



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATTENTION: CITY EDITORS, SCIENCE EDITORS, EDUCATION EDITORS

Leading stem cell scientists to dispel misconceptions and inspire high school students

Let's Talk Science volunteers at The University of Toronto, in partnership with the Stem Cell Network, are hosting a full-day symposium about stem cell biology for senior-level high school students, Friday, March 12, 2010, at the MaRS Collaboration Auditorium in Toronto, Ont.

The event, called StemCellTalks, will provide a forum for approximately 150 students to discuss stem cell biology and stem cell banking with leading scientists and ethicists, including Stem Cell Network researcher James Till, OC, O.Ont, FRSC, a Canadian founder of stem cell research.

Following scientist presentations, students will break into small discussion groups, led by graduate students and post-doctoral fellows from The University of Toronto, where they will engage in problem-solving activities relating to stem cell biology and practical ethics.

“For years, Canada has been a hub for stem cell research, yet the groundbreaking discoveries of our world-renowned stem cell scientists remains unknown to Canadian youth,” says Paul Cassar, Let's Talk Science volunteer and doctoral student in William Stanford's lab at the Institute of Medical Science, University of Toronto. “StemCellTalks was created to introduce youth to the Canadian stem cell community, to demystify the science and to share our experiences and knowledge. It's also an opportunity for the Stem Cell Community to encourage students to build on our accomplishments and to continue our legacy of discovery.”

Till will kick off the event at 9:20 a.m. with a keynote address describing his and Ernest McCulloch's 1960s experiments, which demonstrated the existence of stem cells.

Till, PhD, Senior Scientist Emeritus, Ontario Cancer Institute/Princess Margaret Hospital, University Health Network, hopes that students will take away an appreciation of the realities of going from a new scientific discovery to a human application.

At 9:45 a.m., Derek Van Der Kooy, PhD, Peter Zandstra, PhD, Canada Research Chair, Stem Cell Bioengineering, Ian Rogers, PhD and Cindi Morshead, PhD, will introduce the topic of stem cell biology and bioengineering to the students in the form of lectures and interactive debates. At 1 p.m. a panel, including Stem Cell Network's Tim Caulfield, LL.M., F.R.S.C., and Rosario Isasi, J.D., MPH will discuss ethics of private vs. public cord blood stem cell banking.

Media is invited to all speaker sessions, as well as break-out sessions to see students discuss the information and engage in problem-solving activities. **James Till will be available for interviews immediately following his keynote address.**

It is hoped that this symposium will become an annual event and Plans are already in motion to host StemCellTalks symposia in Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.

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ABOUT LET'S TALK SCIENCE:

Let's Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable, science outreach organization. We deliver science learning programs and services that turn kids on to science, keep them engaged in learning and develop their potential to become 21st century stewards, innovators and citizens. Through the Let's Talk Science Partnership Program, we engage more than 1,800 enthusiastic post-secondary student volunteers at 30 universities and colleges across Canada to turn more than 100,000 kids on to science, engineering and technology each year. For more information about Let's Talk Science, visit letstalkscience.ca.

ABOUT STEM CELL NETWORK:

The Stem Cell Network is a Canadian national organization designed to bring together stem cells researchers and trainees from across the country. The Stem Cell Network facilitates research, grants research funding, and provides training opportunities for young investigators in stem cell biology. The Stem Cell Network is comprised of more than 100 scientists, clinicians, engineers and social scientists from universities across the country.