



StemCONN Stem Cell Symposium Draws Capacity Crowds



Connecticut's **Governor M. Jodi Rell** and legislative leaders joined the media and top scientists from around the world before capacity crowds at StemCONN 07, a two-day symposium in Hartford March 27-28 that confirmed the state's emergence as a worldwide center of excellence in stem cell research.

Planned and led by CURE together with the Connecticut Department of Health and the Connecticut Stem Cell Coalition, and organized and implemented through CURE with primary financial support from CURE as lead sponsor, the event attracted more than 650 registered participants to packed sessions at the Capitol, Legislative Office Building, and Hilton Hartford. Capping the proceedings, a distinguished panel of experts led a public forum on stem cell research taped before a live audience and scheduled for broadcast on April 21 at 12:30 pm on WTNH Channel 8.

Media Show Keen Interest in the Symposium

Journalists from Washington, New York, and neighboring Massachusetts, as well as Connecticut's own leading media, covered the event. TV crews from NBC Channel 30 and CBS Channel 3 in Hartford and from CT-N were on hand for first-day coverage. Scientists and organizers were interviewed on multiple radio and cable programs prior to and during the event, with additional wrap-up coverage scheduled for later this week. Print coverage included items in the *Hartford Business Journal*, *Mass HighTech*, the *Hartford Courant*, and the *Day* (New London) as well as an [editorial in the *Courant*](#) and an [editorial in the *Day*](#).

Governor Rell, **Senate President Donald E. Williams**, and **State Representative Peggy Sayers** all saluted stem cell research at the opening session March 27 led by **Dr. J. Robert Galvin**, Commissioner of Public Health. The Governor thanked Dr. Galvin and **Warren Wollschlager** of the Office of Research and Development within the Department of Health, as well as **Dr. Milton Wallack** of the Connecticut Coalition for Stem Cell Research, for their outstanding efforts, and **Paul Pescatello** and the members of CURE for taking the lead role in championing the state's stem cell Act and in raising funding for StemCONN 07. **Dr. Leslie Weiner** of the Connecticut Stem Cell Research Peer Review Committee and **Dr. M. William Lensch** of the Connecticut Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee contributed remarks.



*Panelists at the session on commercial prospects included **Charles Jennings** of the McGovern Institute, **Edward Wirth III** of Geron, **Joseph Hammang** of Pfizer, **Stacy Taylor** of DLA Peper US and **Peter Longo** of Connecticut Innovations.*

Governor Recognizes Stem Cell Research Heads

Before and after the opening session with the Governor, Connecticut stem cell researchers – scientists who had received grants-in-aid under Connecticut’s pioneering stem cell law – were on hand with posters explaining their work. The Governor recognized the heads of stem cell research at the three institutions receiving grants: **Dr. Marc Lalande** at the University of Connecticut, **Dr. Laura Grabel** at Wesleyan University, and **Dr. Haifan Lin** at Yale University.

Select panels later in the day explored issues and implications of stem cell research. **Dr. Julius Landwirth** of Yale chaired an ESCRO (Embryonic Stem Cell Research Oversight) Committee workshop, while Paul Pescatello led a panel on commercial prospects and Warren Wollschlager and Milt Wallack joined a distinguished round table of experts discussing issues related to collaboration between state stem cell programs.

Organized by Wesleyan's Dr. Grabel and UConn's **Dr. David Goldhamer**, and launched with remarks by Pfizer stem cell expert **Dr. John McNeish**, the scientific symposium on the second day included international experts such as **Ian Wilmut** of the University of Edinburgh, and **Miodrag Stojkovic** of the Centro de Investigación Príncipe Felipe in Valencia, as well as Connecticut’s own Drs. **Jerry Yang**, Haifan Lin, Laura Grabel, **Ren-He Xu**, **David Rowe**, **Diane Krause**, **Jeffrey Kocisis**, and Marc Lalande. Transcripts of the proceedings are being prepared.

Reception and Forum Cap Days' Events

The first-day events were capped by a reception at the Hilton hosted by UK Trade and Investment, the Scottish Stem Cell Network, and UK Science and Innovation. The UK has been working steadily to forge cooperative stem cell projects between British and U.S. institutions. Ontario Canada had an active and visible presence as well.

The second day finished with a public forum hosted by Quinnipiac University and moderated by Yale’s **David Katz**. On the dais were Drs. **Arthur Caplan** of the University of Pennsylvania, **George Daley** of Harvard, **Robert Lanza** of Advanced Cell Technology, and Connecticut’s own **Mel Goldstein**, presenting their views and answering questions from the studio audience.



CURE Can Take Pride in Its Role

“Connecticut’s stem cell initiatives have the effect of bringing scientists, staff, and volunteers from many organizations together in common cause, and StemCONN 07 was no exception,” said

Paul Pescatello, president and CEO of CURE. The founding partners of StemCONN – CURE, the Department of Public Health, and the Connecticut Stem Cell Coalition, had tremendous support from our research universities, from CURE members such as Pfizer, from organizations like the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, and from a list of enthusiastic sponsors. We can also be very proud of the boots-on-the-ground implementation by CURE staff and consultants, including the event organizer, marketing communications firm HarveyMalis Communications. The CURE team was instrumental in translating the vision of StemCONN's founding partners into a landmark event for Connecticut bioscience."

All photos above by Harold Shapiro of Guilford, CT

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