

## **NEWSLETTER: Issue 3**

### **10<sup>th</sup> May, 2004**

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#### **Stem Cell Licensing News**

For this first time, a license to make human embryonic stem cell lines in Australia has been granted to an IVF clinic in NSW. Last month, Sydney IVF was given the green light to go ahead with this research and more licenses are likely to be issued in June this year.

SIVF people have been active members of the NSW Stem Cell Network since it began. Dr. Teija Peura, a stem cell biologist at Sydney IVF presented her research at the 2nd Stem Cell Workshop in June 2003. This upcoming Workshop we will hear from a SIVF Nurse whom counsels IVF couples about donating their embryos for stem cell research..

#### **Renewed Funding for NSCC**

Last week, the Prime Minister John Howard announced a second round of funding for the National Stem Cell Centre as a part of the Federal Government's "Backing Australia's Ability". The Prime Minister committed \$55 million to the NSCC for the period of 2006 until 2011. This should enable Australia to maintain its internationally competitive position in stem cell science. More specifically, it will allow the NSCC to follow through on its various research projects, commercialisation negotiations and education / public awareness programs. The NSW Stem Cell Network looks forward to being part of this renewed momentum in stem cell science.

#### **Highlights from the 4<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop**

Over 80 members from the Network attended the recent Stem Cell Workshop focusing on Spinal Cord and Neurological Disorders. Some of the highlights included presentations by

the duo from up north, Dr. Rod Rietze from Institute for Brain Research, University of QLD and Professor Alan Mackay-Sim from Griffith University in Brisbane. Monash Medical Centre's, Prof Mal Horne also had some excellent work. The locals, Prof Bruce Brew and Prof Anne Cunningham presented fascinating research, the latter including videos of spinning "neurospheres".

An update on Stem cell policy was presented by Ms Kerry Doyle from the NSW Ministry for Science and Medical Research ([http://www.spinalforum.com/home/about\\_the\\_ministry](http://www.spinalforum.com/home/about_the_ministry)). She announced that the Minister Frank Sartor has agreed to provide the NSW Stem Cell Network financial support for the next 3 years.

Spinal Cure Australia, the major sponsor for the event launched their new logo after recently changing its name from Australian Spinal Research Trust (<http://www.spinetrust.com.au>).

AusBiotech's CEO, Dr Anthony Coulepis, opened the Workshop . He is keen to build up the relationship between the NSW Stem Cell Network and his national Network that represents biotechnology in Australia.

Dr Paul Brock, who has the degenerative motor neurone disease made the Workshop a very memorable experience for all those who attended his presentation. Confined to a wheel chair, he spoke about his personal perspective past, present and future since he was first diagnosed with the disease. His final words were from a poem entitled "Never Give Up" that his 7 year old daughter wrote as she has no memory of him as a "healthy normal dad".

### ***Photos from the 4<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop, March 16 2004***



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#### **Speakers from the 5<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop:**

L-R Prof Bruce Brew, Dr Rod Reitze, Dr Tony Coulepis, Prof Bernie Tuch (Co-convenor), Prof Alan Mackay-Sim and Prof Simon Gandevia

Speakers Absent: Prof Anne Cunningham, Dr Adrienne Torda, Ms Kerry Doyle and Dr Paul Brock



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**Major Sponsor is delighted with the outcome** Mr Bob Turner, Spinal Cure Australia and

**Chatting over cocktails at the end of the day** Dr Paul Brock and Ms Kerry Doyle

*Thanks to Debbie Reedsman from the Ministry for Science and Medical Research for the photo of speakers at the Workshop*

## **Register for the 5<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop**

**12.30 – 6pm,**

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2004,**

**Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick.**

**From Embryo to Fetus** is the topic for the 5<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop. This is a timely Workshop, which covers the latest issues including licenses for making embryonic stem cell lines and an update on establishing a Stem Cell Bank in Australia. In the UK, a stem cell bank is already underway, the question is do we follow a similar approach. This is a pertinent issue with the moratorium on therapeutic cloning up for review April next year.

Strong scientific speakers are lined up for this Workshop, starting with, Prof Bernie Tuch, from UNSW who will talk about the use of fetal tissue in biomedical research. This is another topical issue with the guidelines for fetal tissue research up for review this year.

Suggestions that more students should present at our workshops encouraged us to invite a student of Prof Tony Cunningham's from the Millennium Institute, Westmead to present. Ms Chantelle Hood, PhD student, will present her research into infectious diseases using fetal tissue. Prof Chris O'Neill from Sydney University will talk about the research done on embryos in the first 16 days of life. With her extensive list of papers in fetal tissue research, Prof. Rebecca Mason has agreed to chair this first scientific session.

