

UHN Launches McEwen Stem Cell Institute

New Institute will accelerate work in regenerative medicine to help bring theory to therapies

For Immediate Release

Toronto, ON (December 6, 2018) Today University Health Network (UHN) announced the creation of the McEwen Stem Cell Institute. The sixth institute within its research community, the McEwen Institute is focused on stem cell research and the promise of regenerative medicine and cell therapies.

Formerly the McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine, the evolution to the McEwen Stem Cell Institute signals the progress of the research since it was first formed in 2007. In collaboration with research institutions, clinical programs at UHN, and supporters from around the globe, investigators within the new institute will work to harness the potential of stem cell biology to accelerate the development of more effective treatments for conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, liver disease and blood cell diseases.

The McEwen Institute will be led by Dr. Gordon Keller and will launch with an initial focus on developing cell therapies in four areas with significant potential to move quickly from theory to therapy:

Blood: Developing cells in the blood system to replace missing or damaged blood cells and to create potential immune based therapies to treat cancer (Dr. Gordon Keller, PhD)

Diabetes: Developing stem cell therapies to regenerate beta cells to treat diabetes and eliminate the need for insulin injections. (Dr. Cristina Nostro, PhD)

Heart: Developing stem cell therapies to remuscularize and repair the heart (Dr. Michael Laflamme, MD, PhD) and creating stem cell-derived biological pacemakers to eliminate the need for electronic pacemakers (Dr. Stephanie Protze, PhD)

Liver: Creating new liver tissue from pluripotent stem cells to repair damaged livers and reduce the need for transplants (Dr. Gordon Keller, PhD)

"The launch of the McEwen Stem Cell Institute builds on our legacy of innovation in stem cell and regenerative medicine research," says Dr. Bradley Wouters, Executive Vice President of Science and Research, UHN. "The Institute will help to usher in an entirely new form of cell-based therapies to tackle some of the most important human diseases. It is intensely focused on the creation of new therapies and will become an integral part of the life sciences hub in Toronto that could fuel industry and research for decades to come."

In support of this new initiative, BlueRock Therapeutics announced today significant new funding for engineered cell programs for cardiac disease and the creation of a research chair in regenerative medicine at the McEwen Institute. Additionally, the company stated that it would be doubling its operational space in Toronto to enable potential therapeutic programs and an expanded research collaboration with the new Institute. BlueRock was established in 2016 with a \$225 million investment - one of the largest in biotech history. The work of Drs. Gordon Keller and Michael Laflamme, principal investigators at the McEwen Institute, is part of BlueRock's first efforts to commercialize an approach to regenerating heart muscle in patients who have had a heart attack or suffer from chronic heart failure.

“Our relationship with BlueRock has been critical in helping us accelerate our work,” said Dr. Gordon Keller, Director, McEwen Stem Cell Institute. “This most recent investment underscores their commitment to our work and will allow us to move more rapidly to test these therapies in patients.”

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About the McEwen Stem Cell Institute

The McEwen Stem Cell Institute is one of the principal research institutes of the University Health Network. Established as the McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine in 2007 through the generous support of Cheryl and Rob McEwen, the McEwen Institute is focused on developing stem cell-based therapies for the treatment of diabetes, heart, blood and liver diseases. For more information, visit mceweninstitute.ca

About University Health Network

University Health Network consists of Toronto General and Toronto Western Hospitals, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, and The Michener Institute of Education at UHN. The scope of research and complexity of cases at University Health Network has made it a national and international source for discovery, education and patient care. It has the largest hospital-based research program in Canada, with major research in cardiology, transplantation, neurosciences, oncology, surgical innovation, infectious diseases, genomic medicine and rehabilitation medicine. University Health Network is a research hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto. uhn.ca

About BlueRock Therapeutics

BlueRock Therapeutics is an engineered cell therapy company with a mission to develop regenerative medicines for intractable diseases. BlueRock’s Cell+Gene platform harnesses the power of cells for new medicines across neurology, cardiology and autoimmune indications. BlueRock’s cell differentiation technology recapitulates the cell’s developmental biology to produce native cell therapies which are further engineered for additional function. Utilizing these cell therapies to replace damaged or degenerated tissue brings the potential to restore or regenerate lost function. BlueRock was founded in 2016 by Versant Ventures and capitalized with one of the largest-ever Series A financings in biotech history by Bayer AG and Versant. BlueRock’s culture is defined by scientific innovation, the highest ethical standards and an urgency to bring transformative treatments to all who would benefit. For more information, visit bluerocktx.com.

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