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Winnipeg innovators Mark Torchia and Richard Tyc win \$100,000 Manning Award for minimally invasive brain surgery device

Calgary, AB (October 1, 2015) – Dr. Mark Torchia and Richard Tyc, P.Eng of Winnipeg, MB have won the 2015 Ernest C. Manning Foundation Principal Award for developing and successfully commercializing the NeuroBlate® System, a unique device that is helping surgeons to successfully treat patients with malignant brain tumours that were previously considered inoperable.

The Principal Award is the largest of several prizes the Ernest C. Manning Foundation awards annually to talented Canadian innovators who are improving the lives of Canadians and others worldwide through their commercialized innovations. Dr. Torchia and Mr. Tyc will receive their \$100,000 prize at the Foundation's 34th Innovation Awards Gala in Saskatoon on October 2, 2015.

"The Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation is helping build a culture of innovation by recognizing Canadian innovators," said Foundation President Jennifer Diakiw. "Our Awards reward innovators for the value they are adding to our provincial and national economies by creating jobs and wealth, and positioning our country as a global competitor. We consider them Canada's most valuable resource."

The NeuroBlate System uses a laser-probe inserted into the brain through a small incision in the skull to heat and kill tumour cells. The minimally invasive procedure is conducted in an MRI machine, enabling surgeons to plan, steer and adjust the laser continuously as it is delivered, which increases precision in ablating the lesion and avoids damaging surrounding healthy brain tissue. With this technique, patients are often able to leave the hospital a day or two after surgery with a minimal amount of post-procedure pain.

"Early on, we identified a patient population that wasn't being served, and we knew we had to innovate and be unique. Laser therapy itself wasn't new but when we first started working with the laser probe, we found that simply sticking a laser fiber into tissue and firing it wasn't really giving us results we needed. It didn't give the control the surgeon needed to treat a unique area like the brain. The side-fire cooled-probe technology we developed did that and the NeuroBlate technology offers the only commercial actively cooled side-fire laser probe with integrated magnetic resonance guidance on the market," said Mr. Tyc.

Dr. Torchia, Associate Professor, Dept of Surgery, College of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences and Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, University of Manitoba, conceived the first prototype for NeuroBlate in 1990 while working at Winnipeg's St. Boniface Hospital. He brought Mr. Tyc on board in 1999 as the first full time employee to help develop the technology application and turn the concept into a viable commercial product. The pair later founded Monteris Medical Inc. to manufacture and distribute the NeuroBlate System. It is now being used to treat patients in over 30 U.S. hospitals and has received Health Canada approval for use in Canadian hospitals.

"I consider it a wonderful personal honour to be recognized for a development that we've worked on for a very long time," said Dr. Torchia of the award. "But it also provides an opportunity to talk about and celebrate Canadian innovation success. Canadians tend not to blow their own horns, but we're not doing ourselves a favour. For innovation like this to happen, certainly in the field of medical devices, there's considerable investment required. We need to promote the fact that Canada is a source of innovation in many fields, and that people and companies should be investing in Canada."

The Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation was established in 1980 by Alberta Energy Company CEO David Mitchell. Working with former Alberta premier Ernest C. Manning and others, he built the foundation to recognize and celebrate Canadian innovators of all ages and across all disciplines. Since then, the Foundation has built a national network of 3,000 young and adult innovators who are leaders in technology, business, engineering, and social innovation advancement. It has awarded innovation prizes to 255 Canadians who have demonstrated innovative talent in developing and successfully marketing a new concept, process or procedure.