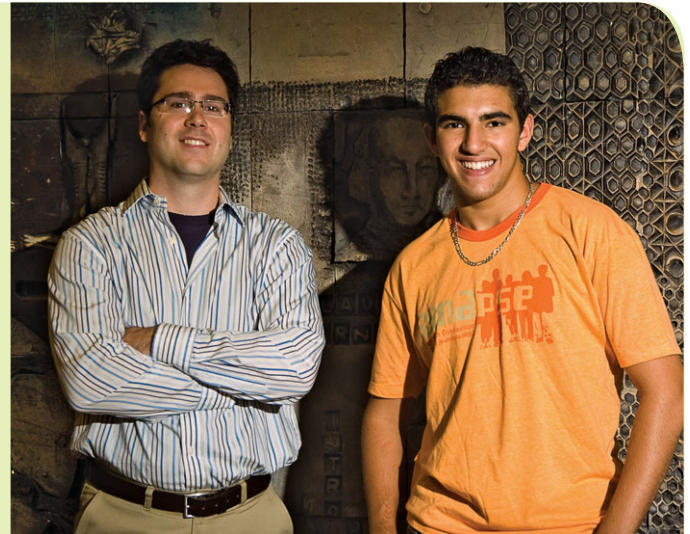


### SYNAPSE MENTORSHIP REMAINS STRONG!

Synapse – Youth Connection initiative continues on the path of success. We currently have over 6,000 registered Synapse mentors – and the number increases daily! Further success can also be found in our second annual survey. From July 2008 to June 2009, 112,000 students were reached by Synapse mentors in various ways. This represents a 105% increase since a similar 2007-2008 survey. Synapse mentors devoted 27,300 hours of their busy schedules to voluntarily reach, educate and inspire 62,000 Canadian students. An additional 50,800 Canadian youth participated in CIHR-funded health research activities delivered by various Synapse-based partners, which include science outreach organizations such as Actua, Let's Talk Science and Youth Science Canada.

Mentors represent the foundation of the Synapse program as a whole, and I congratulate all those who have devoted and continue to devote their time towards educational youth outreach in science and health research. We are continuing to do our best to match mentors up with students according to their outreach



Dr. Frédéric Charron and Sami Obaid

preferences (activities, age groups, locations, languages). At CIHR, we look forward to working with you! Together, we can help put Canada at the forefront of science and technology through the creation of another generation of future scientists and health researchers.

**Christian Riel**  
Manager, Youth and Public Outreach  
CIHR Communications and Public Outreach

### 2009 SYNAPSE – YOUTH OUTREACH INITIATIVE COMPETITION THE RESULTS ARE IN!

CIHR funded six partners through the 2009 Synapse – Youth Outreach Initiative Competition who will collectively offer health research outreach activities to students across Canada. Those who were successful include:

**Let's Talk Science**, a national organization with over 1,900 volunteer researchers and scientists. These volunteers collaborate with school teachers to reach

youth through in-class workshops, field trips and science camps.

**Youth Science Canada**, with the help of 8,000 volunteers that includes scientists and health researchers, encourages the scientific efforts of over half a million young Canadians at science fairs through a network of over 100 local organizations.

**Bioscience Education Canada**, a not-for-profit corporation that coordinates the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge science competition, which displays the outstanding work of high school students who have conducted research projects and experiments of their own design.

**Canadian Medical Hall of Fame** offers the Discovery Days program as a one-day educational career option for high school students at universities that's composed of lectures, hands-on workshops and a career panel discussion featuring Synapse mentors.

**Actua**, a national charitable organization, provides young Canadians with positive, hands-on learning experiences

in science, technology and engineering. Their Dream Team of science instructors (including Synapse mentors) delivers high quality, dynamic and interactive health research programming to communities throughout northern Canada.

**DreamCatcher Mentoring** offers 3-6 month e-mentoring and leadership programs that connect Synapse mentors with high school students in Yukon and Nunavut. It's all part of a collective effort to stop the high school drop-out rate and demonstrate the value of careers in biomedical science and health.

## JUDGING AT SCIENCE FAIRS – WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON FOR YOU?

If you are now a Synapse mentor, and have expressed interest in being a judge at a youth science fair, odds are that you would like to know where these fairs will be taking place across Canada. In collaboration with Youth Science Canada, CIHR will start to supply that information for you, province-by-province, towards the end of January 2010.

In the meantime, for those of you who want to be a judge but don't know quite what's involved, we have an instruction handbook available. Should you want a hard copy of this [handbook](#), please e-mail [synapse@cihr-irsc.gc.ca](mailto:synapse@cihr-irsc.gc.ca).

## DREAMCATCHER MENTORING – TEACHING ALL CANADIAN STUDENTS THE VALUES OF SCIENCE REGARDLESS OF THEIR LOCATION

CIHR is actively trying to create connections between registered Synapse mentors and all Canadian students. To achieve this, we work closely with organizations that provide educational scientific outreach to under-served youth. A prime example of this collaboration is the DreamCatcher Mentoring program.

Created in 2005, this program has reached over 450 students, in grades 9-12, from the Yukon and Nunavut territories. This was achieved through the program's safe, monitored website that helps Synapse mentors guide youth between September and June towards their respective 'dream' careers – including science and health research.

One such volunteer, Dr. Moira Grant, e-mentored a northern female high school student about the steps that need to be taken in order to pursue a career in health care. In three months time, Dr. Grant, Director of Research for the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science and Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Medicine at McMaster University, advised the student of proper courses that would help her go in that career direction, sent links of science/medical games and educational activities, explained what it was like to work in medical laboratories, and discussed some of the issues that health professionals face as a whole.

Josh Silvertown, the founder and Executive Director of DreamCatcher Mentoring, was so impressed with Dr. Grant's mentorship skills that he selected her out of eight applicants to venture to the Yukon in order to offer a face-to-face, hands-on workshop – and also promote the program.

At various schools, Dr. Grant encouraged students to learn about different topics related to her research into health services. The one-on-one interaction proved to be beneficial. She developed a CD-ROM for computer labs so that students could explore medical laboratory-related websites (which included interactive educational games). She also developed six different stop-and-go stations where students could take part in activities that would help them understand laboratory research – everything from tumours to blood cells to urine testing to glucose levels.

In her eyes, Dr. Grant has found the whole mentorship experience to be beneficial. She feels that the program's virtual mentoring approach is a step in the right direction, because it attracts the interest of today's youth on-line and will likely improve some of the employment opportunities that exist up north.

"We need to get them so enthusiastic about these professions while they're still in high school," says Dr. Grant. "That way, they'll get the education that they need and then return to their communities to serve them in the health sector. That is one of the merits of this program."

## WHO WON THE 2009 CIHR CANADIAN NATIONAL BRAIN BEE?

For the second consecutive year, CIHR acted as the national sponsor for the Canadian National Brain Bee competition. The competition, which motivates youth to learn about the human brain and inspires them to consider careers in the basic and clinical neurosciences, took place at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 29 and 30, 2009. Sean Amodeo, an 18-year-old student from Toronto's York Memorial Collegiate Institute, won after answering questions related to memory, stress, brain imaging and neurological disorders. He competed against 11 other students from across Canada.

Amodeo then represented Canada at the International Brain Bee (IBB) in Toronto and challenged representatives from six other countries – Australia, India, New Zealand, Romania, Uganda and the United States. Amodeo came in fifth place at this competition, while Julia Chartove of the United States won the top honour.

The next Canadian National Brain Bee will be held at McMaster University in May 2010.