Hamilton), with no plans to enroll any other Canadian centres at the moment. CanVasc promotes and participates in international therapy trials, including plasma exchange and glucocorticoid dosing in the treatment of anti-neutrophil cytoplasm antibody-associated vasculitis (PEXIVAS), driven in Canada by Dr. Michael Walsh, an associated CanVasc core member (Division of Nephrology, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton, Ontario). It also aims to develop a Canadian database for adults with vasculitis; the project leaders are Dr. Lillian Barna, Dr. Nataliya Milman, Dr. Christian Pagnoux, and Dr. Marinka Twilt. This database will be connected with A Registry for Childhood Vasculitis: e-entry (ARCHiVe) and BRAINWORKS, two ongoing pediatric databases for children with systemic and brain vasculitides, driven by Dr. Susanne Benseler (Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto) and Dr. David Cabral (B.C. Children’s Hospital, Vancouver), and InterSPACE, an international database of central nervous system vasculitis, recently launched and coordinated by Dr. Sylvain Lanthier (Division of Neurology, Montreal).

National Guidelines and Consensus

In addition to the above-mentioned objectives, CanVasc aims to develop consensus recommendations for diagnosis and therapeutic management of vasculitis in Canada, starting with vasculitides associated with anti-neutrophil cytoplasm antibody (ANCA). The initial step was to identify...
main questions according to Canadian specificities. A needs assessment questionnaire was developed by Dr. Leilani Famorca with the help of Dr. Marinka Twilt, under the guidance of Dr. Christian Pagnoux and Dr. Patrick Liang. It was sent by email in July 2012 to members of the Canadian rheumatology, respirology, and nephrology societies.

Vasculitis is no rarer in Canada than it is in the U.S or Europe. Canada has numerous renowned physicians and researchers involved with vasculitis, who are now members of CanVasc; as such, the network could certainly become a sustainable key player in the vasculitis field and a major VCRC partner.

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Table 1
List of CanVasc Centres and their Core Members

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Principal Core Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Dr. Kam Shojania, Dr. David Cabral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>Dr. Elaine Yacyshyn</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>Dr. Aurore Fifi-Mah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>Saskatoon</td>
<td>Dr. Regina Taylor-Gjere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>Dr. David Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Dr. Simon Carette, Dr. Susanne Benseler</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Dr. Nader Khalidi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Dr. Nataliya Milman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>Dr. Tanveer Towheed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Dr. Lillian Barra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newmarket</td>
<td>Dr. Carter Thorne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>Sherbrooke</td>
<td>Dr. Patrick Liang</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Dr. Michelle Goulet, Dr. Christian Pineau</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>Dr. Judith Trudeau, Dr. Paul Fortin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>St. John’s</td>
<td>Dr. Majed Khraiishi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>Dr. Volodko Bakowsky, Dr. Christine Dipchand</td>
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The CRAJ...en route!

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Bon voyage!

Far from Edmonton, Dr. Tony Russell enjoys the CRAJ on the canal at Su-Zhong, outside Shanghai.