

## **Students overcome health challenges to achieve post-secondary education**

*16 students from across Canada named as UCBeyond Scholarship recipients*

**October 6, 2009 (Burlington, ON)** – What would you do if you were faced with a chronic illness? Would you walk across Canada to raise awareness for Crohn's disease, build houses in developing countries despite physical pain or dedicate your career to educating young people living with the same disease as you?

These are just three examples of how Canadian students living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and Crohn's disease went above and beyond the boundaries of their chronic illness to be awarded one of 16 UCBeyond Scholarships, valued at up to \$5,000.00 CDN each.

"Living with rheumatoid arthritis will be a life-long challenge, but it has never stopped me from continuing my education," says Nirupa Varatharasan, 23, from Toronto, ON, one of eight 2009 UCBeyond RA Scholarship recipients. "The fact that a scholarship exists for students like me is a great thing. I have many years of school ahead to reach my goal of becoming a medical professional and the assistance provided by UCB Canada will definitely help to ease the financial burden."

Kyle Steward, 18, from Oakville, ON, and a recipient of the 2009 UCBeyond Crohn's Disease Scholarship, has used a different method to help him overcome the barriers of his disease. "Crohn's disease is not a topic that is widely discussed in Canadian society because of the taboo nature of the symptoms. As a result, Crohn's is often dismissed and ignored. By speaking to others about the daily challenges I have to face, it not only allows them to understand my barriers, but it helps me go above and beyond them, as well."

Scholarship recipients were chosen by an independent selection committee of leading physicians, nurses and patient representatives from across Canada. The applicants were evaluated based on a one-page essay demonstrating how they have gone beyond the boundaries of their disease, exhibited perseverance and empowered others, as well as two letters of personal recommendation.

"On behalf of all members of both selection committees, I would like to extend sincere congratulations to the 16 UCBeyond Scholarship recipients," says Dr. Richard Fedorak, Professor and Director, Division of Gastroenterology at the University of Alberta, President of the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation and chairperson of the Crohn's Disease selection committee. "Through programs like this, we can help to educate the public about the barriers facing students with chronic illness and empower our young patients to surpass their physical limitations to achieve academic excellence and personal success."

"We are delighted to announce the winners of the 2009 UCBeyond Scholarship Programs and wish to thank the hundreds of students who shared their stories of courage and strength," says Anne de Cassini, General Manager of UCB Canada. "This year's recipients truly define what it means to live above and beyond a chronic illness as they diligently work to raise awareness in their communities and aspire to reach their full potential. We are honoured to help them pursue their dream of a post-secondary education."

Partners of the UCBeyond Scholarship Program included The Arthritis Society, Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance (CAPA), Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) and JointHealth™, Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA), Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (CDHF), Crohn's and Colitis Foundation (CCFC) and Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG).

### **About Scholarship Recipients**

In total, 16 scholarship recipients were chosen from close to 300 applicants from across Canada. The winners include:

#### 2009 UCBeyond Rheumatoid Arthritis Scholarship Recipients

1. Chelsea Code-McNeil (Dartmouth, NS; Dalhousie University)
2. Emma Secord (Fredericton, NB; St. Thomas University)
3. Irene Chu (Montreal, QC; McGill University)
4. Patricia Riddell (Waterdown, ON; University of Toronto)
5. Nirupa Varatharasan (Toronto, ON; Dalhousie University)
6. Emily Hicks (Calgary, AB; University of Calgary)
7. Michael Collins (Waterloo, ON; University of Waterloo)
8. Karine Perreault (Sherbrooke, QC; Université de Sherbrooke)

#### 2009 UCBeyond Crohn's Disease Scholarship Recipients

1. Kyle Steward (Oakville, ON; Brock University)
2. Greg Simmonds (Victoria, BC; Thompson Rivers University)
3. Andrea Dmytrash (Lamont, AB; University of Alberta)
4. Michelle Aubie (Bathurst, NB; St. Mary's University)
5. Allison Leadley (Vancouver, BC; University of British Columbia)
6. Natalie Wells (Corner Brook, NL; Memorial University)
7. Kevin Bourque (Lincoln, NB; University of New Brunswick)
8. David Coulombe (St-Marcellin, QC; l'universite du Quebec a Rimouski)

#### **About Rheumatoid Arthritis**

RA is a progressive autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation of the joints. It is estimated that five million people suffer from RA globally with 0.3 per cent to 1 per cent of the population in industrialized countries suffering from the disease. It is estimated that 320,000 (1 in 100) people suffer from RA in Canada. Women are three times more likely to be affected than men. Although it can affect people of all ages, the onset of RA usually occurs between the ages of 35-55.

Symptoms of RA may include joint stiffness, joint pain, inflammation of the affected areas and an associated reduction in mobility. These symptoms can be intermittent and vary in severity from patient to patient. In more severe cases RA can eventually lead to disability. RA patients are also at a higher risk of developing other conditions, in particular heart disease, stroke, infections, lung problems and osteoporosis.

#### **About Crohn's Disease**

Crohn's disease is a chronic, progressive, destructive disorder that causes inflammation of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, most commonly at the end of the small intestine (the ileum) and beginning of the large intestine (the colon). If not effectively treated, it results in the need for surgery. Crohn's disease has been estimated to affect as many as 170,000 Canadians. People with Crohn's can experience an ongoing cycle of flare-up and remission throughout their lives. Together with ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

#### **About UCB Canada Inc.**

UCB Canada Inc. was officially incorporated in 2006 with the objective of bringing new-generation therapies to the Canadian market for auto-immune and central nervous system diseases. As a patient-focused organization, the company is dedicated to bringing new and innovative programs to patients, and to the specialists who treat them, to help improve the lives of people living with severe diseases.

#### **About UCB**

UCB, Brussels, Belgium ([www.ucb.com](http://www.ucb.com)) is a biopharmaceutical company dedicated to the research, development and commercialization of innovative medicines with a focus on the fields of central nervous system and immunology disorders. Employing approximately 10 000 people in over 40 countries, UCB generated revenue of EUR 3.6 billion in 2008. UCB is listed on Euronext Brussels (symbol: UCB).

**For further information or to speak with a scholarship recipient please contact:**

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