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Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission Funds 31 New Research Proposals in FY 2013

Awards address many debilitating diseases; include pre-clinical research and a clinical trial

COLUMBIA, Md. (May 21, 2013) – The Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission (Commission) has completed its review of the 171 applications received in response to its FY 2013 Requests for Applications (RFAs). The board of directors of the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) approved the Commission's recommendation to fund 31 new proposals with the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund's (MSCRF) $10.4 million FY2013 budget. These projects, which include pre-clinical research and a clinical trial, will advance the field of regenerative medicine.

"These awards are critical to ensuring that the groundbreaking research being done has the opportunity to move to the commercial marketplace," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "I congratulate this year's grant recipients and look forward to the contributions they make to the improved health and wellbeing of our citizens."

"Our awards for FY2013 fund projects that will study a diverse array of critical diseases and conditions," said Margaret Conn Himelfarb, MPH, chair of the Commission. "We are especially pleased to support so many collaborations between universities, non-profit organizations, private research companies and NIH. Several of these partnerships leverage State funds with funding outside of Maryland. We thank Governor Martin O'Malley and the Maryland General Assembly for continuing to invest in the pioneering research that will lead to life saving stem cell therapies."

This funding cycle, the Commission gave priority to proposals that focus on advancing regenerative medicine by selecting promising research targeting cancer, sickle cell anemia, ALS, Parkinson's disease, heart disease, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, lupus, epilepsy, and spinal cord injuries as well as end stage lung disease and other debilitating medical conditions. Researchers will also study noninvasive *in vivo* imaging of transplanted stem cells to determine their location and longevity. In addition, the Commission will continue its collaboration with the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), now in its third year.

This year's MSCRF awards include:

- **1 Pre-Clinical Research Award** – This new funding mechanism provides up to $500,000 of direct costs per year for up to three years, and is designed for companies conducting pre-clinical research in Maryland that seek to advance medical therapies in the State. The goal of this proposal is clearance from the FDA to initiate a new clinical trial. This grant, awarded to a biotech company collaborating

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with a research institute and a hospital, is focused on developing a stem cell suture for tendon and ligament reconstruction in healing-impaired patients.

- **10 Investigator-Initiated Research Awards** – These grants provide up to $600,000 of direct costs per year, for up to three years, and are designed for Maryland investigators who have preliminary data to support their hypotheses. Among other promising projects, new awardees in this category will work to create stem cells to treat spinal cord injuries; develop a novel therapy for liver fibrosis; visualize stem cells in brain tumors; characterize cardiac stem cells in newborns; develop a stem cell therapy for diabetes; and conduct a clinical trial in patients with sickle cell disease and lupus.

- **10 Exploratory Research Awards** – These grants provide up to $100,000 of direct costs per year, for up to two years, and are designed for Maryland researchers who are new to the stem cell field (young investigators and scientists from other fields), or for exploratory projects that have little or no preliminary data. FY2013 awards in this category will address such topics as stem cell imaging; nerve regeneration; a disease model of epilepsy; a deficient pathway in Parkinson's disease; and improving lung transplant outcomes.

- **10 Post-Doctoral Fellowship awards** – These grants provide up to $55,000 per year, for up to two years, including direct and indirect costs and fringe benefits, and are designed to train post-doctoral fellows who wish to conduct human stem cell research in Maryland. These grants will focus on ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), sickle cell disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and stroke, among other topics.

For a complete list of the names of the Principal Investigators (PIs), their project titles and institutions, please visit http://www.mscrf.org/content/awardees/2013Awardees.cfm.

All MSCRF-funded research must be conducted in Maryland and must involve human stem cells.

Each grant awarded by the Commission is contingent upon the PI obtaining all applicable ethical approvals to conduct the specified research, as well as a signed agreement with TEDCO that describes the scope of the project, requirements for sharing any cell line(s) developed with MSCRF funding and a commitment to publish the results.

The final amount of each award will be determined during the due diligence process and will be listed in the MSCRF annual report scheduled for release in December 2013. All currently funded MSCRF researchers are required to present their findings at the 6th Annual Maryland Stem Cell Research Symposium to be held on December 3, 2013 in Baltimore, Md.

About the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission

The Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund (MSCRF) was established by the State of Maryland under the Maryland Stem Cell Research Act of 2006 to promote State-funded stem cell research and cures through grants and loans to public and private entities in the State. Administered by the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO), the MSCRF is overseen by an independent commission that sets policy and develops criteria, standards and requirements for applications to the Fund. The current MSCRF budget for FY2014 is $10.4 million. For more information about the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund and a list of Commission members, please visit www.mscrf.org.

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