



# CELLlines

January 2003

Issue 1

## Network names research review panel

Group to meet on Feb.10

Five prominent international researchers will be part of the Stem Cell Network's Scientific Grant Review Panel, which meets in Ottawa on Feb. 10 to consider research proposals for the next two-year funding cycle.

External reviewers are:

- Dr. **Anne McLaren**, Principal Research Associate with The Wellcome Trust/Cancer Research U.K. Institute of Cancer and Developmental Biology at the University of Cambridge;
- Dr. **Cynthia Cohen**, Senior Research Fellow at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics;
- Dr. **Ihor Lemishka**, Professor of Molecular Biology at Princeton University;
- Dr. **William Miller**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Chemical Engineering at Northwestern University;
- Dr. **Darwin Prockop**, Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Center for Gene Therapy at Tulane University Health Sciences Center.

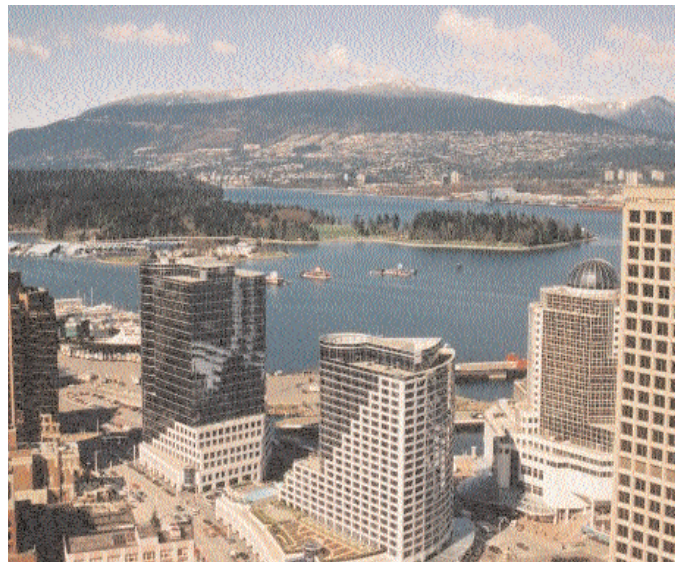
The review panel also includes Network investigators **Derek van der Kooy, John Hassell, David Lillcrap, Leo Behie, Keith Stewart, Michael Underhill and Connie Eaves**.

Twenty research proposals, valued at \$12 million, have been received for review. The Network has about \$7 million in research funding to award.

"The role of the external members is going to be very important," says Executive Director Drew Lyall.

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## 2003 AGM Sept. 17-20, Vancouver, BC



# To B.C. and be seen

Circle the dates on your calendar now! The Second Annual General Meeting of the Stem Cell Network will take place in Vancouver, BC, from Sept. 17 to 20, 2003.

A tentative schedule for the AGM is under development, including plans to add special events to the AGM, such as a Trainee Day.

James Price, the Network's Director of Partnerships, has met with potential partners, including BC Biotech, to look at working together on outreach activities, such as a student forum and a high school teachers' workshop. A Biotech Breakfast event is also under discussion.

Initial meetings with industry, health research and charitable

organizations in British Columbia suggests that there is an opportunity to jointly develop and sponsor a series of initiatives to create greater awareness and understanding of the potential of stem cell research.

The AGM will also provide an opportunity to showcase the province's academic and health institutions, businesses and researchers to leading stem cell scientists, engineers, ethicists and students. In addition, it will help to promote and explore networking, collaboration and partnership opportunities for research, training and business development.

Please watch the Stem Cell Network website ([www.stem-cellnetwork.ca](http://www.stem-cellnetwork.ca)) for developments – and plan on taking part.

## A new source of news for members

**CELLlines** provides monthly snapshot; website gives full picture

With this inaugural issue, the Stem Cell Network launches a monthly internal newsletter to provide its members with a snapshot of monthly management committee decisions, Theme news, events, conferences and internal issues.

The newsletter does not replace the Members' portion of the website, which will continue to provide the full picture on Network activities.

For example, the newsletter will remind you about AGM dates but, in coming months, the website will provide on-line registration, draft agenda, abstracts, links to the hotel and attractions in the area.

Hopefully, through both communication vehicles, you will feel fully linked with the Network's administrative centre.

