

## PRESS NOTICE

### Note : Midnight Embargo

# UK Stem Cell Initiative

Chair: Sir John Pattison DM FRCPath FMedSci

December 1st 2005

## UK A WORLD LEADER IN STEM CELL RESEARCH

...but more investment needed if our position is to be maintained.

Sir John Pattison

The UK is one of the world leaders in stem cell research and development – but it needs more Government funding and better coordination if it is to maintain and develop its global position. This is the message from the report of the UK Stem Cell Initiative (UKSCI) set up by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown in his Budget in March this year.

Sir John Pattison, chair of the UKSCI, launching its report said today Thursday:

“The UK should spend at least an additional £350M over the next decade on stem cell research if we wish to maintain our international leadership in this area. It is vital that we maintain and increase the level of public funding. The ultimate health and wealth gains the UK will enjoy are directly proportional to the additional investment we are proposing”

Describing the current challenges facing stem cell research in the UK, Sir John said:

“During the pioneering phases of any new medical treatments, there are often substantial gaps in our knowledge, leading to a perception that the research is ‘high-risk.’ This is certainly true for stem cell therapies. However, we must foster those who pioneer the applied aspects of our strong basic science, if we are to make significant contributions to its global development. It is essential, therefore, that the UK is supportive of early clinical trials, provided they are of sufficient quality. This will help to develop our breadth of expertise and knowledge of clinical aspects of stem cell research.”

The UKSCI recommends that the Government should provide increased funding over the ten years to 2016 and set up public/ private partnerships to coordinate and develop stem cell research and technology.

The report says there is a strong likelihood of new and exciting discoveries providing treatments for conditions like Parkinson's disease, diabetes and heart disease. Although, it also cautions that any enthusiasm must be tempered, as it may take decades before many of these treatments will be generally available. The UKSCI also predicts that there may be considerable short-term benefits in more conventional areas of medicine, such as the development of safer and more effective drug treatments.

The main points of the report are:

- ▶ Stem cell research needs sustained and increased funding of between £11 and 74 million a year over the next decade.
- ▶ There should be a consortium of pharmaceutical, healthcare and biotechnology companies backed by the Government to develop stem cell technology as a basis for new medical treatments
- ▶ And a public/private partnership involving the Government and the UK Stem Cell Foundation to coordinate investment in research via the Research Councils and private finance.
- ▶ The Government should strengthen the infrastructure supporting UK stem cell research via the consolidation of the UK Stem Cell Bank and the establishment of Centres of Excellence.

## -UK Stem Cell Initiative-

- ▶ The Government and charity sector should develop a dialogue with the public on stem cell research and sustain it over the next ten years.

Professor Sir John and his advisory panel consulted widely with universities, research institutes and industry to produce its report. He said:

“I am left in no doubt that if we are to remain leaders in this crucial area of medical research, then it needs to be given an additional boost in the form of extra financial support and a long-term commitment at the highest level. If this happens, it is probable that a significant portion of discovery and innovation in the field of stem cell research will take place in the UK.”

### Notes to Editors

1. The Chancellor announced the setting up of the UK Stem Cell Initiative in his Budget in March this year. The UKSCI was charged with developing a ten-year research and development strategy from 2006 to 2016. Its terms of reference were:

- To develop a ten-year vision for UK stem cell research, which seeks to make the UK the most scientifically and commercially productive location for this activity over the coming decade, and which commands the support of public and private research funders, practitioners and commercial partners.
- To present a costed plan to Government and business for implementation over 2006-2015, to inform future public spending reviews and private sector investment planning.
- To identify options for better coordinating and leading UK stem cell research and commercial translation in the coming years.
- To report back to Government (DTI, Department of Health, HM Treasury) by Pre-Budget Report 2005 (anticipated late autumn 2005).

2. The members of the panel were:

**Chairman:**

Sir John Pattison DM FRCPath FMedSci

**Members:**

Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive, Medical Research Council

Professor Julia Goodfellow, Chief Executive, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

Ms Diana Garnham, Chief Executive, Association of Medical Research Charities

Professor Sir Christopher Evans, UK Stem Cell Foundation

Dr Peter Mountford, Chief Executive, Stem Cell Sciences (UK) Ltd

Professor Sally Davies, Director of Research, Department of Health

Dr Mark Walport, Director, The Wellcome Trust

Dr Peter Arnold, Director of Technology, Smith and Nephew (UK)

Dr Fiona Watt, The Academy of Medical Sciences

Lord May of Oxford, UK Stem Cell Foundation.

3. Request for interviews and copies of the report from Pat Wilson on 07990 55 00 26