From: Chan Beals <cbeals@scripps.edu>
Date: Thursday, September 26, 2024 at 9:02 AM
To: Claudette Mandac <cmandac@cirm.ca.gov>
Cc: Michael Bollong <mbollong@scripps.edu>, Kit Bonin <cbonin@scripps.edu>, Peter Schultz <schultz@scripps.edu>
Subject: [EXT] Written Comment CIRM ARS Mtg 25 SEP 2024 regarding clinical funding priorities

Dear Claudette

I'd like to enter this into public comment regarding Strategic Allocation Framework (SAF) priorities. I cannot attend the meeting. I have reviewed the slides.
I have been told that current applications prioritize applications that use stem-cell-based therapies over other approaches. (eg small molecule approaches)

I work on a team developing a small molecule approach to drive stemness in mature cell types such as cardiomyocytes, resulting in their proliferation. In the heart, this approach results in an increase in heart function after injury in animal models. Our approach stimulates cell division by driving stem-like transcriptional programs, and falls broadly under allowed CIRM funding. Our approach is unfairly disfavored by CIRM preference for funding stem cell based therapies at the clinical stage.

It has been conclusively shown that the adult mammalian heart has no endogenous cardiac stem cell. Approaches using other cell types have failed to find traction. Most researchers now think the beneficial effects of cell therapies in animal models are through mechanisms that influence the local environment, but the precise cellular and molecular mechanisms are often undefined. The chance of human translation of cellular therapies with unknown mechanisms is very low.

Instead, CIRM should prioritize their review on defined mechanisms and potential for human translation, and should not prioritize therapies that use cellular products, per-se. A small molecule approach overcomes many of the technology, cost, and access gaps for treating heart disease with stem cell products. A broader approach to prioritization will improve CIRMS desire to be maximally impactful on its mission.

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