Your feedback and suggestions for future issues of **CELLlines** is appreciated. Please contact Cathy Campbell in the Communications Office at 613-562-5696 or via email: [cathy@stemcellnetwork.ca](mailto:cathy@stemcellnetwork.ca)

### Inside

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**Stem cells in the Big Apple:** Janet Rossant recently represented the Network at a panel discussion sponsored by the Canadian Consulate in New York, **page 3**

# Review: Leveraging strength of the Network

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The Feb. 10 Grant Review Panel meeting will also be attended by the Research Management Committee.

On Feb. 11, the Research Management Committee will review the recommendations of the Grant Review Panel and use them as a basis for formulating budget proposals to the Board of Directors.

The Board meeting, where final decisions are made, takes place on



Drew Lyall

March 6. Results of this meeting will be announced promptly.

Drew Lyall says final research submissions are impressive.

“Clearly, a lot of effort went into building truly integrated, collaborative research proposals that can really leverage on the strength of the Network.”

## Passage of Bill C-13 expected this spring

*Health Law Review* provides insight, analysis

Bill C-13, an Act respecting assisted human reproductive technologies and related research, has made it out of the Commons Health Committee with relatively few amendments on the research side.

The Bill is expected to proceed to Third Reading shortly after the House of Commons resumes sitting on January 27, 2003.

The Network expects speedy

passage of the Bill, partly because recent news events – particularly cloning announcements by the “alien-directed” Raelian Society in December – have indicated the need for regulation in this area.

For a rational and thoughtful review of the proposed legislation, the University of Alberta’s Health Law Institute has just produced an special edition of the *Health Law Review*.

Copies are available through Tim Caulfield at [tcaulfld@law.ualberta.ca](mailto:tcaulfld@law.ualberta.ca)

## Beckett takes permanent post at CIHR

After a three-month secondment to CIHR to work on implementing CIHR’s stem cell guidelines, Barb Beckett has now left the Stem Cell Network to work for CIHR on a permanent basis.

Her new title is Senior Associate, Stem Cell Research Policy, and her job is to set up the system at CIHR for applying the Guidelines.

Her first major task is to set up the Stem Cell Oversight Committee (SCOC), a body consisting of a variety of members from the research sector (biology, ethics, law, social sciences, repro-



Barb Beckett

ductive medicine) and the general public. Barb says, “I am excited about the opportunity to play a part in enabling stem cell research in Canada to move forward in an ethically responsible manner and to represent the stem cell research community at CIHR.”

“It is sad to leave the Network after two years of very rewarding work and many great friendships but I hope to make a difference for all of you at CIHR.”



A team from the Stem Cell Network took part in Rx&D’s educational forum and networking reception on Dec. 11.

## Stem Cell Network participates in forum at Ontario legislature

About 130 people from Rx&D companies, health charities and government, including Ontario MPPs, took part in a Dec. 11 educational forum on stem cell research, held at Queen’s Park in Toronto.

The purpose of the event was to provide an update on the current state of research in Canada and in Ontario.

Janet Rossant, leader of the Network’s Theme II, made a presentation to attendees. Three researchers, Peter Zandstra, John Hassell and James Ellis, made

poster presentations.

“The opportunity to showcase innovative health research in Ontario and to meet Ontario researchers at the cutting edge . . . was appreciated by all,” said Bruce Beamer, of AstraZeneca Canada, Co-Chair of Rx&D’s Ontario Stakeholder Relations Subcommittee.

“Dr. Janet Rossant’s very clear and informative presentation on stem cells gave everyone in attendance a compelling vision for the potential of this therapeutic area.”

## News In Brief

Stem Cell Network investigator **Peter Zandstra** at the University of Toronto reports that his lab has received and been trained on the **Das Gip bioreactor system**. “The first series of experiments are planned for this week,” Peter says. “Frankly, I am impressed and optimistic about the data we should be able to obtain using the equipment. Please let me know if anybody from the Network would like to use / evaluate the equipment and we can get them on a schedule.” Theme III leader **Jamie Piret** at the University of British Columbia says there should be another one of these systems operational in his lab within a couple months.

**Alan Bernstein**, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, participated in an inter-

national policy discussion on stem cells in London, UK, on Jan. 7. The discussion aimed to lay the foundation for a global approach to policy for stem cell research by establishing two expert working groups and a website for information-sharing. **Full details are available on our public website.**

How’s this for sniffing out a story? Stem Cell Network researcher **Sam Weiss** made headlines in early January for his *Science* research paper describing studies with mice that found the hormone prolactin, which surges after intercourse, during pregnancy and breast-feeding, stimulates the growth of new brain cells in the regions of the brain involved in smell.

