

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



Monday February 2, 2009

NSW and Victoria make stem-cell research breakthrough

New South Wales and Victorian researchers have developed Australia's first human induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cell line capable of leading to a better understanding of Type 1 Diabetes and infertility.

Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay today congratulated researchers from the Monash Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne on producing the iPS cell line as part of a joint NSW and Victorian research project.

"This medical breakthrough is a fantastic result for medical research in Australia," Ms McKay said.

"iPS cells are considered important in stem cell research as they can be generated from adult cells such as skin cells and do not require donated excess IVF embryos or human eggs and no embryos are destroyed in the process.

"The adult cells have been reprogrammed to be more embryonic-like in behaviour.

"Stem cells hold great potential in medical research and the treatment of disease given their ability to grow and generate into specialised cell types."

Ms McKay said the new stem cell techniques are part of a joint collaboration project with Professor Bernie Tuch, Chief Investigator from the NSW Team.

The researchers will generate iPS cells from adult cells in Type I diabetes patients to help understand the disease and develop better drugs to treat it.

"This breakthrough now means Australian researchers have the ability to create their own iPS cell lines rather than having to import them from the United States or Japan which will accelerate the stem cell research effort," Ms McKay said.

"The NSW and Victorian Governments contributed \$455,000 to the project as part of a \$1 million collaborative commitment to develop new stem cell technologies to help treat diseases like diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease and spinal cord injury.

"A further \$550,000 has been provided to Sydney IVF Limited and the Australian Stem Cell Centre for a collaborative research project to compare cells generated from three different stem cell processes - somatic cell nuclear transfer; stem cells derived from human embryos; and iPS cells.

"These joint NSW and Victorian efforts follow the passing of legislation in both States to provide a clear regulatory framework for stem cell research."

Ms McKay said the NSW Government is further supporting iPS stem cell research through the Dr Paul Brock Stem Cell Scholarship which will provide up to \$75,000 over three years to support PhD research efforts. Scholarship applications close on February 13, 2009.

For further information on the Dr Paul Brock Stem Cell Scholarship and to download application forms visit www.osmr.nsw.gov.au or email info@osmr.nsw.gov.au .

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