

renew

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE UK STEM CELL FOUNDATION

ISSUE 1 SUMMER 2011

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Insight

Welcome to the Summer edition of Renew, the new look newsletter of the UK Stem Cell Foundation. I am delighted to report that the last few months have seen much of the planning and hard work of our team come to fruition. The continuation of London Development Agency funding, contributing towards our operating costs and research projects, has been confirmed for the next four years. In addition, support from Scottish Enterprise to create a Scottish fund for stem cell research projects has also been given the go-ahead. Funding from both of these agencies will help to ensure that the work of the Foundation continues to develop, bringing much-needed funding to this most promising area of regenerative medicine. Thank you to both agencies for their continuing support.

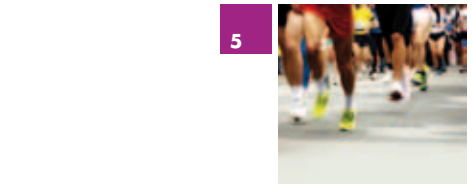
“Funding from LDA and Scottish Enterprise will help to bring much-needed funding to this most promising area of regenerative medicine”

Several collaborations with other medical research charities also are underway. These include the MS Society, where we have jointly fundraised £1 million for three new Multiple Sclerosis (MS) stem cell research projects. Two of these projects will help to improve our understanding of mesenchymal stem cells as a form of immunotherapy that potentially could help to treat this chronic, degenerative condition. The third project will explore the use of neural stem cells to treat a visual impairment that affects many MS sufferers, optic neuritis. The Foundation is also working closely with the British Neurological Research Trust (BNRT). BNRT supporters are running a high profile charity ball in November to help raise funds for the next phase of our spinal injury repair project.

I am pleased to welcome on board two new faces to the UKSCF. Joining our staff team are June Phillips, providing administrative support, and Maureen Munro, who will be focusing on fundraising and marketing. With these new resources now in place, I am confident that we are in a strong position to maximise opportunities and continue our success in the future.

Sir Richard Sykes, FRSC
Chair

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Lasting Legacy

Where there is a will, there is a way. Leaving a gift to charity in your will is a great way for your generosity to last beyond your own lifetime. After considering your family and friends, you could leave a lasting legacy by bequeathing a gift to the UK Stem Cell Foundation. Your gift could help ensure that this most promising area of medical research, with the ability to treat so many devastating conditions, realises its true potential. Also, leaving a gift to charity has the added bonus of being free of inheritance tax.

The gifts and donations of supporters of the UK Stem Cell Foundation play a crucial role in funding its work. Whilst the Foundation receives some funding from the public purse, gifts and donations from supporters are an increasingly important way of raising much-needed funds for stem cell research.

Chief Operating Officer, Lil Shortland, said: "With increasing pressure on the public sector to cut funding, we are becoming more reliant on the generosity of individuals to help fund this ground-breaking area of medical research. Stem cells have the most amazing abilities and qualities, with the potential to treat degenerative illnesses that affect us all - diabetes, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, arthritis, stroke and heart disease, to name but a few. By remembering the Foundation in your will, you have the benefit of knowing you are supporting possibly the most miraculous area of medical research today that will have a lasting impact for generations to come."

The next time you are updating your will, why not ask your solicitor or financial adviser about leaving a legacy to the Foundation? There are several types of legacy that you could consider, which would take into account your own circumstances. These include:

A RESIDUARY LEGACY – this type of legacy would involve leaving a gift of the remainder or a percentage of your estate after all other legacies and payments have been made.

A PECUNIARY LEGACY – this would involve bequeathing a fixed sum of money as a gift to charity. As it would be a fixed sum, the value of the legacy would reduce over time as the cost of living increases.

A SPECIFIC LEGACY – would involve a particular item of value being left to the Foundation. This could be, for example, a property, an artwork or a piece of jewellery.

A LIFE INTEREST LEGACY – is where a surviving dependant can benefit from the gift, for example a house or a fund, during their lifetime. This could be done by setting up a simple trust. When they died, the gift would then pass to the charity.

If you would like to know more about the work of the UK Stem Cell Foundation or leaving a legacy to the charity, please contact **0131 718 0684** or email **info@ukscf.org**





New research projects offer hope to MS patients

Three exciting stem cell research projects into potential future treatments for Multiple Sclerosis (MS) were launched in April 2011, offering new hope to people affected by this degenerative condition. MS affects around one in every 650 people within the UK. Although drugs are increasingly becoming available to help treat some aspects of MS, there is still none available that can reverse its neurological effects or promote repair to damaged cells, limiting the progression of the disease.

By joining forces with the MS Society, we have been able to raise funds more quickly for these valuable new projects

Funding for the projects has resulted from a recent collaboration between the UKSCF and the MS Society, which jointly raised a fund of £1 million for translational stem cell MS research projects.

The first of the projects is led by Professor David Baker of Queen Mary University of London. This three-year project will evaluate the therapeutic potential of transplanting neural stem cells in optic neuritis, or inflammation of the optic nerve in the eye. This is a symptom of MS that leaves many people with visual impairment.

