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16th Workshop: Stem Cell Treatment for Eye Diseases

Cataract and macular degeneration are diseases of ageing that are currently estimated to cost over \$3 billion annually in Australia. For the majority of macular degeneration patients there are no treatment options. While cataract can be effectively treated surgically, issues of secondary cataract and accommodation loss are incompletely resolved. Novel strategies are therefore needed to provide new or improved therapies for these and other eye diseases or injury.



Stem cells hold great potential for novel ocular therapies due to two defining features: their capacity to generate functional human cell types (via differentiation) for their research or transplantation; and their ability to make copies of themselves (via cell division) while retaining the ability to differentiate.

Cutting edge stem cell eye research will soon be discussed in detail at the 16th NSW Stem Cell Network meeting to be held April 16th at the School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney. This meeting, titled "Stem Cell Treatments for Eye Diseases", will feature leading stem cell researchers from Australia, Japan and the USA. The presentations will include research on the cornea, lens and retina, and will cover issues such as: use of stem cells to understand genetic control of eye development; stem cell harvesting, culture, and drug screening; as well as stem cell transplantation therapies. While much work remains to be done, these advances and the prospect of more to come bring to mind Alfred Tennyson's words: "For I dipped into the future, far as human eye could see, Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be". For developing stem cell treatments to debilitating eye disease and injury, it appears the beginning of this future is upon us.

Early bird registrations start from 16 Feb. For more information or to register for the conference, contact the NSW Stem Cell Network on (02) 9552 9981 or by email at s.mustafa@stemcellnetwork.org.au.

Stem Cell Road Show for Doctors by Dr Megan Munsie



Staying abreast of developments in stem cell research is a challenge for us all. For doctors, who are frequently asked about the significance of the latest breakthrough by their patients, this can be particularly difficult.

In an effort to assist physicians and GPs better advise their patients, the NSW Stem Cell Network, together with the Australian Stem Cell Centre and Stem Cells Australia, provided a series of workshops around Australia between September and December 2011.

The seminars, supported by a grant from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), provided an update on current clinical applications; the latest stem cell research, and a review of clinical trials underway in Australia and overseas.

Each seminar was led by a local Physician and also featured a discussion on the challenges of advising patients who are considering experimental stem cell treatments being offered overseas – often referred to as 'stem cell tourism'.

The events, attended by 81 doctors, were well received with requests made for additional seminars in 2012.

Bringing Stem Cells to Secondary Schools : Volunteers Needed

Previously, members of the Network have volunteered their time to present talks about stem cells to medical practitioners, seniors groups, and others in the community and found the experience very rewarding (see attached article).

The Network is now looking for volunteers to champion Stem Cells in secondary schools. Already two youthful members, one a Postdoctoral Fellow and a PhD student, have put their hands up to give it a go.



If you have a bright spark in your group, who you think might be interested or if you, yourself want to be involved in this activity, please [email](mailto:sarah.mustafa@stemcellnetwork.org.au) Sarah Mustafa, the Network manager. We will work with Scientists in Schools, a CSIRO managed organization, to try and ensure that that person is matched up with a secondary school near his/her place of employment or residence.

Interest from Senior Clubs



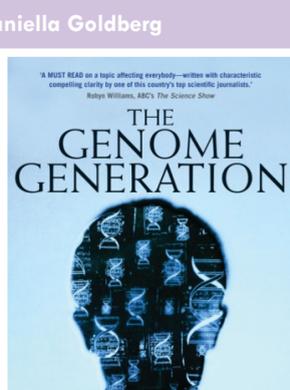
Ms Jennifer Wong is a modest, unassuming person who takes opportunities when presented. A PhD student at the University of Sydney, she took up an opportunity in June last year to go out to the community and talk to the Turramurra Probus Club on *Stem Cells: what are they and what are their uses?* This Club is a group of retired and semi-retired executives and professionals that meet on a monthly basis and discuss topical issues.

