

GSCN-News

From Central Office: Research Ministry funds GSCN for another three years

A highlight of 2014 was undoubtedly the promise of the German Federal Research Ministry (BMBF) to continue supporting us financially for another three years. This will enable us to establish our network on a sound footing and pursue its expansion carefully and sustainably. We are delighted to be receiving this support!



New at Central Office: Stefanie Mahler takes over communication for the GSCN

Since July 2014, Stefanie Mahler, a trained journalist, has been responsible for communication at GSCN Central Office. She was thrown into the job at the deep end: as an introduction to the subject of stem cells she produced three films on stem cell research that were shown at the end of the Second Annual Conference in Heidelberg and can now be viewed on the Internet. She thoroughly enjoyed getting up close to stem cells right from the start. Science has long been close to Mahler's heart: in 2000 she joined TV network 3sat as an editor and film-maker for the magazine program *nano*. Her aim at the GSCN is to develop lots of new films, documents, forms of communication, working groups and materials on stem cell research and to strengthen and expand interaction within the network.

From Central Office: Conference date moved

All the preparations had been made; everything was planned and booked for the 3rd Annual Conference in Frankfurt. Then came the unexpected hitch: a press preview of the International Motor Show (IAA) sent hotel prices soaring at exactly the time of our conference. After much frenzied activity and frantic telephoning, GSCN Central Office came up with a new plan: a great new location was found, five days earlier and a little further from the center of Frankfurt. **The 3rd Annual Meeting of the GSCN will be held on 9 – 11 Sept. 2015 on the Riedberg Campus in Frankfurt/Main.** We're looking forward to it!

New GSCN working group "Basic, Translational and Applied Hematopoiesis" seeks members

The number of scientific working groups has risen to seven: at the 2nd Annual Conference in Heidelberg, Claudia Waskow (Dresden) and Timm Schroeder (Basel) launched the new scientific working group on hematopoietic stem cells.

Anyone interested in joining should contact GSCN Central Office at gscn.office@mdc-berlin.de

Meetings between peers: Launch of non-PI meetings

Who would be interested in organizing a small conference, and in talking to working group members from other institutes – with no pressure and without PIs on board? The GSCN seeks to promote even stronger networking between its members and to encourage personal and professional dialog. It is therefore inviting two of the more junior scientists from each working group to organize a non-PI meeting with a conference-like structure. The GSCN will cover the costs of accommodation, food and the conference location. You will select the topics and encourage people to attend.

If you are interested, please contact GSCN Central Office at gscn.office@mdc-berlin.de

New group: "Communication on Stem Cell Research"

Public relations work is an indispensable part of stem cell research. Its tasks are many and varied; they include explaining the content and methods of research to the general public, setting up experiments for schoolchildren, training teachers, devising educational materials, and making films and cartoons. The GSCN has now set up a group dedicated to communication on stem cell research that will bring science communicators together once a year. What happens at these meetings? People discuss their experiences, produce materials, consider new types of event, and debate the handling of new issues such as lobbying and the use of social media. The first meeting, held in Hannover in September 2014, was attended by delegates from a range of Germany wide institutes who engaged in detailed discussion of the methods and materials used when working with school groups. A meeting in Berlin is planned for 2015.



GSCN gets social

Carefully, cautiously, but confidently: this is how the GSCN is approaching social media. We are now on Twitter at twitter.com/gscn_office.

We look forward to interesting input and lots of followers!

GSCN films on stem cell research

As a networking organization, the GSCN sets out not only to link stem cell researchers but also to inform the public transparently, openly and proactively about stem cell research. In 2014 we therefore produced three films about different research institutions and scientists in the field of stem cell research. The films are available on YouTube and on our website. You are welcome to view, use and share them.

Reports on GSCN activities Travel Awards for Hydra X, the European Summer School on Stem Cells & Regenerative Medicine

The GSCN granted Travel Awards to Katarzyna Osetek, Ronan Russell and Sukhdeep Singh to enable them to attend the European Summer School Hydra X on the Greek island of Hydra from 7 – 11 Sept. 2014. The three participants thoroughly enjoyed the stimulating yet relaxed atmosphere of the Summer School – the tenth organized by EuroStemCell – as well as the interesting discussions and the opportunity to forge new contacts. More than 50 postdocs and PhD students from 19 countries attended the various lectures and seminars on a range of issues relating to stem cells and regeneration. The organizers had invited 27 experts on stem cells, aging, cancer and tissue generation. The opening lecture was given by Connie Eaves (Vancouver) – in almost complete darkness as the result of a power cut. Also informative were the small group sessions which discussed both professional issues and ways in which scientists might convey information about their work with stem cells to a wide audience.

The GSCN is planning further Travel Awards to international conventions next year. Information can be found on the GSCN website closer to the time.

DGTI session and workshop

The 47th Annual conference of the German Society for Transfusion Medicine and Immunohematology was also a milestone in the partnership between the DGTI and the GSCN, which is reflected in reciprocal membership. At the conference, the GSCN organized a session on stem cells in regenerative therapies. Tobias Cantz (Hannover) opened the session with a lecture on “Stem cell based cellular therapies – perspectives and limitations” in which he reviewed stem cell research in general and its application in Germany. He specifically explored pluripotent stem cells and quoted the latest data from his own research. In a presentation entitled “Epigenetic rejuvenation of MSCs derived from iPSCs,” Wolfgang Wagner (Aachen) considered the engineering of mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs) from induced pluripotent stem cells. MSCs derived from iPSC cells have greater homogeneity and a rejuvenated epigenetic program in comparison with



Dinner in Hydra

primary MSCs from patients. “The hidden stem cell of the liver” was the title of the lecture by Michael Ott (Hannover). The engineering of liver cells from stem cells is a key concern of his working group. The symposium closed with a talk by Toni Cathomen (Freiburg) on “Targeted gene editing in pluripotent stem cells – from disease modeling towards therapy.” He described the growing range of genome engineering options emerging also from his laboratory. The article “Designer cuts in the genome” in this issue (page 32) outlines the great progress being made in this field.

At the DGTI conference, the GSCN also helped organize the event “ATMPs – How to bring cell-based medicinal products successfully to the market” hosted by the Committee for Advanced Therapies (CAT) of the European Medicines Agency. The regulations governing clinical trials of advanced therapy medical products (ATMP) were explored in detail at this half-day seminar.

Stem cells are a Tour-de-Force in Dresden

The symposium Neural Stem Cells in Evolution was held on 8 July 2014 during the 5th International Congress on Stem Cells and Tissue Formation in Dresden. Elly Tanaka, Director of CRT Dresden, and Federico Calegari brought ten international scientists together for this event; among them was Oliver Brüstle, founding president of the GSCN. The lectures focused on brain development in various model organisms as a basis for deciphering the evolutionary development of neural stem cells and their differentiation. The aim is to understand the evolutionary history of the most complex human organ, the brain. Federico Calegari’s detailed report of the symposium is available on the GSCN website.



*Front row, from left to right: Tadashi Nomura, Kyoto, Japan; Colette Dehay, Lyon, France; Nancy Papalopulu, Manchester, UK; Elly Tanaka, Dresden, Germany; Yoichi Kosodo, Kurashiki, Japan.
Back row: Victor Borrell, Alicante, Spain; Stefan Thor, Linköping, Sweden; Oliver Brüstle, Bonn, Germany; Federico Calegari, Dresden, Germany; Daniel Besser, Berlin, Germany.*