

The R.E.S.C.U.E.S. Workshop, February 23-25, 2007

The R.E.S.C.U.E. Workshop “What is new in Europe in the field of regenerative medicine?” organized by the Society of Research Experience of Stem Cells in Europe (R.E.S.C.U.E.) took place in Basel on 23-25 February, 2007.

The meeting provided a forum for researchers representing versatile aspects of stem cell research to meet in order to enhance networking and the dialogue with regard to the guidelines and needs of stem cell research in Europe. The timing of the meeting to the Tenth Anniversary of the birth of Dolly Sheep was a reminder of the great potential of stem cell research. The leader of the research team which successfully cloned this first mammal from an adult somatic cell, Ian Wilmut, was the keynote speaker at the beginning of the meeting. The presentations after his talk were given by recognized researchers on the field of stem cell research and covered different aspects of embryonic stem cell differentiation, and regulatory issues. Overview of haematopoietic stem cell transplantation in Europe given by Alois Gratwohl highlighted the fact that in spite of the suspicions of haematopoietic stem cell therapy for hematological malignancies at its infancy, stem cell based treatment is now applied as a routine therapy for hematological diseases with great success. The credit of hematological stem cells may guide stem cell research to further stem cell applications in future.

The afternoon session on the first day of the meeting gave an introduction to The European Science Foundation by Mariana Resnicoff, and to the philosophy of stem cell banking by Craig Taylor and Andrew Bradley. In addition, the existing UK stem cell bank was introduced by Charles Hunt.

The second day of the meeting was devoted to the tissue specific stem cells. The heterogenous nature of adult stem cells was encapsulated in the keynote speech of Catherine Verfaillie. Although many questions remain to be answered before stem cells will be ready for applied neuroscience, new achievements in the treatment of spinal cord injury and information on differentiation of neural stem cells were reported.

The R.E.S.C.U.E. workshop brought together innovative scientists and demonstrated the demand for meetings of stem cell researchers at the European level as well as the importance to promote professional and public education in stem cell research in Europe.

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