

PRESS RELEASE: The Scottish Stem Cell Network June 11th 2010, Edinburgh

ISSCR Launches Web Site Providing Information on Stem Cell Treatments

The International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) has announced the launch of a new website, www.closerlookatstemcells.org, which aims to provide patients, families and carers with an independent assessment of the various companies purporting to offer stem cell treatments.

There are currently only a small number of stem cell treatments that have been shown to be effective in rigorous studies and are confined to diseases of the blood as well as skin grafts and corneal repair.

SSCN welcomes the ISSCR initiative to provide patients with additional, critical information so that they can make the best decision for their on-going care and treatment.

Our advice to patients before contemplating such treatments is to ensure that;

- Preclinical and clinical studies have been published, reviewed and repeated, by other experts in the field, that show the treatment is both safe and effective,
- The providers have approval from an independent committee such as an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Review Board (ERB) to make sure the risks are as low as possible, are worth any potential benefits and that your rights are being protected.
- The providers have approval from a national or regional regulatory agency, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the European Medicines Agency (EMA), for the safe conduct of clinical trials or medical use of the product for this disease.

The new website should enable patients to ascertain the status of any offered therapy against these criteria.

This advice applies to treatments and clinical trials offered in countries other than the UK. In the UK all such treatments, procedures and clinical trials are regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and will meet the guidelines listed above.

SSCN believe the best way to make stem cell therapies a reality is to conduct properly controlled clinical trials and would encourage people to enrol as such trials open for recruitment.

SSCN's website, www.sscn.co.uk contains further information on this subject, including the Patient's Handbook on Stem Cell Therapies, (copy this link into your browser bar <http://www.sscn.co.uk/GetFile.aspx?itemid=206>)

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About the SSCN

The Scottish Stem Cell Network (SSCN) was launched in 2003 and is a not-for-profit organisation supported by grants from Scottish Enterprise, the European Regional Development Fund and the Technology Strategy Board as well as sponsorship from commercial organisations.

SSCN's aim is to bring together scientists and clinicians in order to improve the rate at which laboratory research translates into therapeutic benefits for patients.

SSCN is a membership-based organisation and works with the entire stem cell community in Scotland, including academic institutions, clinical and industry-based research groups as well as patient groups. It provides a forum for discussion and learning, which is critical for the development of this exciting new technology in which Scotland is a global leader.

A major role of the Network is to provide international organisations with easy access to stem cell researchers in Scotland, to engage with the general public and inform open debate at home and abroad.