Governor Malloy, Senator Blumenthal open StemCONN 2013

New Haven, Conn., April 3, 2013 – Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy and United States Senator for Connecticut Richard Blumenthal opened the proceedings today at StemCONN 2013, a day-long symposium that brought together internationally renowned stem cell researchers from Connecticut and beyond.

“Over the course of the past two years, Connecticut has made tremendous investments in bioscience and technology—supporting the expansion of these industries and building partnerships between the private sector and our public universities, hospitals, and economic development entities,” said Governor Malloy. “We welcome this phenomenal group of researchers, doctors, and innovators to StemConn 2013, and we encourage you to explore Connecticut’s leadership in the field.”

“Today’s StemCONN symposium was an inspiring demonstration of the powerful role Connecticut scientists play in leading international stem cell research,” Senator Blumenthal said. “I will continue to advocate for robust federal investment in stem cell and other life-saving breakthrough research. This research is not only vital to our health and wellbeing as individuals, but also to the health of our national and local economies.”

In addition to presentations on the latest in stem cell research, the day’s events included a panel discussion on “Realizing the Potential” that included Edison Liu, M.D., of The Jackson Laboratory, which is building a new facility for genomic medicine in Farmington, and Jonathan Rothberg, Ph.D., the Connecticut entrepreneur behind many of today’s state-of-the-art gene sequencing technologies.

The program also featured stem cell leaders Lawrence Goldstein, Ph.D., of the University of California, San Diego and David Scadden, M.D., of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. At a pre-conference breakfast, Mark Tomishima, Ph.D., of the Sloan-Kettering Institute spoke on stem cell therapy for Parkinson’s disease.

Connecticut research was presented at the symposium by Laura Grabel, Ph.D., of Wesleyan University, Jonathan Covault, M.D., Ph.D., of UConn Health Center and Jun Lu, Ph.D., of Yale University.

The StemCONN symposium at the Omni Hotel in New Haven included a display of 99 scientific posters that featured recent and as yet unpublished research predominantly from stem cell research laboratories in Connecticut. Research in the posters covered a wide area, from the use of stem cells as therapeutic agents to the mechanisms regulating stem cell activity and their utility as models of disease, among other subjects.

One hundred high school and undergraduate students from throughout Connecticut attended StemCONN at no cost thanks to a Connecticut Stem Cell Initiative grant to the Human Embryonic Stem Cell Core Facility at UConn Health Center and Wesleyan University.

“Connecticut has become a major player in the area of stem cell research,” said Dr. Diane Krause, Chair of the StemCONN 2013 organizing committee and associate director of the Yale Stem Cell Center. “We’re proud to demonstrate how the state’s investment in stem cell research is paying off.”

With its pioneering stem cell legislation in 2005, Connecticut became just the third state in the nation to provide public funding in support of human embryonic and adult stem cell research. The legislation established advisory and peer review committees, with the Commissioner of Public Health as chair. Commissioner Jewel Mullen was among the speakers welcoming the audience at StemCONN 2013.

The StemCONN symposium has been held every two years since 2007. In addition to Dr. Krause, symposium organizers included Caroline Dealy, Ph.D. of the Center for Regenerative Medicine and Skeletal Development, UConn Stem Cell Institute, University of Connecticut Health Center; David Goldhammer, Ph.D., of the Center For Regenerative Biology, UConn Stem Cell Institute, University of Connecticut; Marianne Horn, R.N., J.D., of the Office of Research and Development, State of Connecticut Department of Public Health; Janice Naegele, Ph.D., of the Program in Neuroscience and Behavior, Wesleyan University; Paul Pescatello, J.D., Ph.D. of CURE (Connecticut United for Research Excellence, Inc.); Lawrence Rizzolo, Ph.D. of the Department of Surgery and Ophthalmology, Yale University; and Milton Wallack, D.D.S., of the Connecticut Stem Cell Coalition.

The scientific meeting was organized under the auspices of CURE. Core sponsors are: Connecticut Department of Public Health; Economic Development Corporation of New Haven; Life Technologies LLC; University of Connecticut Stem Cell Center; Yale Stem Cell Center; and Wesleyan University.

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