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## Stem cell research sees interstate teamwork

David Perlman, Chronicle Science Editor  
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California's stem cell agency has teamed with Maryland's stem cell organization in the first interstate agreement designed to speed research progress through collaboration among scientists.

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The agreement, announced Tuesday by leaders of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine and the Maryland Technology Development Corp., will encourage researchers to work together and share data, according to the heads of both agencies.

Alan Trounson, president of the California stem cell agency known as CIRM, said in an interview Tuesday that his organization plans similar agreements with state-supported stem cell organizations in Massachusetts, Wisconsin and New York, and already has similar partnerships with agencies in six nations.

Researchers in far-flung institutions traditionally join forces on major research projects. One advantage is that stem cell team members receiving funds from their state agencies should stand an even better chance of jointly obtaining money from the National Institutes of Health, the world's major supporter of biomedical research.

California's stem cell institute was created by voters in 2004 with a \$3 billion bond issue, and so far has approved \$781 million in research and training grants to universities and independent research institutions.

The Maryland Technology Development Corp. runs the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund, which gets its money each year from the state budget and so far has funded about \$56 million in state research grants, according to the fund's official report.

Under the agreement, Trounson said the two agencies will support the researchers on joint projects but will only spend funds for scientists in their own states.

"One of CIRM's primary goals is to accelerate the field of stem cell research as a whole," Trounson said in a statement. "In some instances, we can do this more effectively through collaborations that involve the best scientific endeavors, regardless of geography."

The California agency already has similar partnerships with Canada, Australia, Japan, Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The agreement between California and Maryland was signed ceremonially in Baltimore, where scientists from around the world have gathered for their annual World Stem Cell Summit conference on research progress in the fast-moving field.

The goal of stem cell research is to use varied lines of adult or embryonic cells to create new tissue and treat such deadly diseases as cancers, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known more widely as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease.

In separate statements, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley praised the interstate agreement.

"I am happy that California's first-in-the-nation investment in stem cell research is furthering this potentially life-saving research with its partnerships across the country and world," Schwarzenegger said.

"By forging collaborations with California, we can create together intellectual powerhouse teams to accelerate the search for cures and the development of stem cell based therapies for the benefit of people across the country and around the world," O'Malley said.

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