



CELLlines

September 2003

Issue 9

Network launches subsite with FFB

The Stem Cell Network and Foundation Fighting Blindness - Canada recently launched a subsite based on the newly formed partnership between the two organizations.

The subsite is hosted at www.stemcellnetwork.ca/partners/ffb/

See SUBSITE on page 2



The subsite contains information on the SCN - FFB partnership to fund a new research project, headed by Dr. Valerie Wallace, entitled *Retinal and corneal stem cells; isolation, molecular characterization and therapeutic potential*.

SCN Board of Directors to welcome five new members

The appointment of five prospective SCN Directors is to be ratified by the Board on September 17.

New Board members include Montreal attorney

Bob Hindle, president of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of Canada.

JDRF has been a strong advocate for stem cell research on Parliament Hill and one of the Network's strongest supporters, says Executive Director Drew Lyall.

Bob's place on the board will enable the Network to build on its relationship with JDRF and provide both groups with opportunities to work more closely in terms of research priorities.

Also joining the board is **Yvan Guindon** of the Institut de recherches cliniques de

Montréal. Dr. Guindon has strong academic credentials as well as extensive experience working in private industry.

Drew says the Network is delighted to have someone join the board with Dr. Guindon's academic and industrial background. "This will be invaluable as we try to move forward with our commercialization initiative."

Nominee **Terry Salman**, President and CEO of Salman Partners Inc., is former executive vice-president of Nesbitt Thomson and Immediate Past-Chair of the Board of the Directors of the Investment Dealers Association of Canada.

"Terry brings a unique range of experiences and contacts as we seek to put in place a sustainable, long term financing strategy for stem cell research."

Indira Samarasekera is Vice-President, Research, at the University of British Columbia, Canada's second largest university.

"She has quickly established herself as a leader in university administration," says Drew. "Indira brings a vision for what can be done in the field of academic research." She will be a strong Western representative on the Board as a large cross-section of Network investigators come from UBC and the BC Cancer Agency.

And, finally, nominee **Ron McKay** of the U.S. National Institutes of Health is a respected stem cell scientist. Drew says Dr. McKay brings "strong international links and an international perspective to the Board."

Research Update

Stem Cells to Treat Diabetes

By Lawrence Rosenberg

The Stem Cell Therapy for Diabetes project has been launched.

This project, which is comprised of 12 investigators at 9 institutions from Quebec to British Columbia, aims to investigate whether adult and embryonic stem/progenitor cells can

be used to bring about a reversal of hyperglycemia in animal models of diabetes.

Our objectives are two-fold. First, to identify specific cell types that can be used as islet cell progenitors and that have the potential to be substantially expanded.

Second, we aim to develop novel reagents and in-vitro systems to enable us to study cell differentiation and proliferation in real time. Taken together, these studies should provide a clear picture of the usefulness of stem/progenitor cells as part of the next generation of cellular therapy for diabetes.

After an initial flurry of email exchanges, a group meeting was held in Ottawa on July 18th. We have achieved consensus on: 1) the specific collaborative studies to be put in place, 2) reagents to be exchanged or duplicated across labs 3) milestones.

Members of our group will meet at the upcoming AGM to review progress and to update strategy. As a group we feel that this project has the potential to provide important information on stem cell strategies for diabetes reversal, basic information on cell plasticity, and an exciting training environment for our students and postdoctoral fellows. For example, as a result of the July meeting, a student exchange has already occurred between the Behie and Rosenberg labs.

We continue to be optimistic about the diabetes project and will provide ongoing updates in the months to come.



Rosenberg

AGM Update

Plasticity, Imaging meeting open to all

The plasticity project led by Jane Aubin and Derek van der Kooy and the imaging project led by Eric Jarvis and Cindi Morshead will be having an open meeting at this year's AGM in Vancouver.

The meeting is to be held on **Saturday September 20, 2003 from 2.30 p.m.**, and all AGM attendees are invited to participate in the discussions.

Eric will led off the meeting with an update and discussion on the Imaging project, the group's progress to date, infrastructures in place, what opportunities exist within the group to image different cell types, etc.



Eric will be seeking input on the usefulness of an imaging workshop to demonstrate various techniques including live-cell imaging.

The plasticity session will be led off by a joint discussion by Andras Nagy and Fabio Rossi on the potential problems and solutions of conducting plasticity experiments.

They will also debate the use of different donor Cre/fluorescent and host floxed reporter mice.

This will be followed by discussions on what in the nature of stem cells can be construed as plastic.

Finally, the group will be invited to discuss what plasticity experiments they would like to do or be involved in.

Attendees will be asked to identify at least one project participant or model that they would like to work with.

The plasticity session will also be an excellent forum for Network members to identify project participants, cell types and model systems to work with.

– Sowmya Viswanathan

Call for Trainee Advisory Committee

The Training Committee previously announced the formation of a separate and free standing Trainee Advisory Committee (TAC) to facilitate increased trainee involvement and input in the goals and activities of the Stem Cell Network.

This committee will serve as a dynamic forum for trainees to increase communication with other trainees and investigators throughout the Network and to enhance opportunities for trainee participation in many areas of Network activities.

We are asking for volunteers to serve as members on this committee. To provide appropriate representation of the diversity of the

Network, the membership of this committee will need to cover the four main themes and the various geographically dispersed sites associated with the Network. To provide continuity, staggered two-year terms are envisaged. The Committee will likely meet semi-annually in person, and discuss issues throughout the year via teleconferences.