# Stem Cell Panel visits New York

On December 5th 2002 a panel discussion entitled “*Advances and Opportunities in Stem Cell Research in the U.S. and Canada*” was held at the Canadian Consulate-General in New York.

The panelists were Gordon Keller from Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York, Janet Rossant from the Stem Cell Network, Barb Beckett from CIHR, and Bob Goldstein from JDRF.

The event was sponsored by the Canadian Consulate-General, the Canadian Government Trade Office in Princeton N.J., the Ontario International Marketing Centre in New York, and the Academic Medical Development Company Foundation, Inc. in New York.

The audience of about 50 consisted of academics and researchers from the tri-state area, representatives from biomedical discovery companies in the tri-state area, investors, IP and ethics lawyers, and representatives of the scientific media.



**Janet Rossant took part in a Dec. 5 panel discussion on stem cell research at the Canadian Consulate in New York.**

Dr. Keller outlined the basic concepts of stem cell research and emphasized the need for research on both embryonic and adult stem cell lines.

Drs. Rossant and Beckett talked briefly about the Stem Cell Network and CIHR and discussed the development of stem cell research policy in Canada, including the CIHR guidelines and Bill C-13, the assisted human reproduc-

tion legislation currently being debated by the Canadian Parliament.

Dr. Goldstein talked about JDRF's international funding initiatives, the regulatory situation in the U.S., and the need for stem cell research to develop better therapies for diabetes.

The presentation was well-received by the audience, as judged by the excellent questions that followed.

This discussion was a fruitful first step in a process to help promote Canadian stem cell research and understanding of Canadian policy initiatives to Americans in the tri-state area, and to encourage cooperation in research, discovery and economic development.

The Stem Cell Network's Drew Lyall, who accompanied the panel, said, “People were really impressed by what we're doing up here in terms of the Network.

“They could see the enormous advantages to building these multi-disciplinary teams and multi-disciplinary teams.”

## Partnerships important, Price says

The Stem Cell Network is working to extend its relationships with health charities, first developed last year through outreach activities on Parliament Hill.



**James Price**

“There are specific areas in which we hope to co-operate with health charities,” says James Price, the Network's Director of Partnerships and Corporate Development. “We would like to jointly develop communication and outreach activities to inform and educate patient groups on the potential for stem cells,” he says.

“We also want to help manage expectations in terms of the progress being made.”

The Network has been in discussion with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Parkinson's Society, Muscular Dystrophy Association, ALS Society and Rick Hansen Institute, to discuss ways in which the groups can come together to discuss such things as joint support for research fellows or trainees.

## Network the ‘trusted source’ on stem cells

A year-end review of media coverage indicates that the Stem Cell Network and its scientists are a trusted source of information for the national news media.

In December, a search was conducted through Bowdens, a media monitoring company, to get a handle on how much the Network was quoted in the mainstream media, when and by whom.

The search found that the Network was relied on extensively by radio, television and print media in 2002, especially around the legislative debate over stem cell research.

“What the research shows us is that news reporters are coming to the Stem Cell Network when they want reliable and accessible information about stem cell science in Canada,” says Cathy Campbell, Network communications director.



**Ron Worton: Widely quoted**

Not only that, stories from the Network's newsletter, *Stem Cell Network*, were picked up by mainstream media and circulated across Canada.

“This demonstrates the value of our in-house publications to describe the work of the Network in terms everyone can understand,” Campbell says.

The Network received about 97 “media hits” in 2002; 72 in the print media and 25 on television

and radio.

In his capacity as Scientific Director of the Network, Ron Worton was heard on This Morning with Shelagh Rogers on CBC Radio, CBC National television, CBC Newsworld Today, CTV National News, Global News and CPAC-TV's Primetime Politics. News stories were rebroadcast in many local markets across Canada.

And, an opinion piece on stem cell legislation, written by Network Scientific Director Ron Worton, which originally ran in the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *National Post*, was reprinted by a number of papers.

In the French media, Francoise Baylis was widely quoted about stem cell research. In English media, Janet Rossant, Freda Miller, Sam Weiss and Tim Caulfield were often in the press. A full report on the findings will follow on the members' website.

## Freda on tape

For those of you who missed the Discovery Health Channel profile of **Freda Miller**, entitled *Biology of Hope*, we have the tape.



**Freda Miller**

The 47-minute documentary looks at Freda's life inside and outside the lab and her goals for stem cell science.

If you would like to view the tape, please contact the communications office at [cathy@stemcell-network.ca](mailto:cathy@stemcell-network.ca), and it will come your way – on loan, of course.