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**CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER LAUNCHES NEW INTERNATIONAL STEM CELL RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

*Researchers will work collaboratively to share knowledge with scientists in the U.S. and abroad*

LOS ANGELES (July 21, 2006) -- Cedars-Sinai Medical Center this week launched an International Stem Cell Research Institute that will conduct both adult and embryonic stem cell research. The academic medical center also announced the arrival of renowned Israeli developmental geneticist Nissim Benvenisty, M.D., Ph.D., as the institute's co-director along with David I. Meyer, Ph.D., vice president of Research and Scientific Affairs at Cedars-Sinai.

"This is the time, this is the place, and Cedars-Sinai is ready to fulfill our vision for the promise of stem cell research," said Benvenisty, speaking at the July 17 opening ceremony at Cedars-Sinai. Benvenisty was the first scientist in the world to grow human embryonic stem cells into embryoid bodies and the first to genetically manipulate them.

"Cedars-Sinai has a tradition of conducting research and clinical studies in a way where the emphasis stays on trying to quickly translate research findings from the bench to the bedside to benefit patients," said Benvenisty. "The institute will perform research on all types of stem cells, emphasizing integrity, innovation and collaboration in our approach," he added.

"It is hoped that this streamlined 'bench to bedside' approach to research will lead to more effective treatments in cardiovascular medicine, neuroscience, oncology, surgery and transplantation, among other areas," said Meyer, who conceived the idea of the International Stem Cell Research Institute and actively recruited Benvenisty.

Benvenisty will maintain his current position as professor of genetics at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he and his family live. Later this summer, two more investigators will join the institute: Professor Michal Schwartz from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel and Professor Dan Gazit, also from Hebrew University.

(more)

Cedars-Sinai scientists have already been conducting more than a dozen research studies involving adult stem cells in areas such as neurology and neurosurgery, cardiology and connective tissues. Adult stem cells are rare, however, and are difficult to grow and study in the lab. They are used primarily to treat blood and skin diseases, or injuries such as tissue burns.

In contrast, embryonic stem cells can proliferate indefinitely into all types of cells and are easy to grow and study.

By conducting stem cell research, scientists hope to find new treatments for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries and other diseases.

"Embryonic stem cells hold the promise to change the face of medical research," said Benvenisty. "They will potentially serve as a source of cells in transplantation medicine, enlighten us on human development, and help us understand the pathology of many human genetic disorders."

"In the not-too-distant future, we will look back and recognize this day as the dawn of Cedars-Sinai's ability to make major worldwide contributions to an exciting new era of scientific discovery involving stem cells in research, therapy and healing," said Thomas M. Priselac, president and CEO of Cedars-Sinai.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for NIH-funded research activities and is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP).

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The first of eight hospitals in California whose nurses have been honored with the prestigious Magnet designation, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For 18 consecutive years, it has been named Los Angeles' most preferred hospital for all health needs in an independent survey of area residents. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and was recently fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). Additional information is available at [www.cedars-sinai.edu](http://www.cedars-sinai.edu).

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