



CELLlines

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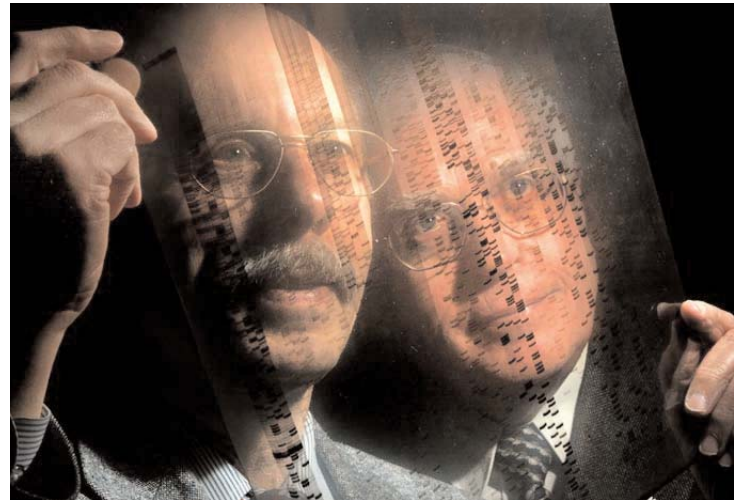
StemCell Technologies is Network's first 'lead partner'

B.C.-based Stem Cell Technologies has become the Stem Cell Network's first 'lead partner' with a contribution of \$300,000 over three years to further the Network's mandate to advance stem cell research.

"We're delighted to have one of Canada's most successful stem cell companies join the Network as a lead partner," says James Price, Director of Partnerships and Corporate Development. "This will be the first of many dynamic partnerships with industry," says James.

"The Canadian stem cell research community is already among the very best in the world, and the ability of the Network to encourage collaborations among

researchers in various fields and to focus this talent will help advance both the basic science and its real world applications," says Eric Atkinson, Manager of Corporate Development for StemCell Technologies. "StemCell Technologies is committed to supporting stem cell researchers worldwide by providing enabling research tools that are innovative, timely and of consistently high quality. We are very happy to be able to provide additional financial assistance to the stem cell research community here in Canada through our lead sponsorship of the Stem Cell Network, and we look forward to interacting closely with the Network and its members in the coming years."



CSN Scientific Director Tony Hakim, left, and Ron Worton, Scientific Director of the Stem Cell Network, were photographed by The Ottawa Citizen to illustrate a feature on collaborative research between the two Networks of Centres of Excellence.

The following story is culled from a press release issued by the CSN and SCN. The release did not include a breakdown of each partner's contribution to the project.

Network team coming to a city near you

Drew Lyall, Executive Director of the Stem Cell Network, hits the road this month with James Price, Director of Partnerships and Corporate Development, and commercialization consultant Jim Murray. They are going to talk business.

They will meet with every Network Principal Investigator who has expressed an interest in the 'company concept' for commercialization of stem cell science.

They will also meet with technology transfer offices at relevant institutions to get feedback on the idea and begin to develop a model for the company.

"We're trying to meet face-to-face with everyone over the next four to six weeks," Drew says.

"Drew and I have spoken with almost all of the investigators in the Network," says James. "More than 40 have responded favourably



Drew Lyall



James Price



Jim Murray

562-5826 or via email at karen@stemcellnetwork.ca

and expressed their desire to catalyse the creation of a national stem cell company that builds on the advantages we have in Canada."

The road trip begins in Vancouver on April 14 - and moves East.

If you have not spoken with James or Drew, and would like to meet with them, please get in touch with Karen McPherson as soon as possible. Karen can be reached at 613-

Stroke-Stem Cell Project gets \$400K boost from CIHR

Initiative receives \$1.8M over two years

Two of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) are joining forces to try to speed the development of therapies to repair brain damage after stroke.

The Canadian Stroke Network and the Stem Cell Network and CIHR's Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction and the Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health will jointly invest \$1.8 million in a two-year effort to carefully and systematically investigate how stem cells taken from adult skin and bone marrow can be reliably engineered to become functioning neurons.

The Canadian Stroke Network is investing \$800,000 in the project: the Stem Cell Network is contributing more than \$600,000 and the two CIHR institutes are putting in \$400,000 over two years.

