

B.C. to test cancer drug

Clinical testing of Interferon, a possible new anti-cancer agent, will begin across Canada later this year under a deal announced recently between a British drug company and the British Columbia government.

The Wellcome Foundation Limited has agreed to provide British Columbia with enough Interferon for experiments on between 500 and 1,000 patients. It will also provide partly processed Interferon as feedstock for a refining plant to be built at the University of British Columbia.

If Interferon proves itself in the tests, British Columbia has the option, under a seven-year exclusive licence, to build its own large-scale, primary production plant. The deal gives the province the sales territory of all of Canada and China for lymphoblastoid Interferon produced by the Wellcome process.

It will cost British Columbia about \$6 million the first year, and a further \$10 million if it goes into production.

Fox foundation

The British Columbia government has announced that it will donate 4.6 million British Columbia Resource Investment Corporation shares, worth \$26 million to a newly formed Terry Fox Medical Research Foundation. The foundation, aimed at promoting biomedical and pharmaceutical research, will finance the Interferon venture.

It will provide the capital to Pacific Isotopes and Pharmaceuticals Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Crown-owned British Columbia Development Corporation.

Terry Fox, 22, a Vancouver-area university student who lost a leg to bone cancer, became a hero last year when he attempted to run across Canada to raise funds for cancer research. A recurrence of his cancer stopped his run in Thunder Bay.

It was revealed earlier this year that the cancer had spread to other parts of his body, and that only a miracle could save his life. Interferon, of a type different from that produced by the Wellcome process, was obtained from the United States in a final bid to arrest his cancer.

Terry, who is in hospital for further Interferon treatments, became critically ill after his first treatment and required

surgery to remove fluid from around his heart.

Focus on bone cancer

Canadian research using the Wellcome Interferon probably will concentrate on victims of bone cancer, breast cancer, skin cancer and cancer of the lymph glands, said Dr. Patrick McGeer, a brain researcher and the province's Minister of Universities, Science and Communications.

The agreement with Wellcome will give British Columbia an initial 50,000 mega-units — or about a quarter of a gram. One milligram, or about 200 mega-units, is enough to treat one patient for about 18 months.

Interferon is a natural substance, produced in tiny amounts by cells that are attacked by viruses, stimulating other cells to produce anti-viral proteins.

The British Columbia venture means that Canada can be a part of a Wellcome Foundation program to subject Interferon to international experimentation. It has a plant in Spain, and has already licensed other partners in Japan, the United States and Britain.

Inspecting Canada's meat industry

The meat industry is Canada's fourth largest processing industry and has a reputation for producing high-quality meat.



One of Agriculture Canada's 1,500 meat inspectors takes a final look at a beef carcass before it leaves the slaughterhouse.

Agriculture Canada employs about 300 veterinarians and 1,200 primary product inspectors in its meat hygiene division to ensure the clean, safe, wholesome quality of Canadian meat. They have been specially trained to work in about 500 slaughtering and processing plants across Canada.

Federally trained inspectors examine 90 per cent of the beef, pork and poultry Canadians eat. The remaining 10 per cent comes from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta where the provinces in some cases inspect their own meat products.

Individually examined

In most of the nation's packing plants, federal veterinarians must be in attendance whenever slaughter operations are taking place. Each animal is individually examined before it enters the plant to see that it is fit for human consumption.

In each slaughter plant, a federal veterinarian is the inspector-in-charge. He is responsible for the inspectors and the sanitation of both plant and employees. Some of the larger plants have up to six full-time veterinarians on staff.

Agriculture Canada's meat hygiene division has regulations governing every aspect of packing plant operations — including construction, temperature control, ingredients and additives, packaging, labelling, soaps, disinfectants and even the type of grease used in the machinery.

It is the responsibility of the federal veterinarians to make certain these regulations are respected and enforced.

Dinosaur museum in Alberta

Alberta has announced that a major new museum and research institution for the investigation and display of dinosaur remains will be established. The new Drumheller Museum and Research Institute will be located in Midlands Provincial Park on the outskirts of Drumheller.

Alberta — and particularly the Red Deer River Valley, including the Drumheller area — is the world's richest dinosaur and fossil collecting area.

The museum's display of Alberta dinosaurs and fossils will compare with or exceed that of the Royal Ontario Museum and other world-class museums. A research program on dinosaurs and fossils will be undertaken on a scale reflecting the significance of this material in tracing the geological history of the earth.