Interested trainees should submit their names and a short one-page justification of why they would like to join and how they would help such a Committee to Dr. Sowmya Viswanathan at Sowmya@stemcellnetwork.ca before the AGM.

– Sowmya Viswanathan



The Stem Cell Network's third Annual General Meeting takes place in Vancouver from September 18 to 20 inclusive.

Last-minute queries about next week's AGM?

If you have any questions regarding logistics for the AGM please contact:

Karen McPherson
Network Coordinator
Stem Cell Network
(613) 562-5826
karen@stemcellnetwork.ca

Tanis B. Steward
Conference Secretariat
Malachite Management Inc.
(604) 874-4004
tanis@malachite-mgmt.com

Meeting for All PIs

A meeting for all Principal Investigators will be held at the AGM at 7 p.m. on Sept. 18 at the Hyatt Hotel in Vancouver. Among other issues discussed, the meeting will include an update on the Stem Cell company initiative. Please plan to attend.

Another spinoff for Network's Drew Lyall

Stem Cell Network Executive Director Drew Lyall and his wife, Suzanne Loch, are the proud parents of a baby boy, **Matthew Christopher Lyall**, born on Saturday, **Sept. 6** in the wee hours of the morning. Matthew's older sister, Heather, turns three later this year. Suzanne and Drew are doing



Drew Lyall

well – and very excited about their new arrival.

The Stem Cell Network extends warmest congratulations.

SUBSITE: Highlights partnership

Continued from page 1

It highlights the partnership, but was also created as a forum for answering frequently asked questions about the impact of stem cell research on eye disease.

The Network and FFB are jointly funding a two-year research project on retinal stem cells, lead by Valerie Wallace (Ottawa Health Research Institute).

The goal of Wallace's project is to isolate and grow stem cells that

exist within the eye, understand the genes that control them and determine whether the cells can be coaxed or commanded to perform specific repair tasks.

An average of 4500 visitors come to the SCN web site each month.

With the addition of this and other new features, the Network hopes to continue to increase that number.

– Sheri Pincovski



The Foundation Fighting Blindness - Canada
La fondation qui lutte contre la cécité - Canada

Network thanks AGM sponsors

The Stem Cell Network would like to acknowledge the generous support of a number of groups in sponsoring the Annual General Meeting.

Thanks to Network Lead Partner **StemCell Technologies** of Vancouver, main sponsor **Western Economic Diversification**, event sponsors **Invitrogen**, **Ernst & Young**, **Borden Ladner Gervais**, **IBM Life Sciences**, as well as AGM supporters **BC Cancer Agency**, **BC Biotech**, **Miltenyi Biotec** and **Malachite Management Inc.**

"I would like to thank the sponsors of this year's Annual General



Worton

Meeting," says Scientific Director Ron Worton. "They represent government agencies, companies and professional service firms that support the Network's mandate and recognize the importance of this meeting to furthering those objectives. Their commitments of financial and other support have been invaluable."

Copies of new publications available to Network members

The Stem Cell Network will release, hot off the press, its fall "Focus on British Columbia" news magazine and its Annual Report at the AGM in Vancouver next week.

The *Focus on B.C.* issue features the research of scientists at the BC Cancer Agency and the University of British Columbia. There is also a profile of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, which is working to attract and retain scientists to B.C.

This year's Annual Report takes a slightly different format. Financial reports, lists and the

annual message from SCN Management is included in a mini-report, which fits inside a glossy publication describing all Network projects.

If you would like additional copies of either the Annual Report or the news magazine to distribute to students, trainees, partners, your institutions or colleagues, please contact the SCN Communications office at 613-562-5696 or email cathy@stemcellnetwork.ca.

Some extra copies will be available at the AGM. These publications are provided to members at no cost.

Website gets search engine, 'what's new' feature

Want to know what's new on the public web site? Go to www.stemcellnetwork.ca, click on "News", then "What's New", and you'll be directed to a listing of all the latest updates to the web site.

The goal of the Network is to refresh content on the web site as frequently as possible. To this end, stories from newspapers, web sites, and journals from around the world are updated daily on the front page (see the news stories bar on the left hand side of the front page!).

Feature articles on the front page are updated every few days.

The main, more "static" content of the web site is updated at least every two weeks. To achieve this, a new Focus Feature - an article on some specific topic in stem cell research - is added biweekly.

In addition, a major content section is added about every 6 weeks. In June, this included a series of papers first published in the *Health Law Review*. In August, lay summaries of all of the projects were launched, and now in September, our first partner subsite with the



Foundation Fighting Blindness - Canada has debuted.

If you have any news stories, or feature articles you'd like to see highlighted, contact Sheri at webmaster@stemcellnetwork.ca.

If you've got an idea for a Focus Feature, email Sheri or go to the Members Area and look under "Research" to learn more.

– Sheri Pincovski

Contact us

The Stem Cell Network welcomes your questions, comments and suggestions for future issues of *CELLines*, which is produced monthly.

Suggestions are also welcome for our external news magazine, which is published twice yearly.

Please contact Cathy Campbell at cathy@stemcellnetwork.ca or by phone at 613-562-5696.

www.stemcellnetwork.ca