

The Australian Stem Cell Centre is the first Australian Biotechnology centre of Excellence

An embryonic stem cell has the unique capacity to renew itself indefinitely.

Stem cells are the body's own biological repair kit.



Australian Stem Cell Centre

www.stemcellcentre.edu.au

Media release

Australia Leads the way in Stem Cell Education

Wednesday, 18 June 2008, San Diego, United States of America

Thursday, 19 June 2008, Melbourne Australia

An interactive website tackling the major issues in stem cell research and designed especially for secondary school students and teachers was launched today by the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, at BIO2008 in San Diego (USA).

The Stem Cell Channel - www.stemcellchannel.com.au - has been developed by the Australian Stem Cell Centre (ASCC) to provide accurate and timely information about stem cell science.

Mr Brumby said the website plugged a gap in students and teachers seeking information about stem cell research.

“Public education in stem cell research is a top priority in Australia and this website provides knowledge from a range of expert sources via interviews, animations and mini documentaries,” he said.

“It will become the ‘go-to’ resource for students and teachers and covers ethics, the science and scientists, career information, patients, legislation and has an ‘ask a scientist’ function.”

The website was developed due to the increasing number of requests from students and teachers for information from the Australian Stem Cell Centre.

“The public affairs group at the ASCC were typically receiving 10 – 15 calls and emails a week from students,” said Professor Stephen Livesey, Chief Executive Officer at the Australian Stem Cell Centre.

“There is no resource like this anywhere in the world. There are plenty of general websites offering stem cell information, but they are often highly scientific and very dry reading. This is not at all attractive to the average 17 year old. We need to acknowledge and understand that young people these days learn in different ways. Technology is driving their style of learning and we need to adapt to this new approach.”

The ASCC undertook a study looking at how senior students (16-18 year olds) use media technology to gather information and how they preferred material to be presented for the greatest impact. The advice received was to develop a website on a short video format of interviews and documentary style footage of one – three minutes each.

The site has been tested a number of times with senior students and teachers over the past three months. Feedback from students and science teachers has shaped some of the topics covered and the navigation tools offered.

One of the most valued features in the feedback was the 'ask a scientist' function. This tool allows students to email questions to a selection of working stem cell scientists at the Australian Stem Cell Centre. Scientists undertake to provide an email response within 48 hours.

The site is expected to receive an average of 10,000 visitors a month.

It will be continually updated as new scientific advances are announced, ethical issues emerge and legislation is debated and changed.

The website has been developed with the support of the Victorian Government.

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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Background

The **Australian Stem Cell Centre** is Australia's Biotechnology Centre of Excellence. The Centre has partnered with ten leading Australian universities and research institutions, and brings together a critical mass of outstanding Australian stem cell research that is internationally competitive and well regarded. The ASCC's vision is to undertake research of the highest quality in the stem cell field, in order to discover and ultimately commercialise new therapies for human disease. The Australian Stem Cell Centre is funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments.