



Rémi Quirion, PhD

Social organization and economic development, traditional responsibilities of governments, are now increasingly dependent on the advancement of science, requiring substantial research investment and coordination. Management and integration of advanced research demands scientific expertise and organizational skill, including diplomacy and public advocacy. To meet this vital need, the Quebec government named distinguished neuroscientist Rémi Quirion Chief Scientist, a position first created in 2011.

Dr. Quirion has summarized the scope and purpose of his position and the role of research: “Research helps us to understand the social, economic, medical and environmental phenomena that surround us. It can also guide the decisions of governments, companies, public agencies and citizens. Research leads to incredible medical advances, ever more sophisticated and greener technologies, and the development of public policies and practices adapted to meet our needs.”

Scientist-administrators like Dr. Quirion help insure that these great projects of science, grounded in basic research, will continue to generate social and economic benefits for Canada and the world.

Dr. Quirion began his career with a PhD in Pharmacology at the University of Sherbrooke with a thesis focused on the role of neurotensin in cardiovascular and brain diseases. He then pursued postdoctoral training at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, MD working on the mechanism of action of drugs of abuse including phencyclidine and opiates, and neuropeptides in the brain. He moved to the Department of Psychiatry at McGill and soon began development of the Douglas Hospital Research Centre (DHRC), which earned international recognition for research on Alzheimer’s disease and neuropeptide physiology as it relates to mental disorders. The DHRC is currently Quebec’s largest mental health research institute. His work at DHRC helped to elucidate the roles of the cholinergic system in Alzheimer’s disease, the neuropeptide Y in depression and memory, and the calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) in pain and opiate tolerance. In addition to his scientific research, Dr. Quirion has served as Vice-Dean for Science and Strategic Initiatives at McGill, first Science Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA), and as Executive Director of CIHR International Collaborative Research Strategy for Alzheimer’s disease.

With over 750 publications, Dr. Quirion is one of the world’s most frequently cited neuroscientists. He has also trained almost a hundred graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, helping to build and nurture the next generation of young scientists. He has been much honoured nationally and internationally for his many scientific and administrative achievements.

As Chief Scientist, Dr. Quirion now chairs the boards of directors of the three Quebec Research Funds and advises the Minister of Economy, Science and Innovation on research and scientific development issues. He is the representative of scientific research to the public of Quebec, and of Quebec to the world.