



# Media Alert

## Stem Cells in Schools

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**12 August 2010, Melbourne Australia:** To celebrate National Science Week 2010 (14 - 22 August), the Australian Stem Cell Centre (ASCC) is launching a series of education initiatives to introduce stem cell science into the classroom.

For the first time teachers will be able to access a free [Stem Cell Teachers' Kit](#), which along with the newly updated interactive Stem Cell Channel ([www.stemcellchannel.com.au](http://www.stemcellchannel.com.au)), will provide teachers with the tools to teach the science and ethics of stem cells. To kick start the initiative, stem cell scientists are going *Back to Schools* this week across Victoria to give talks and inspire young people in this exciting area of science.

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The *Stem Cell Teachers' Kit* is designed to assist teachers in the integration of stem cell science into the secondary school curriculum. Mainly aimed at Years 10-12, the kit will help teachers across Australia in the key learning areas of Science, Biology, English, Religious Education and Philosophy. Key questions are addressed, such as *What are stem cells? What are the different types of stem cells?* and *What are the ethical issues?* in an interactive format that caters for different abilities and age groups.

The Teachers Kit was developed in response to significant interest from the teaching community. Based on experience exhibiting at the Conference of the National Science Teachers and enquiries received through the ASCC website, it became clear that teachers wanted lesson plans and activities that would fit into the national curriculum. The development of the Teachers Kit was supported by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research *National Enabling Technologies Strategy*.

The Stem Cell Channel, a web resource of short videos, recently updated with new footage, is an invaluable partner to the Teachers' Kit. Students and teachers can now visit the Channel and watch videos such as: *What are iPS cells*, *Creation of human embryonic stem cells*, and *When does human life begin?* All videos feature leading Australian stem cell scientists along with ethicists, religious leaders and politicians.

Professor Joe Sambrook, ASCC Scientific Director, believes "Providing educational materials about the stem cell field is crucially important. We want to give students and teachers access to accurate information in an easy to digest format so that they can learn about this exciting technology from experts and scientists in the field."

As a final complement to these education initiatives, once again this year the ASCC is sending some of Australia's leading stem cell scientists *Back to Schools*, following its successful launch in 2009. *Back to Schools* is a unique initiative being the only education service covering stem cell research in a personal, face to face setting with students. The scientists will give an interactive talk on stem cell research designed to debunk myths, discuss career choices and answer questions. Last year the Centre's speakers reached over 1,600 students and this year again are looking to visit over 22 schools across the State.

Last year's *Back to Schools* program was received well by students and teachers, "Interesting, relevant, well presented and gave a good insight into stem cell research and its uses." commented Anina Alexander, a science teacher from Sunbury Downs College.

## **Ends**

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **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.