



www.stemcellcentre.edu.au

Media Release

International Stem Cell Society to Provide Guidance on Unproven Stem Cell Treatments

Embargoed until 12.00am 9 June 2010, Melbourne Australia:

Australians seeking new stem cell treatments will soon have more information to arm them, their families and doctors in making important decisions regarding their health.

The International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) today launched a new website 'Take a Closer Look at Stem Cells' (www.closerlookatstemcells.org) which will assist patients around the world to assess the recent explosion of online claims regarding stem cell treatments.

There is an understandable impatience from many groups to see faster medical results from stem cell research. Worldwide, there is a proliferation of clinics directly marketing expensive stem cell therapies that are considered unproven by globally accepted clinical standards. In response the ASCC released its [Patient Information Handbook](#) in 2009 to assist the growing number of Australians interested in accessing these therapies. Today's announcement from the ISSCR will provide Australian's with an additional and powerful resource to assist in evaluating the multitude of stem cell treatments offered online and elsewhere.

Australia has a well regulated health system and patients can be confident that when stem cell treatments are offered here they will be both safe and effective. However, not every country is so well regulated. The promise that stem cell based treatments hold for debilitating diseases and crippling injuries, that are often otherwise untreatable, has led to treatments being offered in some countries without proof of safety and efficacy by properly overseen trials and regulation of the treatments. These processes are time consuming and expensive, but are essential for patient safety and well being.

The statement released today by the ISSCR said that while stem cells hold a tremendous amount of promise there are currently only a small number of stem cell treatments that are medically proven. The majority of currently available stem cell treatments are those for blood related disorders such as bone marrow transplants for leukaemia. However, the ISSCR says it is concerned that stem cell treatments are being marketed to patients worldwide for a variety of medical conditions without having the appropriate safeguards in place to ensure safety for the patient or evidence that the treatment will be beneficial.

Visitors to the new website will be able to submit the details of a stem cell treatment provider they have seen advertised on the internet that they may be considering and wish to know more about. The ISSCR will ask for evidence that the clinic has appropriate oversight and other patient protections in place. The ISSCR will list whether or not stem cell clinics provide this information on the website and the information will be made available to future patients.

Clinical Advisor for the Australian Stem Cell Centre, Dr Kirsten Herbert commented "Stem cell therapy holds great promise and clinical trials are ongoing under controlled circumstances. Until the appropriate testing and regulation is in place for these international treatments, resources such as 'A Closer Look at Stem Cells' and the ASCC's Patient Handbook will be invaluable in assisting patients, advocacy groups, and clinicians in evaluating claims of benefit from unproven stem cell therapies."

For more information visit www.closerlookatstemcells.org and to download the ASCC Patient Information Handbook please visit www.stemcellcentre.edu.au. To read the ISSCR media release visit www.isscr.org.

- Ends -

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

Rebecca Skinner
Senior Manager – Communications and Networking
Australian Stem Cell Centre
Phone + 613 92711180 Mobile +61 (0)400684993
Email rebecca.skinner@stemcellcentre.edu.au
www.stemcellcentre.edu.au

About the ASCC

The Australian Stem Cell Centre was founded to capitalise on Australia's significant strengths in the field of stem cell research. The ASCC was selected in 2002, in a competitive bid process, as Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence, an initiative of the Australian Government. The Centre provides a unique national resource for stem cell researchers to deliver outcomes that benefit the wider Australian biotechnology industry and will ultimately contribute innovative solutions to human health challenges.

The Centre was established with the financial and in-kind support of a number of institutions of which the current voting Members, who retain ultimate oversight of the Centre, are: Monash University, University of Queensland, Howard Florey Institute and University of Adelaide. The additional Stakeholder institutes are: University of Melbourne, Baker IDI, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and Mater Medical Research Institute.

The ASCC is governed by a Board of Directors with independent scientific oversight and support from an eminent Scientific Advisory Board.

Total funding of \$100 million has been awarded to the ASCC by the Australian Government and is administered by the Australian Research Council and the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The funding is provided in instalments from 2002 to 2011. To complement Australian Government funding, the State Government of Victoria's Science Technology and Innovation program awarded the Australian Stem Cell Centre a further \$11 million to support key infrastructure in Victoria.

Together the ASCC and partnering organisations support a critical mass of Australian stem cell research that is internationally competitive. The ASCC currently funds research at leading institutes and universities in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales with the major hubs of activity centred in Victoria and Queensland.