I-STEM and Roche form research collaboration to discover new therapies for diseases such as Alzheimer's and schizophrenia

Paris, 29th June, 2009: I-STEM, the Institute for Stem cell Therapy and Exploration of Monogenic Diseases, has signed an agreement with Swiss-based healthcare company Roche to use I-STEM's technologies in discovering novel therapies to treat devastating central nervous system (CNS) diseases such as Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, depression and anxiety.

The €7.5 million two-year collaboration will use I-STEM's neuronal stem cell proliferation techniques to screen Roche's compound libraries and identify molecules that could be potentially useful in treating neurodegenerative diseases.

Dr. Marc Peschanski, Director of I-STEM said: "Stem cells and their applications offer enormous potential in discovery of drugs or innovative therapies, and I-STEM is a pioneer in developing cell models that can be used as a basis for screening compound libraries. We are excited to be working with Roche in the area of CNS, where Roche has considerable expertise in bringing effective therapies to patients."

Scientists from Roche will be closely collaborating with I-STEM researchers in Evry (Paris), as well as carrying out parallel research programmes at Roche's headquarters in Basel, Switzerland.

I-STEM will be eligible for up to €16 million additional payments in royalties from products resulting from this agreement.

About I-STEM

The Institute for Stem cell Therapy and Exploration of Monogenic diseases – is a laboratory which has been set out to explore the therapeutic potential of stem cells in the treatment of rare genetic diseases. Headed by Marc Peschanski (an Inserm Research Director), I-STEM has grown out of a collaboration between the French Muscular Dystrophy Association (AFM), the Inserm (the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research) and the University of Evry-Val d'Essonne (UEVE). It has been funded by Genopole and by several other institutions (the Conseil Régional d'Ile-de-France, the Conseil Général de l'Essonne, the French National Research Agency and the European Union) and is located at the heart of the Evry biopark. In early 2005, I-STEM was the first lab in France to be allowed to work on (imported) human embryonic stem cell lines. Then, in June 2006, it was authorized by the French Agency for Biomedicine to set up a library of mutated cell lines that can serve as models in the study of monogenic diseases. For more information: www.istem.eu

About stem cells

Stem cells are known as “pluripotent” – they can be replicated indefinitely (self-renewal), proliferate in culture and differentiate themselves into more than 200 tissue types. During development, they are designed to form all tissues of the body. Their unique attributes lead to potential major breakthrough in terms of biological and medical applications.

About Inserm

Inserm is the only French public organization entirely devoted to biological, medical and public health research. Inserm conducts research relevant to many health issues and is committed to studying all diseases, whether common or rare and is dedicated to a continuous research effort from lab bench to patient bedside. Inserm coordinates the whole French research effort in the biomedical field.

Inserm Transfert, its subsidiary, promotes knowledge transfer from Inserm labs to health industries through R&D partnerships, licensing agreements or start-up creation. For more information: www.inserm.fr; www.inserm-transfert.fr

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