
NEWS

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ON GOVERNOR'S INNOVATION ECONOMY MISSION, UMASS HUMAN STEM CELL BANK AND REGISTRY INKS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH UK STEM CELL BANK

*Agreement formalizes relationship to share best practices and collaborate
on banking standards and procedures*

HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND – Tuesday, March 15, 2011 – As part of Governor Patrick's Innovation Economy Partnership Mission 2011, today global leaders in the field of stem cell banking and characterization, the University of Massachusetts Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry and the United Kingdom Stem Cell Bank, signed an agreement to share best practices for stem cell banking and to collaborate on standards for stem cell line characterization, production and distribution in the US and UK. The signing followed Governor Patrick's meeting with Glyn Stacey, Director of the UK Stem Cell Bank, at the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control in Hertfordshire, England. The signing follows on last week's agreement between Massachusetts and Israel allowing for further collaboration in research & development programs between Massachusetts and Israeli companies.

“This agreement is an important step toward advancing groundbreaking scientific research, developing life-saving cures and building the life sciences economy of the future in both Massachusetts and the UK,” said Governor Patrick. “Stem cell research has already led to exciting new developments in medicine and is at the forefront of 21st century medical exploration. We are excited to play a critical role in that progress.”

“This agreement represents a major step forward for the University of Massachusetts, for the University of Massachusetts Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry, and for researchers working in this critical field,” said UMass President-elect Robert J. Caret, who is a member of Gov. Patrick’s Massachusetts Innovation Economy Partnership Mission 2011 delegation.

“Stem cell research provides so much promise for scientists seeking to unlock new cures and new therapies for diseases that afflict so many people around the world. This is an important partnership for the University of Massachusetts and is a significant addition to our ever-expanding portfolio of global engagement,” President-elect Caret said.

The UMass Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry and the UK Stem Cell Bank support international research in regenerative and stem cell medicine by providing the biomedical research community with expertly derived and maintained human embryonic stem cell lines for fundamental biological investigation and therapeutic applications. Using stringent protocols, the banks provide high-quality, reliable stem cell lines to researchers working on discovering new therapeutic treatments for diseases such as cancer, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, among others.

Today’s agreement calls for the two banks to identify shared priorities and create models that foster collaboration and cooperation. Potential areas of collaboration include the harmonization of standards for cell line characterization, production and distribution; identification of issues surrounding co-distribution of cell lines for research; and exploration of funding opportunities for joint research projects.

“Both banks share common goals and needs,” said Joseph C. Laning, PhD, senior director of the UMass Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry. “Working in concert allows us to develop strategies that will shape stem cell production, characterization, banking and distribution in a dynamic field. Each bank brings its own unique attributes to bear in a way that will enhance our influence in the field.”

Dr. Stephen Inglis, director of the UK Health Protection Agency’s National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) said, “This agreement presents an opportunity to forge a new strategic and innovative link between two leading international stem cell banks. International cooperation is vital in this fast moving field and we expect that the partnership will accelerate the development of important new therapies as well as keeping the UK at the forefront of stem cell research.”

Stem cells are different from other cells because they not only have the ability to renew themselves for long periods but, with the right signals, can become many different types of cells. Because of these unique properties, scientists are able to use stem cells to learn what makes individual cell types unique, how an organism develops from a single cell to an adult and how healthy cells replace damaged cells in adult organisms.

The UMass Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry was developed in partnership with and backed by the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, a quasi-public agency charged with implementing the state’s 10-year, \$1 billion life sciences initiative. The UMass Bank works with other

institutions and researchers to bank and characterize stem cell lines, detailing the cell line and its properties. After the lines are put through rigorous quality control testing by the Bank's experts, they are made available to researchers throughout the country and worldwide.

“Our vision was that the Massachusetts Stem Cell Bank and Registry would serve as a resource for researchers not just in Massachusetts, but throughout the world,” said Susan Windham-Bannister, president & CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and member of the Innovation Economy Mission's delegation. “With the signing of this agreement, that vision becomes a reality. We look forward to this collaboration, and to the benefits it will bring to the scientific community in Massachusetts, in the UK and across the globe. This partnership is a significant signal of Massachusetts' commitment to meeting the evolving needs of researchers working in this vitally important field, as we endeavor to translate this research into commercialized products and therapies that will improve patient care and ultimately save lives.”

The UMass Human Stem Cell Bank and Registry were established in 2008 and occupy 15,000-square-feet of research and training space at the University of Massachusetts Medical School's Shrewsbury campus. The Life Sciences Center has provided \$8.9 million in start-up funding for the organization.

Today is the second full day of the UK portion of the Massachusetts Innovation Economy Partnership Mission 2011 designed to bring new jobs and investments to Massachusetts through industry roundtables, company visits and meetings with UK business leaders and government officials in London and Cambridge, UK. The Governor will depart on March 17th to return to Boston.

To learn more about the UMMS Human Stem Cell Bank go to <http://www.umassmed.edu/MHSCB/index.aspx>

For more on the UMMS Human Stem Cell Registry, go to <http://www.umassmed.edu/iscr/index.aspx?linkidentifier=id&itemid=47856>

About the University of Massachusetts Medical School

The University of Massachusetts Medical School, one of the fastest growing academic health centers in the country, has built a reputation as a world-class research institution, consistently producing noteworthy advances in clinical and basic research. The Medical School attracts more than \$255 million in research funding annually, 80 percent of which comes from federal funding sources. The work of UMMS researcher Craig Mello, PhD, an investigator of the prestigious Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), and his colleague Andrew Fire, PhD, then of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, toward the discovery of RNA interference was awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize in Medicine and has spawned a new and promising field of research, the global impact of which may prove astounding. UMMS is the academic partner of UMass Memorial Health Care, the largest health care provider in Central Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.umassmed.edu.

About the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (“the Center”) is a quasi-public agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts tasked with implementing the Massachusetts Life Sciences Act, a ten-year, \$1 billion initiative that was signed into law in June of 2008. The Center’s mission is to create jobs in the life sciences and support vital scientific research that will improve the human condition. This work includes making financial investments in public and private institutions that are advancing life sciences research, development and commercialization as well as building ties between sectors of the Massachusetts life sciences community. For more information, visit www.masslifesciences.com.

About the UK Health Protection Agency

The Health Protection Agency is an independent UK organization that was set up by the government in 2003 to protect the public from threats to their health from infectious diseases and environmental hazards. It does this by providing advice and information to the general public, to health professionals such as doctors and nurses, and to national and local government. From April 2012 the HPA will become part of Public Health England. For more information: www.hpa.org.uk.

About the UK Stem Cell Bank

The UK Stem Cell Bank was established to provide a repository of human embryonic and adult stem cell lines as part of the UK governance for the use of human embryos for research. Its role is to provide quality controlled and ethically sourced stocks of these cells that researchers worldwide can rely on to facilitate high quality and standardized research. It is also ready to prepare stocks of ‘clinical grade’ cell lines as seed stocks for the development of therapies. Oversight of the UK Stem Cell Bank is provided by an independent Steering Committee, which provides an ethical framework for stem cell research and the distribution of stem cell lines. More information on the UK Stem Cell Bank can be found here - <http://www.ukstemcellbank.org.uk>.

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