

# ICSCN

**International Consortium of Stem Cell Networks**

*A Collaborative Research Group of the ISCF*

Montréal White Paper  
Signed June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005

## **International Consortium of Stem Cell Networks**

*A proposal to form an International Stem Cell Forum Working Group to facilitate international cooperation and undertake collaborative research programs towards implementing novel stem cell therapies.*

### **Background**

Stem cells hold great promise for the repair and regeneration of organs and tissue destroyed by injury or degenerative disease, but the challenges of bringing new therapies to the clinic are enormous. Meeting the challenge requires a major international collaborative research effort bringing together the world's best stem cell biologists with bioengineers, clinical practitioners and ethical and legal scholars.

Recognizing this extraordinary challenge, several countries have already taken steps to create national stem cell research centers or networks. These currently exist in Australia, Canada, Israel, Norway, Sweden, North Rhine Westphalia, Scotland, Denmark and Switzerland, and are under consideration in several other countries.

In addition to the national efforts, the heads of the granting councils of some of the world's most research-intensive countries have formed the International Stem Cell Forum, and have met each year for the last three years to discuss the ethical and policy implications of stem cell research and its promised therapeutic applications.

### **Synopsis of ICSCN first meeting**

On November 6, 2004 the International Stem Cell Forum held its fourth meeting in Montréal, and at the same time Canada's Stem Cell Network hosted a meeting of representatives of some of the existing stem cell Centers or Networks to share information and discuss multinational collaborations between the national groups. Also included in the meeting was a representative of the stem cell program of the US National Institutes of Health.

The outcome of the "Networks" meeting in Montréal is a recommendation to create an international coordinating group that will be committed to international cooperation and collaboration, extending the concept of national research networks to the international level. It was agreed that we take steps toward formation of a "Multinational Stem Cell Initiative" and this was presented to the International Stem Cell Forum. Feedback from the forum was positive with respect to the concept, and suggested that the "initiative" might have added strength if it was a vehicle of the Forum. The initiative will be known as the International Consortium of Stem Cell Networks (ICSCN): a collaborative research group of the ISCF.

### **Mandate**

Acting in concert with the Forum, and reflecting the interests of the member countries, the ICSCN is committed to the principle of international cooperation and collaboration to accelerate the field of stem cell research, maximizing the opportunities to make stem cell therapy a reality for a broad range of debilitating diseases.

The ICSCN will act in cooperation with the International Stem Cell Forum to create a research fabric that will bring together the world's best stem cell biologists, bioengineers, clinical practitioners and ethical and legal scholars to ensure the most efficient path to the development and execution of stem cell therapeutics.

To achieve this goal the ICSCN will evaluate and report on conceptual and technological developments, monitor progress across the spectrum of research and identify potential synergistic opportunities, gaps and deficiencies and redundancies that might be minimized or avoided.

## **Proposal**

### **1/ International cooperation**

- a) Identify and develop methods to promote international co-operation:
  - i) focused workshops,
  - ii) international informational exchange,
  - iii) development of international consortia,
  - iv) linkage to international initiatives (e.g. standardization committee for ES cell derivation),
  - v) Distribution of reagents without IP encumbrance.
- b) International meetings for national initiatives – focus on how to develop international equivalents of national initiatives.

### **2/ International collaborative research programs**

The ICSCN will promote goal oriented collaborative research projects between member countries. Examples of potential areas for strategic collaborations are described below:

- a) Stem Cell Applications/Cellular Therapy:
- b) Stem Cell Therapeutics and Drug Discovery:
- c) Standard Methods, Tools, Reagents and Diagnostics:
- d) Stem Cells and Public Policy:

### **Principle Authors**

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We the undersigned express our full support for and participation in the Montréal White Paper of November 2004 which sets out an international agreement for scientific and administrative collaboration on stem cell research and the establishment of the International Consortium of Stem Cell Networks.

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