negotiating with men.” It is hoped 710 Ugandan women will be enrolled by next March, and that preliminary results will be available by the end of 2008.

Kamali added that separate trials on 2 other gels are ongoing elsewhere in Africa, including one in Rwanda where Dr. Eveline Geubbles, scientific manager at Projet Ubuzima, told *The New Times* their trials on the Dapirivine gel would not be affected by the CONRAD findings. “Currently, we are at the stage of data analysis. We sent the data [to the US] for laboratory tests and we expect results around the end of this year,” she said. — Wairagala Wakabi, Kampala, Uganda

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Imaging possibilities

Imagine the capacity to simultaneously identify the location of a tumour and obtain information about its biochemical and molecular nature.

That’s the goal of an ambitious \$26.9 million research project that hopes to combine diverse imaging modalities like MRI, PET and CT into a single technological platform for diagnostic use.

“If that can be achieved, the potential therapeutic benefits would be enormous, in that physicians would obtain information with greater speed and de-

tail from a single scanning session,” says Dr. David Hill, scientific director of London’s Lawson Health Research Institute. “This obviously moves us enormously ahead in starting to arrive at the right course of treatment.”

The Lawson, along with St. Joseph’s Healthcare London, will take the lead in the multidisciplinary international initiative known as the Biomedical Multimodality Hybrid Imaging Project, which is expected to be launched this year, having successfully garnered a \$13 million infrastructure award from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, primarily for the purchase of a cyclotron.

Hill says the 105-strong research team, including 23 from outside Canada, hopes to push the technologies “to the limits of what they can tell us in terms of useful information. Part of that is how can we devise new readings for imaging that will tell us, for instance, more about particular genes and how they’re being expressed. To do that, we need to come up with radioisotopes that give us readouts based on carbon or oxygen or nitrogen.”

The cyclotron and radiochemistry facilities will generate those isotopes, which researchers will mark with biochemicals for use as tracers in imaging.

Hill says the research team also plans to investigate myriad leading-edge imaging technologies, including the emerging form known as photoacoustic imaging, a hybridization of laser and ul-

trasound technology that can provide optical images at significant depths and with excellent resolution.

In photoacoustic imaging, a high intensity light is shined into a tissue for a few billionths of a second. The laser energy that is absorbed by subsurface objects causes an ultrasound signal. “What this does potentially is [create] a very high definition 3D picture of the tissue in real time,” says Hill. “What we’re looking for within [5 years] ... will be the application of these new technologies to patients.... We’re pushing the limits of medical imaging.” — Lynne Swanson, London

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Family practice a tough sell

Family medicine residencies remained the toughest fill during the 2007 residency match, as some 108 of 987 available slots were left vacant at the conclusion of both iterations of the process.

By contrast, only 36 medical specialty slots remained vacant at the conclusion of the annual match run by the Canadian Resident Match Service (CaRMS).

Only 29% of medical graduates chose family medicine as their preferred option, compared with 32% in 2006 and 28% in 2005.

But CaRMS Executive-Director Sandra Banner says the decline isn’t necessarily an indicator of the lack of appeal of family practice, so much as a function of the larger number of available family medicine residencies in this year’s match. “The vacancies have everything to do with the funding that was in place and there was a lot of extra positions this year because of the expansion in BC and the expansion in Ontario. And the positions exceeded the number of grads and for the most part, international medical graduate positions were in addition to that and specially identified.”

For the first time since 1992, the annual match allowed Canadian medical school graduates (CMGs) and international medical school graduates (IMGs) to participate in both iterations of the

Canada Foundation for Innovation President Dr. Eliot Phillipson (centre) tours the 3T MRI Suite of the Lawson Health Research Institute with imaging scientists Dr. Terry Thompson and Dr. Neil Gelman.