

August 2015 Newsletter

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CIRM Board Approves \$16M investment in Two Clinical Trial Projects

At its July meeting, the CIRM Board agreed to invest \$15.9 million in two clinical trials aimed at helping people battling AIDS-related blood cancer and a rare immune deficiency disease. Dr. Mehrdad Abedi at the UC Davis, was awarded \$8.5 million to treat people with HIV/AIDS who have lymphoma. The team will take the individual's own blood stem cells, genetically modify them so they contain a triple combination of anti-HIV genes, and then re-introduce them to the individual. Dr. Don Kohn at UCLA, was awarded \$7.4 million to run a clinical trial for people with X-linked Chronic Granulomatous Disease, an immune deficiency disease that leaves people unable to fight off bacterial or fungal infections, having a severe impact on both the quality of life and life expectancy.

- [Read our press release about these funding awards](#)

New Video: Paving a Path to Cures with the Alpha Stem Cell Clinics Network



CIRM's Alpha Stem Cell Clinics Network is a \$24 million initiative to provide the infrastructure necessary to get stem cell clinical trials off the ground in the most efficient manner possible. In May 2015, the three Network programs from UCSD, City of Hope, and the UCLA/UCI consortium joined CIRM at the City of Hope campus for a kickoff workshop to mark the beginning of the endeavor. CIRM produced a short video based on that workshop and features interviews with each trial center's program director.

- [Watch our video and read our blog about the Alpha Stem Cell Clinics Network](#)

Viacyste Opens 2nd Site for its First-in-Human Stem Cell-Based Diabetes Trial



VIACYTE

Regenerating Health™

On July 29th, ViaCyte, Inc. announced that they would begin enrolling patients at a second location for their type 1 diabetes trial CIRM helped launch by funding the first clinical trial site at the University of California, San Diego. That trial uses pancreatic cells grown from embryonic stem cells that are protected from immune attack by a semi-permeable pouch. The second site, at the University of Alberta Hospitals in Edmonton, Canada, is being funded in part by Alberta Innovates as well as by the JDRF Canadian Clinical Trials Network.

- [Read ViaCyte's press release](#)
- [Watch our short video about the project](#)

CIRM Hosts HIV/AIDS Town Hall Event in Los Angeles



"Cure" is no longer just a distant dream for the HIV/AIDS patient advocate and research community, it's a goal. CIRM is funding three projects in clinical trials — by Calimmune Inc., City of Hope/Sangamo BioSciences, and UC Davis — that aim to genetically modify a patient's own blood stem cells to block HIV infection. To share the progress of these projects and others with the public, CIRM partnered with the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), Being Alive and the University of Southern California (USC) to host an HIV/AIDS Town Hall event called "Countdown to a Cure: California Leads the Way." Around 120 people showed up to listen to stem cell scientists talk about the development of new treatments, hopefully even cures, for HIV/AIDS.

- [Read our blog about the HIV/AIDS Town Hall Event](#)

CIRM Board Allocates \$190M to Drive the Full Spectrum of Stem Cell Research

CIRM 2.0, the agency's plan to radically overhaul the way it works, took another big step forward on July 23rd when the CIRM Board voted in favor of two new concepts covering Discovery – or early stage – and Translational research. The concept plans are structured to encourage a clear path from early research all the way to the clinical phase. In the Discovery program, for example, there are financial incentives for researchers who successfully complete their work, and then move it along into the Translational phase – either themselves or by finding a scientific partner willing to do that. The stem cell agency estimates that each year there will be up to 50 Discovery awards worth a total of \$53 million; 12 Translation awards worth a total of \$40 million; and 12 clinical awards worth around \$100 million.

- [Read our press release about the Discovery and Translational programs](#)

President Mills Meets with Patient Advocates to Help Inform Strategic Plan



CIRM is in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan to help shape the direction the agency takes in the next few years. Because CIRM's mission is to accelerate stem cell therapies to people with unmet medical needs, it was important to hear from patients and patient advocates in building the Plan. So in early July, CIRM President & CEO C. Randal Mills, Ph.D., hosted patient advocate meetings in San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco to get feedback from the community.

- Read our blog about the patient advocate meetings

The Latest Publications by CIRM-Funded Researchers

CIRM grantees are making steady progress on understanding the fundamentals of stem cell biology and moving stem cell-based therapies toward clinical trials. Here are examples of CIRM-funded research that was published in July along with press releases from the grantees' home institution and an entry from *The Stem Cellar*, CIRM's official blog:

July 1st - *Nature Communications*

- UCLA Release: UCLA study reveals bone-building protein's impact on bone stem cells
- CIRM Blog: Protein Revs Up Bone Stem Cells; Points Toward Future Osteoporosis Drug

July 2nd - *Molecular Therapy*

- UCLA Release: Stem cell gene therapy developed at UCLA holds promise for eliminating HIV infection
- CIRM Blog: Trendy CAR T therapy tried on HIV

July 10th - *Nature Communications*

- Oregon Health & Science U./Stanford Release: Discovery could improve IVF success rates for women around the world
- CIRM Blog: Stem cell researchers boost IVF

July 13th - *Cell Reports*

- Cedars-Sinai Release: Researchers Identify Critical Genes Responsible for Brain Tumor Growth
- CIRM Blog: Two studies show genes and their switches critical to brain cancer's resistance to therapy

July 14th - *Nature Communications*

- UC Berkeley Release: Researchers create model of early human heart development from stem cells
- Popular Science Article: Researchers Grow Tiny Beating Human Hearts From Stem Cells
- CIRM Blog: Giving stem cells the right physical cues produced micro hearts, maybe a tool to avoid birth defects

July 27th - *The Lancet Haematology*

- UCSD Release: New Drug for Blood Cancers Now in Five Phase II Clinical Trials
- CIRM Blog: Sonic Hedgehog provides pathway to fight blood cancers

Upcoming CIRM Events

August 20th

The CIRM governing Board will hold its August 23rd meeting telephonically. The fifth in-person meeting of 2015 will be held September 24th in San Diego. Agendas and details will be posted to the **meetings page** 10 days before each event.

CIRM 2.0 Funding Opportunities



CIRM will accept applications on a monthly basis applications for our three Clinical Stage Programs described in the Program Announcements listed below:

- PA 15-01: Partnering opportunity for late stage preclinical projects
- PA 15-02: Partnering opportunity for clinical trial stage projects
- PA 15-03: Partnering opportunity for supplemental accelerating activities

To submit an application, visit our CIRM 2.0 awards page for more information. Our Discovery and Translational Stage Programs will be announced later this year.

Sign up to receive CIRM funding announcements

CIRM Job Openings

The following positions are now open. Follow the links below to apply or go to our jobs page:

- Science Officer/Senior Science Officer, Therapeutics
- Associate Director/Director of Therapeutics
- Grants Management Specialist