



## Scotts Honored at Annual Luncheon

**W**alter and Suzanne Scott were this year's honored guests at the ninth annual tribute luncheon sponsored by the Nebraska Coalition for Lifesaving Cures. The luncheon, held to honor individuals who have shown their support for medical research in Nebraska, took place on April 4, 2011, at Happy Hollow Club.

The Scotts have long been ardent supporters of many causes throughout the state, but they have been particularly strong in their support of medical research.

**“Whenever something wonderful happens in Nebraska,” said Dr. Gail Yanney, “you know that Sue and Walter are not far behind.”**

Richard Holland, chairman of the board of the Nebraska Coalition, introduced the Scotts at the luncheon. In accepting the honor the Scotts told the crowd of some 300 people that each generation benefits from the investment of previous generations.

Scott has often said, “Don't be a taker, be a giver. Give something back to your community.”



*Top:*  
Suzanne and  
Walter Scott  
display their award.

*Middle:*  
Margaret Kirkeby Batt,  
Victoria Kohout,  
Jessica Brummer  
and Rick Boldt.

*At Left:*  
Hal Maurer, Mike  
Yanney, Gail Yanney,  
Beverly Maurer,  
Walter Scott, and  
Suzanne Scott.



## Geron presents interim findings at International conferences

June 7, 2011

**G**eron Corporation has announced two presentations on the company's ongoing Phase 1 clinical trial of the human embryonic stem cell-based therapy, GRNOPC1, in patients with spinal cord injury. Data on the first two patients were presented at the 2011 International Conference on Spinal Cord Medicine and Rehabilitation in Washington, D.C.

A second presentation was given at the 2011 Spine Symposium, which was held as part of The American Spinal Injury Association (ASIA) annual scientific meeting. The presentations were given by Edward Wirth, III, M.D., Ph.D., Geron's medical director for cell therapies and Linda Jones, P.T., M.S., Geron's senior clinical trials manager for GRNOPC1.

"We are pleased to report a very good safety profile of GRNOPC1 to date, with no serious adverse events," said Dr. Wirth. "Currently, we have two patients in the trial. We anticipate increased enrollment going forward as we open our additional clinical sites and following FDA approval to expand our inclusion criteria to patients with injuries resulting in a neurological level of T11, which represents a substantial percentage of thoracic injuries, and to reduce the stagger between patients from 30 days to 10 days."

## U.S. adults favor taxpayer-funded research

April 7, 2011 | Health News

**S**eventy-two percent of U.S. adults say they favor expanding federal funding for embryonic stem cell research, a survey indicates.

A survey, commissioned by Research!America, questioned 32 percent self-described conservatives, 32 percent self-described liberals and 35 self-described moderates -- and 78 percent say federal funding for health research is important for job creation and the economy.

The survey indicated 61 percent say accelerating the nation's investment in research to improve health is a priority; 76 percent say global health research and development is important to the U.S. economy and 84 percent say it is important that the government play a role in research for prevention and wellness.

Ninety percent say the United States is in danger of losing its global competitive edge in science, technology and education, a five percent increase since May 2010.

The survey of 1,000 U.S. registered voters was conducted by Charlton Research Co. in March. It has a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points.

## ACT Announces Oregon Health & Science University As Clinical Trial Site for Macular Degeneration Study

May 16, 2011 | News Release, Advanced Cell Technology

**A**dvanced Cell Technology, Inc., a leader in the field of regenerative medicine, announced that the Casey Eye Institute (CEI) at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in Portland, Ore., has received institutional review board (IRB) approval to be a site for its Phase 1/2 human clinical trial for Stargardt's Macular Dystrophy (SMD) using retinal pigment epithelial (RPE) cells derived from human embryonic stem cells (hESCs). The Phase 1/2 trial will be a prospective, open-label study designed to determine the safety and tolerability of the RPE cells following sub-retinal transplantation into patients with SMD.

"We are pleased that OHSU's Casey Eye Institute has agreed to participate as a site for this study that should help us better understand the role that RPE cells can play in the treatment of SMD," said Gary Rabin, interim chairman and CEO of ACT.

Additional details on this study, for which the Jules Stein Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles has also received IRB approval, can be found on <http://clinicaltrials.gov/>; ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT01345006.

# Imperfections mar hopes for reprogrammed stem cells

March 31, 2011 | By Julie Steenbuysen, Reuters

When scientists announced five years ago they could reprogram ordinary skin cells into behaving like embryonic stem cells, religious conservatives and others who opposed the use of stem cells cheered the advance.

But while they have proven to be a powerful new way to study human disease, the reprogrammed cells -- known as induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS cells -- are no substitute for embryonic stem cells.

"This has strong policy implications," Dr. George Daley of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute and Harvard Medical School said in a telephone interview. "It has not ever been a scientifically driven argument that iPS cells are a worthy and complete substitute for embryonic stem cells," Daley said. "Those arguments were always made based on political and religious opposition to embryonic stem cells."