The talk was so well received that Jennifer was asked to repeat it to other community groups including the Abbotsleigh Adult Discussion Group, the Upper North Region's University of the Third Age, and Seaforth Probus Club. Events such as these are excellent opportunities to interact with others in the community, to gain contacts, and expand one's experience in communication. Jennifer is just one of a number of stem cell researchers who give of themselves to the wider community.

Book Review - The Genome Generation by Dr Daniella Goldberg

Following the success of Dr Elizabeth Finkel's first intriguing science book, "Stem Cells: Controversy at the Frontiers of Science, which follows Professor Alan Trounson's journey leading stem cell research, the Australian molecular biologist turned science writer has now published, "The Genome Generation".

This year marks the tenth anniversary since the DNA sequencing of the first human genome - all 3 billion letters of DNA. The book reveals the impact of the genome revolution and how it affects everyone in some way – whether it's predicting your genetic destiny as in the movie *Gattaca*, eating genetically engineered foods, curing disease or understanding your ancestors. This is a compelling book by an award winning science journalist. If you want to know the power of DNA – this is a must!



10th Annual ISSCR Meeting

10th Annual Meeting of the International Society for Stem Cell Research. This meeting, to be held in Yokohama, Japan between 13 and 16 June, is the first time that this meeting has been held in Japan.



It is the 2nd time that it has been held in this part of the world, the first time being in Cairns during 2007. Details of the program can be found at www.isscr.org. Registrations are currently open.

5th Annual ASSCR Meeting

5th Annual Meeting of the Australasian Society for Stem Cell Research. This meeting will be held in Adelaide 26-27 November as part of the Australian Health Medical Research Congress. Last year the meeting of the Society was held in Leura, Blue Mountains and attracted a considerable number of academia and industry to this wonderful environment. It is expected that the more urban setting this year will attract a similar number of registrants, who will be able to listen to a greater number of international speakers. Invitations are currently being extended to these speakers.



The Network & Social Networking



The NSW Stem Cell Network, which has been in existence for 9 years, has been proactive in teaching the community about stem cells. The aim of NSW Stem Cell Network has always been to educate and create awareness about stem cell and its related issues. To further this purpose, the Network is now on Facebook and Twitter, under NSWSTEMCELLNETWORK.

The purpose is create an interactive platform where members can hold discussions on the scientific aspect of stem cell related issues, events and news. Forums like these serve to further stem cell awareness in the community by the exchange of ideas, news and views. All are welcome to join.

Like us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) to receive 10% off the next Network event.

Save the Date: Stem Cell Events

NETWORK EVENTS:

16th NSW Stem Cell Workshop: Stem Cell and Developing Treatment for Eye Diseases
16 April 2012
University of Western Sydney, Sydney
www.stemcellnetwork.org.au

OTHER EVENTS:

ISSCR 10th Annual Meeting
13-16 June 2012
ISSCR 10th Annual Meeting
Yokohama, Japan
<http://www.isscr.org>

3rd International NanoMedicine Conference
2 - 4 July 2012
Cooze Beach, Sydney, Australia
www.oznanomed.org

ASSCR 5th Annual Meeting
26-27 November 2012
Adelaide
www.asscr.org

2012 World Stem Cell Summit
3-5 December 2012
West Palm Beach, Florida, USA
www.worldstemcellsummit.com

If you would like to contribute stem cell related articles, events and news, please email your material to the manager. Material will be accessed for relevance

You can advertise stem cell related jobs on the Network website. Please email details of the position offered to stemcellinfo@stemcellnetwork.org.au

Contact:
Manager Sarah Mustafa or Director Dr Bernie Tuch at 02 9552 9981,
stemcellmanager@stemcellnetwork.org.au,
www.stemcellnetwork.org.au

Acknowledgement: The above newsletter has been compiled with the combined efforts of Sarah Mustafa, Dr Michael O'Connor, Dr Megan Munsie, Dr Daniella Goldberg, Jennifer Wong and Dr Bernie Tuch

To remove your name from our mailing list, please email stemcellinfo@stemcellnetwork.org.au

Questions or comments? E-mail us at stemcellmanager@stemcellnetwork.org.au