

## **Toronto Gathers Stem Cell Researchers from Around the World**

(July 2006, Toronto) Forty-three years after the discovery of stem cells in a laboratory at the Ontario Cancer Institute (a member of the University Health Network), the city of Toronto hosted the current leading lights of the stem cell research world at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR), held from June 29 to July 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

“The ISSCR Annual Meeting not only provides a unique forum to disseminate the very best stem cell research from around the world, but also offers an ideal setting for stem cell researchers to interact with members of the industry, governments, media and the public to exchange ideas on stem cell research and accelerate the translation of basic stem discoveries to concrete therapies,” says Dr. Gordon Keller, immediate past President of the ISSCR.

For Dr. Keller, this meeting in Toronto was of special significance as he was welcoming his fellow stem cell colleagues for the first time to his new city. Dr. Keller was recently recruited as the inaugural Director of the McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine at the University Health Network (UHN)—Canada’s largest teaching hospital and a sister institution of the University of Toronto.

UHN’s presence was strongly felt at the event, since the institution was also represented by Dr. John Dick, chair of the 2006 program committee and a stem cell researcher at UHN. “The ISSCR annual meeting is rapidly growing and in only four years of existence, it is already major forum for stem cell research. We are thrilled to host this meeting which takes place outside the United States for the first time this year” said Dr. Dick. This year’s meeting attracted over 2000 stem cell researchers.

The meeting included a keynote by Dr. John Polanyi, 1986 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and Professor of chemistry at the University of Toronto. He addressed the audience in a Presidential Symposium in honor of the world-renowned stem cell pioneers Drs. James Till & Ernest McCulloch. The UHN-based scientists Drs. Till and McCulloch were awarded the prestigious Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research in 2005 for their ground-breaking discovery of hematopoietic stem cells in the 1960s.

As with past meetings, this year’s schedule also included a free public symposium to learn about the latest stem cell research and its influence on the future of medicine. Panelists and stem cell research experts Peter Andrews (University of Sheffield, UK), Timothy Caulfield (University of Alberta), Janet Rossant (Hospital for Sick Children) and James Till (University Health Network) helped address some fallacies about stem cell research and related ethical and legal issues.

The next ISSCR Annual Meeting will be held in Cairns, Australia, June 17-21 2007. For more information about the ISSCR, please visit [www.isscr.org](http://www.isscr.org)

**About the McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine**

The McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine was established in 2003 with a generous donation from Rob and Cheryl McEwen. Its mission is to be a catalyst for regenerative medicine research by facilitating collaborations and promoting research and awareness in the field of regenerative medicine. The McEwen's Centre ultimate goal is to accelerate the development of better, more effective treatments for life-threatening conditions such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and spinal cord injury. The McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine is fully affiliated with the University Health Network.