The second project will investigate the use of autologous mesenchymal stem cells as a form of immunotherapy to prevent and potentially reverse neurological deterioration in relapse-remitting MS. This three-year project is a collaborative phase II study, led by Dr Paolo Muraro of Imperial College London. More on this project can be found on page 6.

The third project, led by Professor Cris Constantinescu of QMC Nottingham, aims to understand more about mesenchymal stem cells, which have the ability to modulate the immune system and have neuroprotective / neurorepair qualities. The project will look into the phenotypic characteristics, immune interactions and ultra-high field imaging of autologous mesenchymal stem cells from MS patients in preparation for future clinical trials.

Lil Shortland, Chief Operating Officer of the UKSCF said: "By joining forces with the MS Society, we have been able to raise funds more quickly for these valuable new projects. MS is such a debilitating condition that devastates the lives of so many people, particularly in the UK. We hope these projects will lead ultimately to the development of successful new treatments for multiple sclerosis within the next three to five years."

SPREAD the WORD

HELP US raise awareness and much-needed funds for essential stem cell research. Stem cells have the amazing potential to change into any type of cell in our bodies. That means that they also have the potential to repair and renew cells that have been damaged in some way. However, before we can translate them into treatments, we need to fully understand them and how they can be controlled to ensure that they bring therapeutic benefits to patients.

You can help us raise awareness of the Foundation and this exciting area of research by encouraging friends, family and colleagues to support us.

To sign up for our newsletter and to be kept up to date with new developments, please email your contact details to info@ukscf.org. If you would like to know ways in which you can help to raise funding or make a donation, log on to www.ukscf.org/donate/index/htm or email maureen.munro@ukscf.org



The UKSCF staff team has just got bigger!

Many supporters of the Foundation will be familiar with our Chief Operating Officer, Lil Shortland, who has been running the organisation with the support of the Board for the last four years. She has recently expanded her team and now has been joined by June Phillips. Based in our London office, June has past experience of working at senior levels in the academic, health and voluntary sectors, including PA roles at Imperial College London and more recently NHS London. She is currently PA to Sir Richard Sykes, Chair of the UKSCF. Maureen Munro has also joined the team as Director of Marketing and Fundraising. Maureen has worked for many years in both the private and third sectors, and brings her extensive experience in marketing and fundraising to the Foundation.



FIRST FOOT FORWARD

If you want to run for funds for charity, but are not sure how to get started, our top five tips for beginners will help you to put your first foot forward.

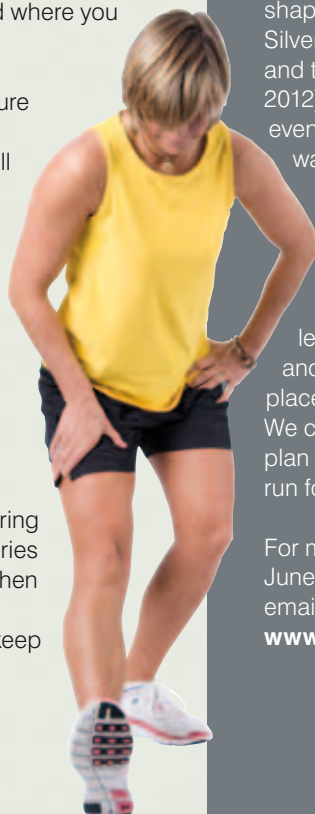
1 Check with your GP – if you have any illnesses, health concerns or past injuries, it is best to check first with your GP before you take up running.

2 Fit for your feet – make sure you have the right shoes for you. A specialist running shop will be able to help you choose the right pair of shoes that will take into account your running style and where you will be running, e.g. on or off road.

3 Remember to stretch – to prevent injury, make sure you warm up and cool down before and after your run. Stretching exercises to prepare your muscles for the full range of movement you will expect of them will help to stop them seizing up during or after your run.

4 Pace yourself – start gently and build up slowly. Start by walking briskly to warm yourself up. Then try walking for a minute then running for a minute. Repeat this several times. On subsequent sessions, gradually build up the amount of time that you spend running. However, it is important that you listen to your body to make sure that you avoid injuries.

5 Keep yourself motivated – set yourself goals during your run. On longer distances, break your run into a series of achievable goals. This will help to keep you going when you begin to tire. Why not run with a friend for some company and for mutual support? It is a great way to keep yourself motivated!



RUN FOR FUNDS

Whether you want to walk, jog or run, there is plenty of time for you to get into shape to support the UKSCF in next year's Silverstone Half Marathon (March 2012) and the Virgin London Marathon (April 2012). We have booked places at both events for enthusiastic supporters who want to help raise funds for ground-breaking stem cell research.

If you want to make a difference and help us advance stem cell treatments for conditions such as leukaemia, MS, Alzheimer's, diabetes and AIDS, contact us now to book your place and to receive your fundraising pack. We can also provide you with a training plan to help make sure you are on form to run for funds!

