

For immediate release

## **Crohn's and Colitis: The Economic Burden of "Canada's Diseases"** **How Canada leads the fight to find new treatments and the cures**

**Toronto, November 20, 2014** – Canada has among the highest rates in the world of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis – lifelong illnesses that can be debilitating, causing severe abdominal pain and prolonged diarrhea. Most alarming, the number of children diagnosed with this disease has increased by over 50% over the last two decades. The fastest growing group of patients with these diseases are children under the age of 10.

In 2012 alone, these diseases cost Canada \$2.8 billion. The economic burden attached to having one in every 150 Canadians living with these diseases is enormous – nationally and on individuals and families. Dr. Eric Benchimol, a leading paediatric gastroenterologist at the University of Ottawa, will discuss how, in addition to the earlier onset of the diseases, the heavy economic impact on Canada and those living with the diseases has become a staggering burden for us all. The trends indicate an impact in the cost on the overall healthcare system; an imbalance in public coverage programs across the country; increase in treatment costs; a toll on families and caregivers.

While Canada carries an enormous economic burden and continues to pay the price in terms of personal losses to our citizens and our communities, Crohn's and Colitis Canada has turned our country into a research powerhouse. Crohn's and Colitis Canada is the largest non-governmental funder of research, with over \$88 million invested to find the cures as well as new and better treatments. Moreover, Crohn's and Colitis Canada is leading the world by launching the [Crohn's and Colitis Canada Inflammatory Bowel Disease GEM Project](#) (the world's best hope for a cure to Crohn's disease) and in forming exciting new collaborations between researchers, hospitals, universities and the biomedical industry.

Dr. Benchimol's talk spotlights a business solution to improving quality of life for people affected by Crohn's and colitis. As he notes, "Crohn's and colitis are Canadian diseases and we are going to find a Canadian solution. Not only do the diseases put a financial strain on the healthcare system, but the social stigma attached to them impact Canadians on an emotional level."

"Dr. Benchimol's ongoing research is helping us to not only find a healthcare solution for those living with these diseases but is also providing a clear plan and direction moving forward to improve the lives of Canadian's isolated behind closed doors," said Lindee David.

Currently, Crohn's and Colitis Canada is embarking on a new national awareness campaign for November's Crohn's & Colitis Awareness Month. The **Crohn's & Colitis – Make it stop. For life.** campaign goes "Behind Closed Doors", sharing the pain, fear and isolation experienced by children, young adults and others living with these



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**Make it stop. For life.**

devastating, lifelong diseases. The awareness campaign supports the launch of a \$100 million fundraising campaign that will run over the next five years. The goal is to inspire Canadians to find ways that they can help **Make it stop. For life.**

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### **About Crohn's & Colitis Canada**

Crohn's and Colitis Canada is a volunteer-based registered charity that is dedicated to finding the cures for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and to improving the lives of children and adults affected by these chronic diseases. Crohn's and Colitis Canada provides education, advocacy and awareness activities across Canada to people living with these diseases, their families, healthcare professionals and the general public.

Crohn's and Colitis Canada is at the core of inflammatory bowel disease research in Canada and on the world stage. To date, Crohn's and Colitis Canada has invested more than \$88 million in research and is Canada's largest non-governmental funder of Crohn's and colitis research. Crohn's and Colitis Canada furthers the development of new treatments and lays the groundwork for the cures by connecting critical researchers, universities, hospitals and the biomedical industry. To learn more, visit: [www.crohnsandcolitis.ca](http://www.crohnsandcolitis.ca).

### **About Dr. Benchimol**

Eric Benchimol is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Epidemiology and Community Medicine at the University of Ottawa. He is also a pediatric gastroenterologist in the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Inflammatory Bowel Disease Centre, a scientist at the CHEO Research Institute, and an adjunct scientist at The Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES). He received a Bachelor's of Science degree in biology and genetics from York University, and a medical degree from the University of Western Ontario. He also completed a residency in pediatrics at CHEO, fellowships in pediatric gastroenterology and inflammatory bowel diseases at The Hospital for Sick Children, and received a PhD in clinical epidemiology from the University of Toronto.

**For more information or to arrange an interview with a local representative of Crohn's and Colitis Canada, please contact:**

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