



## ***Solving Kids' Cancer* invests in SickKids researchers to support Neuroblastoma Drug Discovery Group**

**Toronto, ON (December XX, 2008)** – On a mission to improve survivorship rates, Solving Kids' Cancer has invested in some of the world's leading paediatric cancer researchers to support innovative approaches to research and patient therapies. The team at Solving Kids' Cancer in New York City is supporting the Neuroblastoma Drug Discovery Group at SickKids Research Institute with a \$400,000 gift inspired by The James Fund at SickKids Foundation. This is the largest single gift associated with The James Fund and it acknowledges the innovative research and leadership of the Drug Discovery Group.

The Neuroblastoma Drug Discovery Group is led by Dr. David Kaplan, senior scientist, and Dr. Sylvain Baruchel, pediatric oncologist/associate scientist, and includes the laboratories of Meredith Irwin, Paul Thorner, Herman Yeger and Maria Zielenska. Drug Discovery Group, a team of paediatric health researchers is housed at The James Birrell Laboratories, named after an eight-year-old boy who lost his battle with neuroblastoma, a cancer of the nervous system. Neuroblastoma accounts for nearly 10 per cent of all childhood cancers and is the most common tumour in babies under one year.

“We are convinced that we need to produce a new generation of effective anti-cancer drugs for children and our drug discovery endeavours to find those that will be effective against patients' cancer stem cells,” says Dr. Kaplan. “Opportunities like this to conduct further research enhance our ability to bring new drugs to children with cancer.”

The goal of The James Birrell Laboratories team is to determine why neuroblastoma arises and becomes resistant to conventional cancer drugs, and to discover new and effective anti-cancer agents for this type of tumour. These scientists have made several important discoveries in the past year, including identifying cancer stem cells that might be responsible for why neuroblastoma relapses and returns following chemotherapy treatments. They have also identified these cells in the bone marrow of neuroblastoma patients in remission.

“The Neuroblastoma Drug Discovery Group is a perfect match for us,” says Scott Kennedy, executive director, Solving Kids' Cancer, who, along with John London, founded the organization. “We are extremely excited to collaborate with Dr. Kaplan and Dr. Baruchel in what we believe will be a significant breakthrough discovery program that can make important inroads towards improving survivorship for children with neuroblastoma.”

“It is philanthropy like that of Solving Kids Cancer and their belief in the power of paediatric health research that allows us to continue to invest in the future of our children,” says Michael O’Mahoney, president, SickKids Foundation. “The James Birrell Laboratories scientists have made some significant inroads that would not have occurred without the generosity of the community.”

#### About Solving Kids’ Cancer

Solving Kids’ Cancer is a non-profit therapeutic development venture whose mission is to extend life for children with the deadliest forms of childhood cancer today while improving survivorship to 75 per cent or greater by 2015. Based in New York City, the organization invests in aggressive and innovative research undertaken by leading paediatric researchers in North America. Solving Kids’ Cancer brings together, leads and manages the efforts of visionary scientists, forward-thinking industry professionals and impassioned parents to help solve kids’ cancer. For more information visit [www.kidcancer.org](http://www.kidcancer.org).

#### About The James Fund

In an effort to beat the clock and find an effective treatment and cure for their son James, Syd and Pam Birrell established The James Fund for Neuroblastoma Research at SickKids. They have rallied the community and families from around the world, raising \$2.7 million in seven years and translating donor dollars into high impact research. To date, there are 10 research projects underway, five full-time research salaries funded and 17 peer reviewed articles published. Dr. Kaplan’s lab was named The James Birrell Laboratories at SickKids Research Institute in November 2007, recognizing the impact of James and the Birrell family on neuroblastoma research.

The James Fund also supports a Canadian scientist to work in New York City on a joint project between SickKids and Cornell University Medical College labs, the first example of a joint scientist working between the US and Canada in the children’s cancer field.

#### About SickKids Foundation

SickKids Foundation is the largest non-governmental granting agency in children's health in Canada. Since 1972, the Foundation has generated more than a billion dollars towards children's health care and has granted more than \$70 million to researchers across the country. Our mission is to inspire our communities to invest in health and scientific advances to improve the health of children in Canada and around the world. Our vision is, "Healthier Children. A Better World."

In September 2005, SickKids Foundation launched the largest fundraising campaign for a hospital in Canada. The SickKids Believe fundraising campaign has a goal of \$500 million to be reached by 2011. For more information visit [www.sickkidsfoundation.com](http://www.sickkidsfoundation.com).

For further information, please contact:

Sandra Chiovitti  
Public Affairs, SickKids Foundation  
p: 416.813.8292  
e: [sandra.chiovitti@sickkidsfoundation.com](mailto:sandra.chiovitti@sickkidsfoundation.com)

Scott Kennedy  
Executive Director, Solving Kids’ Cancer  
p: 646.283.0347  
e: [scott@kidcancer.org](mailto:scott@kidcancer.org)