The project, which pulls together some 25 university-based researchers across the country in a major multi-lab effort, will also investigate harnessing the brain's own extraordinary ability to repair itself, by seeking ways to recruit stem cells naturally present in certain areas of the brain to help repair damage in other areas.

The hope is that, within two years, researchers will know whether adult stem cells could potentially be used to repair damage to the brain caused by stroke.

See STEM CELLS on page 2

Training News: Information on Stem Cell Network training programs is now available on the Network's public website under "Careers"

Key Dates for the Stem Cell Network

APRIL 30: NCE reporting due from investigators

JUNE 7: Training application deadline

JUNE 11: Board of Directors Executive Committee meets in Ottawa

JUNE 25: Board of Directors conference call

JULY 21: AGM abstracts due

Important reminder about money

All funded PIs must return the Acceptance of Award form by fax to Finance Coordinator Jennifer Masek as soon as possible.

(Send the original by mail.)

Payments were scheduled to go out on April 1.

Please note that money cannot be distributed until the completed form is received by the Stem Cell Network.

Contact us

The Stem Cell Network welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions for future issues of *Celllines*.

Email: cathy@stemcellnetwork.ca

Phone: 613-562-5696

Researchers: A 'dream team' working on project

Continued from page 1

"If Canadian scientists could find a way to use stem cells to help stroke patients regain the use of an arm or leg, for example, or recover their speech, the stakes would be enormous," said Dr. Antoine Hakim, Scientific Director of the Canadian Stroke Network.

"This project brings together a dream team of researchers to explore the potential of stem cells in the treatment of stroke," said Dr. Ronald Worton, Scientific Director of the Stem Cell Network.

Lead investigators on the project are Dr. Samuel Weiss of the University of Calgary, who was the first in the world to discover stem cells in the adult brain, and Dr. Freda Miller of the Hospital for Sick Children. Dr. Miller's research captured worldwide headlines in 2001 when she isolated stem cells in human skin that appear capable of turning into neurons. University-based researchers

in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, London, Halifax and St. John's will take part in the project.

"These are two of the world leaders in stem cell research and this is the kind of partnership that allows researchers to excel in their work," says Dr. Rémi Quirion, Scientific Director of the Institute for Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

"The cost of stroke in our society is enormous. Its incidence is extremely high and the options for treatments are limited. Therefore, it is important to look for novel solutions. This is one of them."



Weiss



Miller

News In Brief

Bill C-13 update
OTTAWA, April 10 – Bill C-13, which governs reproductive technologies and stem-cell research, remains in the House of Commons in Third Reading. As *CELLlines* goes to print, a motion to send the bill back to the Standing

Committee is being debated. Two major amendments were recently made to the Bill. These amendments have introduced some ambiguity and the Network office is exploring the implications for stem cell research in Canada.

Vitamin C transforms mouse stem cells into heart muscle cells
DALLAS, April 1 – Vitamin C helped convert mouse embryonic stem cells growing in the laboratory to heart muscle cells, researchers report in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*. Dr. Richard T. Lee,



senior author of the study, and his colleagues tested 880 bioactive substances – including drugs and vitamins – to see if they stimulated the mouse stem cells to become heart muscle cells. "We only got 1 out of the 880 to light up, and that was from ascorbic

acid, the chemical commonly known as vitamin C."

Congratulations to the following recipients of training awards in the recent Network competition: **Eric Lechman** from John Dick's lab; **Lin Tang** who is working with Derrick Rancourt; **Maria Barcelon**, who is with John Hassell; **Melisa Hamilton**, who is in Connie Eaves lab; **Pascal Beauchesne**, who is working with Jamie Piret; **Rachel Caroline Harvey**, who is with Jason Robert; and **Vincent Chow**, who is working in Jamie Piret's lab.

UK Stem Cell Mission 'a great chance to network'

The UK Stem Cell Mission to Toronto on March 26 and 27 provided a terrific opportunity for networking and information exchange.

Participants spent two days sharing their thoughts on science and potential commercialization models and regulatory issues.

About 20 people, mostly scientists, came from the UK. There were also representatives from the Medical Research Council, granting agencies and government departments. About 25 from Canada were in attendance.

Of particular interest was a presentation made by the managers of the UK stem cell bank, describing its set-up and function.

