

Message from the President: Sally Temple
March 2017
Bringing Stem Cell Research to the Clinic

The ISSCR just hosted a successful international symposium in Basel, Switzerland, where scientists and clinicians met to explore “Translational Opportunities in Stem Cell Research.” These focused symposia provide ample opportunity for discussions between speakers and attendees, and in-depth exchange of information and ideas.

It was exciting to learn about the numerous lines of research progressing toward the clinic, and the potential to address a wide variety of disease areas. As research moves forward, it is critical to engage scientists, clinicians, patients, and advocates, to share progress and perspective. The translational aspect of stem cell research is vitally important, and discussion and interaction are key so that we make the transition from the lab to the clinic is as seamless as possible, prioritizing sound scientific rationale, robust pre-clinical evidence of safety and efficacy, and patient welfare.

Translational Focus at ISSCR 2017

As the field moves increasingly towards medical applications, the ISSCR is enhancing clinically-focused programming, and several sessions at [ISSCR 2017](#) will address the clinical translation of stem cell discoveries. Two pre-meeting educational sessions are specifically designed for scientists and physicians interested in learning more about how stem cell therapies are developed and moved into the clinic. The sessions will highlight the potential of clinical translation, and illuminate some of the key challenges.

On the morning of 13 June, the [Workshop on Clinical Translation](#) (WCT), “How to Get From the Bench to the Clinic: Practical Advice for Completing an Investigational New Drug (IND) Application” will explore the process of preparing an application to clinically test an experimental cellular therapy. The co-organizers, Melissa Carpenter, PhD of Carpenter Group Consulting, and Chris Mason, PhD of AvroBio, have extensive experience in bringing new therapies to clinic, and have assembled an excellent lineup of speakers: Alessandra Biffi, MD, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School; Lauren Black, PhD, Charles River Laboratories; Jane Lebkowski, PhD, Asterias Biotherapeutics; and Mercedes Serabian, MS, U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

That afternoon, the [Clinical Advances in Stem Cell Research](#) (CASC) program, new this year, will feature three parallel, independent sessions on current and regenerative medicine approaches to disease areas, with leaders exploring the current clinical landscape, advances in cell therapies, and how stem cell research is being applied in the clinic.

Neurodegenerative diseases:

- Roger Barker, MRCP, PhD, University of Cambridge
- Kevin Eggan, PhD, Harvard University
- Eva Feldman, MD, PhD, Michigan Medicine, University of Michigan
- Brian Fiske, PhD, Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Disease

- Claire Henchcliffe, MD, DPhil, Weill Cornell Parkinson's Disease & Movement Disorders Institute
- Lorenz Studer, MD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
- Vivian Tabar, MD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Ocular indications:

- Kapil Bharti, PhD, National Eye Institute
- Hardy Kagimoto, MD, Healios, K.K.
- Jane Lebkowski, PhD, Regenerative Patch Technologies
- Michael Young, PhD, Schepens Eye Research Institute
- Kang Zhang, MD PhD, University of California, San Diego

Immuno-oncology diseases:

- Justin Gainor, MD, Massachusetts General Hospital
- Philip Gotwals, PhD, Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research, Inc.
- Helen Heslop, MD, Baylor College of Medicine
- Carl June, MD, University of Pennsylvania
- Marcela Maus, MD, PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital

[Registration for these sessions is open now](#) as part of the larger ISSCR 2017 [meeting registration](#).

Separate registration is also available; those interested in hearing more about clinical progress can attend the Clinical Advances in Stem Cell Research as a stand-alone event.

The focus session on Wednesday June 14 organized by the ISSCR Industry Committee, "From the Bench to the Clinic: How to Manufacture Your Cell Product," complements the clinical translational workshop. Speakers in this 9:00-12:00 program will focus on the many elements of the manufacturing process, using case studies including pluripotent stem cell-derived products and genome edited cell products. The panel will focus on such issues as cell production, selection and qualification of manufacturing equipment and materials, outsourcing considerations, product testing, release criteria, and the importance of analytical method development and validation, including identity, purity, and potency assays. The session will be moderated by Nils Pfaff, PhD, a research scientist and laboratory head at Bayer.

Themes of translating research to the clinic will also run through several plenary and concurrent sessions, with speakers actively involved in therapy development. The Saturday 17 June Plenary, "Frontiers of Cell Therapy," is focused on key areas of promising research, among them Parkinson's Disease, diabetes, and retinal disease. That session will also feature the John McNeish Memorial Lecture, "Evolving Gene Therapy for Primary Immunodeficiencies," delivered by Adrian Thrasher, PhD, UCL Institute of Child Health, U.K.

Late-breaking abstract submission for the meeting closes 12 April, with advance registration closing 26 April. Looking forward to seeing you at ISSCR 2017!