

Healthcare industry BW

“Regenerative medicine has the potential to revolutionise medicine”

More than 300 researchers from all over the world have gathered at the Haus der Wirtschaft in Stuttgart for the “4th Congress on Regenerative Biology and Medicine – BioStar 2010”. This is already the fourth staging of an event that provides an intensive and interdisciplinary platform for medical experts, scientists and engineers to share views and experiences relating to regenerative medicine and biology. In this innovative field, methods and therapies are developed whereby the body’s own regenerative processes are directly supported by cell biology, tissue engineering and medical technology.



Researchers and entrepreneurs are developing new processes that help patients heal. It is the task of politicians to create the necessary framework for these new developments. Against this background, the Parliamentary Secretary of State at the Federal Ministry for Health, Annette Widmann-Mauz MdB, made the following statement at the opening of the congress: "The German healthcare system, which delivers high-quality patient care, is not simply an insurance system. It also has innovative potential that benefits people and contributes to the country's productivity. We want to ensure that medical progress remains available to all." In order to do so, she stressed that new processes always had to provide sufficient evidence of their benefits. In her welcoming address, Dr. Monika Stolz MdL, Minister for Labour, Social Affairs, Families and Senior Citizens, underlined the importance of close cooperation between research, development and application, and of interdisciplinary network events such as BioStar.

New processes, products and therapies require comprehensive licensing procedures in Germany before they can be used to patients' benefit. Dr. Klaus Eichenberg, Managing Director of BioRegio STERN Management GmbH and co-organiser of BioStar, had the following to say on the subject at the press conference marking the opening of the event: "Regenerative medicine has the potential to revolutionise medicine. It is, however, vital to consider licensing procedures as early as the research phase because, in addition to being effective, therapies also need to be safe for patients." This was a reference to a satellite symposium at the congress that focuses on REGiNA – the users' centre for regenerative medicine in the Neckar-Alb and Stuttgart health region. The www.info-rm.de website and the information hotline for the REGiNA project initiated by the BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) will be available from the Friday of BioStar 2010. The information system for doctors and patients is part of the users' centre for regenerative medicine, which is currently being set up with the participation of around 30 partners from the Neckar-Alb and Stuttgart region. Key topics include health economics and licensing procedures.



Dr. Ralf Kindervater, Managing Director of BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg GmbH and also a co-organiser, confirmed that the REGiNA project was unique in Germany. "The BioStar 2010 congress provides an in-depth insight into the fundamental and application-oriented research that is currently being conducted on an international level," he stated. Professor Claus D. Claussen, Director of the Society for the Promotion of Biotechnology Stuttgart/Tübingen/Neckar-Alb e.V. and another of the congress organisers, shares the view that: "It is extremely important for company founders, researchers and entrepreneurs to work closely together and share information." One such entrepreneur is Dr. Harald Stallforth, Vice-Chairman of the Management Board at Aesculap AG & Co. KG and head of the biomaterials working group at the Gesundheitsforum Baden-Württemberg health forum. Key figures on the research side include molecular biologist Professor Wilhelm Aicher, who works at the ZMF (Centre for Medical Research) at the Orthopaedic University Hospital Tübingen, is Deputy Director of the ZRM (Centre for Regenerative Medicine) and also played a role in organising the congress. Professor Aicher is currently developing "fish hooks" to probe the multitude of different stem cells and "fish out" the right ones for the therapy in question.

Professor Robert M. Nerem, Director of the Georgia Tech/Emory Center (GTEC) for Regenerative Medicine at Emory University in Atlanta, is an internationally acknowledged expert on regenerative medicine. In his plenary speech, the scientist stated that, despite the many challenges, this young discipline has a big future. "In vitro models of tissues and organs that are made from human cells will be used to develop drugs and perform toxicity analyses. Blood cells obtained from stem cells and multiplied in vitro will reduce the need for blood donations. Tissue-based heart valves made from living cells will be implanted in children with genetic heart defects and grow with them. And it may even be possible to regenerate the central nervous system," he said, concluding with the emotional words: "It may be a fantasy, but it is my dream." According to Professor Nerem, the only way to get closer to realising this dream is for specialists from all kinds of disciplines – such as physicists, information scientists, engineers and biologists – to form a scientific community to resolve the technical and social problems.

Links of this kind have long been established in the STERN BioRegion – currently between biotechnologists, mechanical engineers and automation engineers. Many companies in the biotech sector have to date simply been working as manufacturers. With the growing demand, however, fresh supplies of cell cultures and biomaterials need to be produced in large quantities of consistently high quality. And this also requires know-how from sectors such as the automotive supplier industry.

Press release

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