For more information, please contact June Phillips on **020 8282 6355** or email june.phillips@ukscf.org or visit www.ukscf.org

International Collaboration on New MS Project

One of the new projects jointly funded by the UK Stem Cell Foundation and the MS Society is a clinical trial to test the safety and potential of mesenchymal stem cells for the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis (MS).



As part of a 3-year, £525,478 project, the trial will involve 13 participants to test whether mesenchymal stem cells can be used as a safe treatment for people with MS. The London trial site will be one of 15-20 worldwide trial centres participating in the international trial, aiming to involve 150 people with MS.

The project leader, Dr Paolo Muraro of Imperial College London, explains more about the project.

"I have thought for over a decade that stem cells hold a lot of promise as a potential therapy for people with MS. During that time, researchers have quietly been moving into uncharted territory, working together to find out how we might be able to use stem cells in the treatment of MS.

"Researchers are ready to begin work that will translate our early laboratory findings into potential treatments for people with MS. The exciting thing about this phase 2 trial is that it involves close collaboration

between different researchers from around the world. Our site, based in London and with key collaborators in Edinburgh and Cambridge, will evaluate the safety and effectiveness of mesenchymal stem cells in 13 people with 'active' MS. But around the world, a total of 150 people will be recruited, treated and assessed in the same way. At the end of the trial, we will combine all of our information to get a much more accurate measure of the risks and benefits of using mesenchymal stem cells than we would be able to get by working in isolation."

Once the trial is complete, and depending on the results, a larger, phase 3 clinical trial would be required to evaluate the potential use of mesenchymal stem cells in a larger number of people, and to possibly compare their effectiveness against other standard therapies.

Dr Muraro explains: "The way that clinical research is done is that we need to prove that stem cells have an effect on people with MS in rigorous studies. This is the only way that we can be sure that stem cells are

The exciting thing about this phase 2 trial is that it involves close collaboration between different researchers from around the world

beneficial to people with MS and the only way that the public and health authorities will be able to evaluate treatments with any confidence.

"I often hear from people with MS that research takes a frustratingly long time. I can empathise with this viewpoint, but I always try to explain to people that it's essential to do proper clinical studies and clinical trials to measure the value (and risk) of any therapy before it is introduced into clinical practice. Having said that, we are making great progress in stem cell research and my hope is that the MS Society and UKSCF's £1 million funding for stem cell research will speed that progress."



ISSCR 9th Annual Meeting

15 – 18 June 2011: Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, Canada www.isscr.org

RegeNer8 Annual Conference 2011

29 September 2011: The Lowry Theatre & Art Gallery, Manchester www.regener8.ac.uk

The BNRT Ball

17 November 2011: Embankment Gardens, London www.thebnrtball.co.uk



Having a BALL

There is still time for you to look out your dancing shoes in support of a great cause. The BNRT Ball Committee is running a dazzling ball to raise funds for the British Neurological Research Trust (BNRT).

Taking place on 17 November 2011 at Embankment Gardens, London, WC2, the ball is sure to be a spectacular affair and is aiming to raise over £100,000 to support the research of Professor Geoff Raisman and his team into spinal cord repair.

The event will include a champagne reception, three-course meal, silent and live auctions, and of course dancing. All drinks are included in the ticket price of £150, £1,500 for a table of 10.

This prestigious ball has already attracted a sparkling list of guests, including high profile law firms, banks, asset managers, hedge funds and media companies to name but a few. Opportunities still exist to take a table for corporate entertainment and to sponsor prizes or the event.

For more information, to make a booking or a donation, visit www.thebnrtball.co.uk or email info@thebnrtball.co.uk

Focus on Spinal Cord Repair

Professor Geoff Raisman's team at the Spinal Repair Unit of the Institute of Neurology at University College London are undertaking research into ways of repairing damage to the brain and spinal cord in patients suffering from the crippling effects of spinal cord injury, birth injuries, strokes, head injuries, multiple sclerosis and degenerative conditions such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Professor Raisman has dedicated his career to finding a cure for spinal cord injuries. Since the early 1990s, he has been working with a team of scientists to develop a process to use olfactory ensheathing cells (stem cells found in the nose) to bridge the gaps left by spinal cord injury. The results have been very encouraging. Not only did the cells survive the transplant, but critically they also bridged the gap, allowing new nerves to grow and movement to return.

The first trials on human patients are planned for the end of this year. They have the aim of restoring movement in injuries known as "brachial plexus avulsions", essentially spinal injuries

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that paralyse the arm causing acute pain. These are often caused by traffic accidents. If this proves successful, it could provide cures for a variety of conditions resulting from spinal nerve damage.

The UK Stem Cell Foundation and the Nicholls Spinal Injury Foundation, together with the International Spinal Research Trust, the British Neurological Research Trust and Smith's Charity have helped to support Professor Raisman's work to date. Donations to the UK Stem Cell Foundation would help greatly to progress this ground-breaking research, and give hope to thousands of people, worldwide, who suffer from spinal cord damage.

For further information please contact UKSCF on info@ukscf.org or call Lil Shortland on **0131 718 0684**.



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