When they were first discovered in 2006, induced pluripotent stem cells looked like a perfect solution to this ethical debate. Instead of destroying an embryo, iPS cells are made in a lab from ordinary skin or blood cells. Using various methods, scientists introduce three or four genes that return these cells to an embryonic-like state in which they, too, are able to turn into any type of cell.

But recently, scientists have started to raise concerns about iPS cells. Last year, a group led by Dr. Robert Lanza, chief scientific officer of Advanced Cell Technology, compared batches of iPS cells to embryonic stem cells and noticed the iPS cells died more quickly and were much less capable of growing and expanding.

"It was the first study showing there were problems. No one wanted to believe it," Lanza said in a telephone interview.

In July, Daley's team reported more problems in the journal *Nature*, showing that iPS cells retain a bit of memory of their prior life as adult tissue, which could limit their use. And earlier this month, an international team led by researchers at the University of California San Diego found genetic mutations in 22 iPS cell lines taken from seven different labs. "The gold standard cells at the present time are embryonic stem cells," Lanza said.

Stem cell scientists are not giving up on iPS cells, but instead of a replacement for embryonic stem cells, they see them filling a unique research role.

Dr. Jack Kessler of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago led a team that coaxed iPS cells into becoming a type of memory cell in the brain that dies off early in people with Alzheimer's disease.

"The beauty of iPS cells for this kind of study is that it gives us the ability to create human neurons with different genetic backgrounds, and specifically with genetic backgrounds with the disease of interest," Kessler said.

That cannot be done with embryonic stem cells, whose potential for future disease is unknown. "There is no such thing as developing human embryonic stem cells with Alzheimer's disease," Kessler said.

Kessler and others see the newly discovered problems with iPS cells as a setback in efforts to use them in people to treat diseases. "Do I personally think we will ultimately be able to use iPS cells for treatments? I do."

## Appeal overturns stem cell ban

April 29, 2011 | Portions of this article from Omaha World-Herald and Associated Press

Embryonic stem cell research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and other institutions nationwide will go forward after an appeals court ruling.

In a 2-1 decision, a panel of the U.S. court of appeals in Washington overturned a judge's order that would have blocked taxpayer funding for stem cell research. The judges ruled that opponents of taxpayer-funded stem cell research are not likely to succeed in their lawsuit to stop it.

Nebraska proponents and opponents of the research reacted in predictable ways to the ruling. "It's the right decision legally, and

it's the right decision medically and scientifically, and it's the right decision morally," said Sanford Goodman, a spokesman for the Nebraska Coalition for Lifesaving Cures.

For opponents, the ruling was a blow. Dr. David Crouse, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said he and his colleagues were pleased. He said the ruling "allows the science to go forward."

At least three UNMC scientists conduct research that falls under the category of embryonic stem cell research.

# The Nebraska Regenerative Medicine Project

UNMC's Plans to forge Regenerative Medicine Research | *By Natalie Targy*



meet with the potential candidates coming through to discuss collaborations and future research directions. With these collaborations, hopes of developing new therapies that involve bone implants and blood vessel prosthetics are on the horizon.

When establishing a new program it is not only necessary to decide where to focus your research, but also the approaches that will generate clinically relevant and translational results. There are so many strengths at UNMC both clinically and scientifically, and this project will only benefit as these forces come together. There are several avenues of Regenerative Medicine that will require many more years of research, but Sarvetnick wants to focus on developing therapies that can help treat patients now. Some of the approaches will include:

- Cellular Therapies, involving both adult and embryonic stem cells
- Translational Research leading to clinical trials
- Restoration with synthetic and cellular components
- Making use of The Bioengineering Facility at UNL
- Stem Cell Differentiation
- Biotech collaborations

Faculty members are currently working with the NU Foundation to acquire funds for these new research goals. They want to conduct outstanding basic research that will result in therapies and biomaterials that can be manufactured and applied in our community hospitals and facilities. And it doesn't stop there. They foresee the fruits of this research going far beyond the laboratory bench into the Nebraska community by building up research and manufacturing job opportunities. Regenerative medicine members look forward to seeing this project succeed in such a way that even the Nebraska economy will benefit.

"A necessary component for the success of this project is clinical translation. Without the help of involved/collaborative clinicians here at UNMC we cannot bring our current research into the clinic. We would like to encourage those interested in Regenerative Medicine to contact us with their thoughts and suggestions. Our goal is to foster collaborations between scientists and clinicians to drive new and innovative tools and techniques that are currently absent but necessary.

"We are all very excited about this new adventure, and have been working hard to establish the infrastructure of this project. We look forward to making Regenerative Medicine a successful part of UNMC," says Sarvetnick.

**E**mbarking on new and innovative ventures has always been a strong point at UNMC and that will not cease as the Nebraska Regenerative Medicine Project, lead by Dr. Nora Sarvetnick, enters the limelight. UNMC has a strong history of establishing successful programs that are recognized both nationally and internationally and this project is no exception. UNMC Chancellor, Dr. Harold M Maurer expects the program to take off quickly and with Dr. Sarvetnick's sound track record, expansion and results are bound to be abundant.