While stimulating science was on everyone's mind, another theme provoked widespread discussion: People continue to struggle to identify the proper commercial model for stem cell science.

"Quite a few of the British scientists said they wished they'd had some of the discussions we're having around a national stem cell company before going down their own paths," said Drew Lyall, Executive Director of the Stem Cell Network, who attended the meeting.

"There was a lot of feedback from the British in terms of how we seemed to be so much more focused with disease targets and a sense of what we're driving for," says Drew.

"They were impressed that we were not operating on our own, as individual islands."

Network researchers who presented at the meeting described how their work fit into the greater Canadian whole.

"The Brits knew we had good science but they were still impressed by the strength and depth of research here," Drew said. "It was a solid group, there was real information exchange and people seemed to really get a lot out of it."

AGM planning is in high gear

Meeting builds on suggestions from '02 participants

Planning for the September 17-20, 2003 Annual General Meeting has begun in earnest. The Network has convened an Organizing Committee that will determine the agenda and scientific content for the annual conference.

Members include both Network investigators and trainees. They are: Valerie Wallace, David Hill, Tim Caulfield, Jamie Piret, Brian Cox, John Stingl and Marosh Furimsky. The group is chaired by Sowmya Viswanathan, Manager of Scientific Affairs and Training. Malachite Management Inc. have been hired to help coordinate the logistics of the meeting, and they will be working closely with Karen McPherson, Network Coordinator.

The Committee had its first meeting in mid-March and discussed a variety of items, including the selection of internationally-reputed keynote speakers and internal network speakers. Based on the success of last year's panel discussion, the concept is being expanded this year and likely include two sessions: one on ethics and a second on a scientific issue(s). The Committee is brainstorming topics for these panel sessions, and welcomes additional suggestions.

At this year's AGM, specific networking time is being allotted for PIs and trainees to meet with and update project team members of their progress. Some of the larger, multi-collaborative meetings are being planned by the Network Management in order to minimize scheduling conflicts.

The Committee is also looking to organize open workshops on pertinent topics.

One of the biggest inputs from last year's AGM was to increase the time trainees had to network with one another. With a view to this, an entire day is being devoted to trainee activities, starting with a networking breakfast organized by BC Biotech. This session will provide trainees with an opportunity



The 2002 AGM – the Network's first – brought together more than 150 researchers and trainees. (See images above and below.) This year's meeting, to be held in Vancouver, promises to be even better!

**Sept. 17-20:
Stem Cell
Network Annual
General Meeting
and Stem Cell
Awareness Week
in Vancouver.**

to meet and interact with industrial partners. A career development session and panel discussions/debate session (led by trainees) on relevant scientific questions is also being planned. Formal talks by trainees are also on the agenda. A more informal beer & pizza poster-viewing session will wrap the training day. Trainees will be contacted with an informal survey short-listing potential options and will thus have an opportunity to shape the events of this year's AGM.

If you would like to contribute ideas to this year's AGM or have suggestions for topics of panel discussion, workshops or for the training day, please contact Sowmya Viswanathan at



sowmya@stemcellnetwork.ca.

– by Sowmya Viswanathan

Abstract deadline approaches

The deadline for AGM abstract submission is July 21. Eight abstracts will be selected for oral presentation; four for presentation to the plenary session.

Web-based reporting system ready for use



Networks of Centres of Excellence
Réseaux de centres d'excellence

Many investigators have already completed their forms

This year's Web-based NCE Reporting system is up and running.

All investigators should have received an email on April 2 detailing their access instructions. You are to use the same password to access the system as you use to access the members' area of the Stem Cell Network website.

This year, you'll find the system is new and improved. Suggestions received last year have been incorporated into the final design.

For example, you'll find that any data you entered last year is already in the system – just delete old entries, update information for those that are still relevant, and add new entries.

In addition, if you sent a CV with your submission of a research funding proposal, the information about your grants and publications from 2002 will have already been entered in for you.

Please note that the deadline for completed NCE reporting is April 30, 2003.

With more than 10 per cent of investigators completing their forms in the first few days, we hope that this year's system will be the easiest and most efficient yet.

Please contact Sheri Pincovski (webmaster@stemcellnetwork.ca) if you have any technical questions about the system or Drew Lyall (drew@stemcellnetwork.ca) for questions about the reporting requirements.

– by Sheri Pincovski