



Media Contact:

Kelly Cahill
410-504-8312
kcahill@mghus.com

Katie Grieco
410-581-5928
kgrieco@mghus.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission Hosts Sickle Cell Summit, “Sickle Cell Disease in Maryland: How Can We Optimize Therapy and Care?”

Summit brings together patients, researchers, legislators and physicians to learn about the latest research, treatment and prevention for sickle cell disease. Commission also announces 2014 Request for Applications.

BALTIMORE (Sept. 24, 2013) – In the U.S., between 70,000 and 100,000 people have sickle cell disease and many of these patients are in Maryland. To bring awareness and education to this illness, the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission (Commission) today hosted a sickle cell summit titled, “Sickle Cell Disease in Maryland: How Can We Optimize Therapy and Care?.” Before the summit, which was held in Anne Arundel County, Md., the Commission also approved its 2014 Requests for Applications (RFAs).

“Sickle cell disease is a serious medical condition that affects thousands of Marylanders each and every day,” said Rabbi Avram Israel Reisner, chair of the Commission. “Because of the vested public interest in sickle cell disease, the Commission felt it was important to put together an event that highlights treatment advancements and research regarding this disease. Stem cells play a crucial role in the future of sickle cell treatment and we’re pleased to present this summit which also draws attention to the importance of Maryland’s stem cell research program.”

“Scientific advances offer tremendous hope for the treatment of sickle cell disease,” said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). “I appreciate the work that will be done today to bring together patients, clinicians, and researchers to accelerate progress.”

The summit featured research, treatment and prevention panels as well as an advocacy and awareness panel. Opening speakers included Dr. Dan Gincel, Executive Director of the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund and Dr. Sharfstein. Other speakers included Dr. Robert Brodsky from Johns Hopkins Medicine who discussed half-matched bone marrow transplantation for sickle cell disease; Dr. Debbie Badawi of DHMH who spoke about newborn screening and long term care follow-up of sickle cell disease; Dr. Sophia Lanzkron of the Johns Hopkins Sickle Cell Infusion Center who provided insight on the impact of sickle cell infusion outcomes in Md.; Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam; and Dr. Sonja Banks of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. Following the Commission’s sickle cell summit, the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America kicked-off its 41st annual convention titled “Moving Forward: Advocating for New Discoveries, Advancements and Breakthroughs,” also being held in Anne Arundel County.

The Commission also approved earlier today its four research funding programs for 2014. RFAs include: Investigator-Initiated Grants, Exploratory Grants, Post-Doctoral Fellowships, and Pre-Clinical and Clinical Grants. This funding cycle, all research proposals must pertain to stem cell based therapy and regenerative medicine. Priority will be given to translational and collaborative projects. In addition, the Commission announced the continuance of its partnership with the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) for the fourth year in a row. Through the program, Maryland researchers have the opportunity for collaboration with CIRM researchers with the goal of advancing critical human stem cell therapies by

fostering meritorious interdisciplinary research across geographical boundaries. Details about all funding opportunities can be found at <http://www.mscref.org/content/fundingopports/index.cfm>.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

- Photographs from the summit and VIP speakers can be obtained by contacting Kelly Cahill at (410) 504-8312 or kcahill@mghus.com.

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.mscref.org.

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