Sarvetnick has gathered experts on campus to serve on leadership and advisory committees, with the primary focus of establishing directions for the Project as well as recruiting the best researchers in the field. "We hope to grow the field of Regenerative Medicine at UNMC, but also give both senior and junior investigators and clinicians the chance to participate in research and therapy development." In order to do this, the group plans to focus the research of this project in the following areas: Vascular Biology; Intestinal/GI; Liver; Bone Remodeling; Pancreas; and Skin/Wound Healing.

Now recruiting for several faculty positions within the program, the Regenerative Medicine team is trying to fill their new space with renowned scientists who want to collaborate with researching clinicians at the University and in the Omaha area. The first two candidates coming through specialize in the areas of bone remodeling and vascular biology. Both candidates specialize in developmental biology and utilize stem cells in their research to discover how bones and blood vessels form. It is essential to understand how organs develop in order to manipulate that growth for therapeutic purposes. Several researchers and clinicians at UNMC and Children's Hospital are scheduled to

# The Maurer Center — ‘A good thing for people’

May 19, 2011 | By Chuck Brown, UNMC Public Relations

When he was young, UNMC Chancellor Harold M. Maurer, M.D., was being hard on himself because he did not achieve a goal he had set out to accomplish.

Dr. Maurer's father noted his son's downtrodden demeanor and said, "Harold, the world is with you, you have plenty of time."

Years later, Dr. Maurer grasped what his father meant.

"What he was saying was, 'Harold, don't fret. In time you'll be able to do good things for people,'" Dr. Maurer told the hundreds in attendance at Wednesday's opening ceremony for the Harold M. and Beverly Maurer Center for Public Health. "Today, I feel we have done a good thing for people."

The Maurer Center is the new home of the UNMC College of Public Health and was made possible thanks to several benefactors including Ruth and Bill Scott, who made the lead gift.

## Dean's relentless energy

On Wednesday, Ruth Scott thanked Dr. Maurer first for his vision to start a college of public health at UNMC, and second for hiring the college's energetic dean, Ayman El-Mohandes, M.B.B.Ch., M.D., M.P.H.

"When I first met Ayman, I asked him what his vision was for the college; one hour later, I was able to ask him my second

question," Scott said, drawing huge laughs from the crowd. "Ayman moves fast, thinks fast, talks fast. He is as close as is possible to being the human equivalent of the Energizer Bunny."

## College primed for success

"UNMC and the College of Public Health are in good hands with people such as Drs. Maurer and El-Mohandes on campus," Scott said.

"It's an honor for the college to have its home named for Dr. Maurer and his wife, Beverly," Dr. El-Mohandes commented, noting that the couple has done much for public health and UNMC as a whole.

## Accreditation on the horizon

"The Maurer Center and the support from throughout the state puts the UNMC College of Public Health in position to enact change with international benefits," said Harrison Spencer, M.D., M.P.H., president of the American Schools of Public Health and keynote speaker at Wednesday's opening.

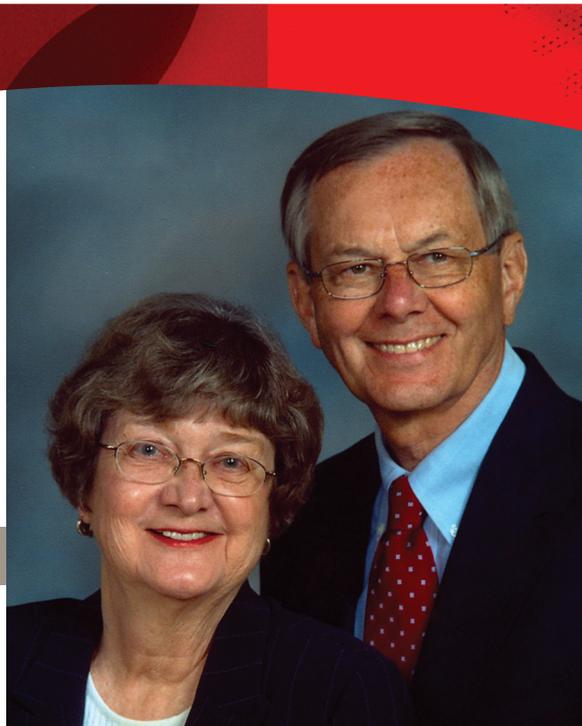
"I know you're up for accreditation next week and I'm confident that you'll be very successful," Dr. Spencer said. "I wouldn't have come today if I didn't believe that."

Save the date  
as we honor  
**Dr. Charles and  
Linda Wilson**

FIRST ANNUAL LIFESAVER AWARD LUNCHEON

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2011  
11:30 A.M. — 1:00 P.M.

LINCOLN COUNTRY CLUB  
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