

**Connecticut Stem Cell Research Peer Review Committee
Hartford Hilton
March 28, 2007, 12:00 Noon, EDT
Minutes**

A meeting of the Connecticut Stem Cell Research Peer Review Committee (Peer Review Committee) was held on March 28. In addition to the Peer Review Committee members, DPH staff and public attendees were present. The meeting was initiated during the Connecticut Stem Cell Research International Symposium held at the Hilton Hartford, 315 Trumbull Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Members Present: Leslie Weiner, Miodrag Stojkovic, Catherine Verfaillie, and Ian Wilmut

CT Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee Members Present: Julius Landwirth, Willy Lensch

DPH Staff: Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, Warren Wollschlager, Marianne Horn, Denise Leiper, Lynn Townsend

Guests: Dr. Petra Stojkovic, Dr. Arlene Chiu

Introductory Remarks

Commissioner Galvin and Warren Wollschlager thanked the Peer Review Committee for participating in StemConn'07 and in the luncheon meeting. Mr. Wollschlager explained that this was a public meeting, notes were being taken and minutes would be available.

Minutes

The Peer Review Committee members reviewed the proposed minutes from the October 24, 2006 meeting. **Upon a motion made and seconded, the Peer Review Committee members voted unanimously in favor of approving the minutes as presented.**

CT Stem Cell Research Peer Review Process

Dr. Weiner, Chair of the Peer Review Committee, stated his concerns over the review mechanism and the need for additional reviewers on the Committee. Dr. Weiner agrees that five additional reviewers are needed in order to assist the present members with the burden and to increase the fairness of the review process. Dr. Weiner described Connecticut's 70 applications as large, complex grants that required 100 hours of his time to review. Dr. Weiner estimates that the Peer Review Committee provided 800-1000 hours of review time to the State of Connecticut. He has never had that many grants to review at one time. In his NIH review process, he receives 8-10 grants. The written grant reviews for the NIH are longer; however, it is often harder to prepare a synopsis for each grant than it is to write a larger written summary. Dr. Galvin had proposed a change in legislation that was not accepted; however, he is willing to try again. Dr. Galvin requested that Dr. Weiner assist us by writing a letter encouraging a change in statute to include ten members in the Peer Review Committee.

Status Report and Timeline on Connecticut's Stem Cell Research Program

Warren Wollschlager informed the Peer Review Committee of Connecticut's desire to develop a strategic plan for addressing the next round of grant funding in addition to the long term viability and sustainability of Connecticut as an international center of excellence for stem cell research.

In developing the next RFP, outstanding questions should be addressed including: should we continue to fund a mix of small and large grants, should we mandate disease-specific research, should we focus more on specific research areas, such as nuclear transfer, should we target clinical research, translational research or private sector research, among others. Connecticut's plan is to request comments and interviews from stakeholders. Dr. Galvin mentioned the need for fundraising as described in Connecticut's current stem cell statute.

Dr. Weiner commented that, in his personal opinion, Connecticut should go with the best science, coming from the universities or private businesses. He doesn't feel that targeting is best, he would rather see what is out there and go with it. Dr. Weiner stated the need for more foundation during the first to second round of funding especially for seed grants and investigative work. He does agree that facility core grants were needed in the first round which can bring in more expertise. His second priority area would be in the way of training funds. He feels that perhaps three years down the line, targeting would be indicated. He mentioned that we should look for some industry during the second round of funding. He thinks that collaborative efforts between the universities and industry would be productive. Dr. Wilmut mentioned that he thinks that the second round of funding should include those areas not funded in the first round.

The timeframe was discussed. Dr. Weiner reviews NIH grant renewals with deadlines on 2/1, 6/1 and 10/1, so it might be best for the Peer Review Committee to receive the applications for review during October and November.

NAS Guidelines: Handout of Revisions

Marianne Horn distributed the *2007 Amendments to the National Academies' Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research*. She discussed her commitment to revisit the regulations in light of the recent session on interstate collaboration that was held at StemConn'07. The states that participated agreed to a state-to-state alliance and a commitment to move forward in addressing the issues surrounding stem cell research.

Additional Issues

Terms of appointment were discussed. Drs. Stojkovic, Weiner, and Verfaillie were appointed October 1, 2005 for a two year term. Dr. Galvin expressed the desire to reappoint them for an additional two years. All three members agreed to serve another term.

Dr. Arlene Chiu of California mentioned the International Stem Cell Forum that has an established ethics work group which is separate from the intellectual property work group.

Dr. Willy Lensch, a member of the CT Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee, thanked the Peer Review Committee for their commitment to the peer review process.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 PM.