Prof Mike Archer, the new dean of science at UNSW will chair the second session that explores the ethics and policy of stem cells. Dr Rachel Ankeny from Sydney University will highlight the latest ethics surrounding stem cells and Dr Jock Findlay, chairman of the stem cell licensing advisory committee will reveal more about the first stem cell license that was given to SIVF last month. Mr Alex Bradley, Director of FASTS and former scientific advisor to Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, will discuss the potential of establishing Stem Cell Banks in Australia.

A personal story about whether to donate your spare embryos for medical research will be told by Ms Sally Muir.

To register and download the program for the 5<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop go to:  
<http://www.diabetes.unsw.edu.au/STEM/Workshops/Workshop040804.htm>

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NSCC National Conference and AH&MR Congress**

Following the success of the 1st National NSCC Conference last year, you will be aware that its Second Annual Meeting will be held in Sydney, meeting during the week of 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26 November 2004 in conjunction with the Australian Health and Medical Research Congress (AHMRC). Details of the Congress can be found at <http://www.asnevents.net.au/congress/>

It is proposed that the NSCC will hold a one day Conference independent of the Congress on **Monday 22nd November 2004** at the Congress venue. Many International Speakers will present at this meeting. Workshop, Free Communication and Poster Sessions will also be held on **Tuesday 23rd November and Wednesday 23rd November**. The NSCC will also sponsor/co sponsor three major Symposia on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the Congress. A preliminary outline of the program is enclosed. Comments and suggestions to the Program Organising Committee, care of myself are welcome.

Further information will be posted on the NSCC website shortly at [www.nsc.edu.au](http://www.nsc.edu.au)

If you have any questions please contact Prof Graham Jenkin: [Graham.Jenkin@nsc.edu.au](mailto:Graham.Jenkin@nsc.edu.au)

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## **AusBiotech, NSW Tissue Engineering and NSW Stem Cell Network Seminar**

"**Can you make money from stem cells**" is a seminar planned for later in the year. If you are interested in this commercial aspect of stem cells and would like to attend an evening event in the CBD please reply ASAP. The event will include a presentation by a successful entrepreneur about the business of stem cells, as well as light refreshments.

**Contact:** The NSW Stem Cell Network ASAP Tel: 9382 4856

**Date:** To be advised

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## **Networking on the rise**

This year, the NSW Stem Cell Network has been given a booster injection of funds from the NSW Ministry for Science and Medical Research (see highlights of the 4<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop). In the same year, the Tissue Engineering Network ([www.tissue-engineering.net.au/index.htm](http://www.tissue-engineering.net.au/index.htm)) is getting off the ground with seed funding from the Australian Research Council. Assoc. Prof Clive McFarland, from the University of New South Wales is one of the co-ordinators of this new Network and is dabbling in stem cell and tissue engineering research. There are common areas of research between the two Networks and we look forward to future collaborations between members of each network.

For information on the Tissue Engineering Network  
Clive Mc Farland: [p.macfarland@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.macfarland@unsw.edu.au)

contact: Prof

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## **Learn how to “grow” human embryonic stem cells**

**"Do you want to know how to grow human embryonic stem (hES) cells ?** The NSW Stem Cell Network is looking at establishing a 3 day course to teach qualified scientists the skills required to grow hES cells. This hands-on course will be available for groups of 5 people. Tissue culture experience is a prerequisite. The cost will be approx. \$1,500 / person.

**Contact:** The NSW Stem Cell Network ASAP Tel: 9382 4856

**Date:** To be advised

## **Events for the Diary**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

Biomaterials Conference, Darling Harbour

[www.tourhosts.com.au/biomaterials/invit.html](http://www.tourhosts.com.au/biomaterials/invit.html)

**10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2004**

2<sup>nd</sup> International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) Meeting, Boston.

[www.ISSCR.org](http://www.ISSCR.org)

**August 4<sup>th</sup> 2004**

5<sup>th</sup> Stem Cell Workshop, From Embryo to Fetus, Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney

<http://www.diabetes.unsw.edu.au/STEM/Workshops/Workshop040804.htm>

**21<sup>st</sup> Nov 2004:**

2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NSCC National Conference, Darling Harbour, Sydney

[www.nscce.edu.au](http://www.nscce.edu.au)

**21<sup>st</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> Nov 2004:**

Australian Health and Medical Research Congress, Darling Harbour, Sydney

<http://www.asnevents.net.au/congress/>