

Scientists gathering in West Palm to discuss stem cell therapies



*Richard Jove, director of Nova Southeastern University's new Cell Therapy Institute in Davie.
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Scientists, clinicians and patients from South Florida and around the world will gather in West Palm Beach to discuss advances in stem cell science that potentially could cure disease, help people age better and live longer, and keep certain animals from becoming extinct.

More than 1,200 people from 35 countries are expected to attend the World Stem Cell Summit, set for Dec. 6 to 9 at the Palm Beach County Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Blvd.

"A big part of the future of medicine is going to be cell-based therapies. It's a quiet revolution that's taking place," said Richard Jove, director of Nova Southeastern University's new Cell Therapy Institute in Davie and co-chairman of the summit.

NSU is one of the local sponsors of the event, along with the University of Miami's Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute and Miller School of Medicine, and the Diabetes Research Institute in Hollywood.

For the first time, the opening day of the conference, Dec. 6, will be a "public day" of education designed for patients, doctors, students and anyone who has an interest. Attendees can learn how scientists conduct research in space; find out about clinical trials, anti-aging technologies and about potential cures for macular degeneration; and hear how stem cell technology is rescuing animals from extinction.

The price for the public day, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., is \$30 for general admission and \$10 for students, except for those K-12, who are admitted free.

This is the second time since 2012 that the summit's board has selected West Palm Beach as the location.

"There has been phenomenal growth in stem cell therapy, especially at University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University. And there are important companies in Palm Beach County," said Bernie Siegel, founder and chairman of the World Stem Cell Summit since it began 12 years ago.

"One of the emerging themes of the summit is the converging of technologies that is allowing major medical advances that might have taken decades or centuries to happen. They're happening so fast, it is changing the face of medicine," Siegel said.

Today's medical technologies include robotic implants, precision or individually tailored medicine, tissue engineering, imaging, and nanotechnology or molecular engineering. But it is regenerative medicine — or the making of new human cells, tissues or organs to combat disease — that Siegel and others hope will lead to cures for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, spinal cord injury and cancer.

As founder of the nonprofit Regenerative Medicine Foundation in Wellington, Siegel "is really pushing the field forward," Jove said.

South Florida participants in the event include faculty members from NSU's Cell Therapy Institute, UM and The Scripps Research Institute in Jupiter. Scripps Florida scientist Paul Robbins is scheduled to discuss equine orthopedic applications of stem cells on Dec. 8.

Local companies involved in the summit include Zero Gravity Solutions, which is developing novel stem cell production from the zero gravity environment of the International Space Station; and Akron Biotech, which produces cell cultures and other raw materials for government and pharmaceutical company research. Both companies are located in Boca Raton.

World Stem Cell Summit attendees will have eight topic tracks to choose from, including two new tracks this year: the RegMed Capital Conference, designed to bring together medical technology companies with angel and venture capital investors; and the Equine World Stem Cell Summit, which will focus on veterinary medicine advances.

On Dec. 7, the World Stem Cell Summit will present awards to inspirational leaders in the field. Former Home Depot co-founder Bernie Marcus and Florida real estate developer Don Soffer, who developed Aventura, will receive leadership awards.

The Advocacy Award will go to Dr. Camillo Ricordi, director of the Diabetes Research Institute and Cell Transplant Program at UM's Miller School of Medicine.

To register for the conference, visit worldstemcellsummit.com. Costs range from \$545 to \$1,795. Advance registration ends Dec. 2.

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