

Commercialisation: Challenges in Cellular Therapy

MEETING SUCCESS:

Inaugural ICSCN Stem Cells and Bioinformatics

IPS CELL RESEARCH:

New Focus for Parkinson's Disease

COMPANY IN FOCUS:

Antoxis

Industry, Science and Society FOCUS FOR SUMMIT

The three parallel tracks of industry, science and society were the focus of this year's World Stem Cell Summit, which took place in Baltimore, Maryland.

The meeting was attended by more than 1,100 international delegates, including industry leaders from the pharmaceutical, biotech and clinical research sectors.

Scotland had strong representation at the Summit, with Scottish Development International (SDI) and SSCN exhibiting at the event and promoting the capabilities of Scotland's stem cell cluster. SDI held meetings with Geron, Novocell, Beckham Coulter, Life Technologies, Celgene, Stemgent, ThermoFisher and Corning. Participating in the conference itself were Aidan Courtney of Roslin Cells and Duncan Graham of the University of Strathclyde.

The three-day meeting was structured around the parallel themes of industry, science and society.

The industry theme of the event focused on issues of commercialisation of stem cell advancements, and the ways in which companies are coping with the recession, while pursuing their business objectives. Many companies are operating with less than six months of expenses in the bank. Industry experts expect this to continue and see more mergers and acquisitions in this sector.

In the theme of science, there was lengthy discussion about the changes that have taken place regarding NIH ES cell lines by the Obama administration. Problems have been identified in the

consent process to utilise the lines, and research continues to be hampered by the fact that new cell lines cannot be derived with NIH monies. Many researchers expressed frustration around not being able to access funding from either the NIH or state-funded research programmes. With all these continuing problems, Scotland continues to be an attractive and trouble-free destination for stem cell research.

One of the interesting topics on the theme of society was the emergence of medical tourism in India and China. An increasing number of patients are travelling to these countries for stem cell therapies, driven by frustration at a lack of progress in the delivery of such therapies in the Western world. Addressing this, the Canadian Stem Cell Network launched the Stem Cell Charter at the meeting. Details of this can be found at www.stemcellcharter.org, and will be explored in more detail in the next issue of SSCN News.

A highlight of the World Stem Cell Summit was the address to the congress delegates by Governor Martin O' Malley of Maryland. Following his presentation, a signing ceremony took place to mark greater collaboration between the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) and the State of Maryland. Discussions were held during the conference with a senior member of CIRM to establish a similar agreement between Scotland and California. This kind of agreement would facilitate funding of collaborations between Scottish research institutes and companies and counterpart organisations in California.



FORTHCOMING Events

Information on forthcoming events can be found at www.sscn.co.uk

Adult Stem Cells in Regenerative Medicine and Disease

A collaborative conference between Newcastle's Institute for Cellular Medicine (ICM) and the North East England Stem Cell Institute (NESCI), entitled The Adult Stem Cells in Regenerative Medicine and Disease, took place in Newcastle on 26 - 27 August 2009.

Opened by the event organiser, Annette Meeson, talks were given by representatives of the two Institutes, Michael Whitaker (NESCI) and Dave Jones (ICM). Included in the range of speakers and talks from abstracts were keynote speaker, Thomas Hawke of McMaster University, and Professor Stuart Forbes of the University of Edinburgh.

The second day of the conference commenced with a presentation from Chris Harlow from the University of Edinburgh, who present his preliminary work characterising Side Population (SP) cells in ovarian cancer models. Other speakers included Lynne Postovit from the University of Western Ontario and Tom Lennard from the University of Newcastle. Tom's closing comments emphasised the importance of the advances being reported at the conference, and the potential impact on patients.

