

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 10, 2005

WI STEM CELL NOW, INC.

NEW LOCAL GRASS ROOTS GROUP ADVOCATES IN
SUPPORT OF FUNDING STEM CELL RESEARCH

Urges Support for Governor Doyle's Budget

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Leaders of a new grass roots advocacy organization announced today the creation of a nonprofit corporation based in Milwaukee County named "Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Incorporated." President Ed Fallone, a Whitefish Bay resident, stated that the mission of the organization is to serve as a public voice advocating on behalf of the public funding of stem cell research in Wisconsin.

Stem cells are "unspecialized" cells that can generate healthy new cells, tissues and organs. Medical researchers believe that stem cells can be used to replace diseased cell populations within patients, effectively reversing the symptoms of many diseases and perhaps even affording a cure. It is estimated that stem cell research could lead to treatments for diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries and over 70 other diseases and conditions affecting more than 128 million Americans. Wisconsin is currently a leader in the field of research into stem cells and the University of Wisconsin holds many important patents relating to the field.

"The breakthroughs announced recently by University of Wisconsin researchers are exciting, and these advances illustrate why our state cannot afford to allow special interest groups to try to dictate public health policy," said Fallone. "Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc. represents a broad-based coalition of Wisconsin residents -- representing different faiths, political affiliations, and backgrounds -- all united in favor of supporting this important research. Both Governor Jim Doyle and former Governor Tommy Thompson support stem cell research, as do a majority of Wisconsin residents."

The group's immediate priority is to generate public support for Governor Doyle's budget proposal for a \$750 million Biotechnology and Stem Cell Research Initiative. On a broader front, the group will work with state legislators to secure public funds for researchers in Wisconsin, work with Wisconsin's biotechnology industry to attract new investment and jobs to our state, and work to educate the public on the benefits of stem cell research.

Federal funding of research for cures using stem cells is currently limited, and many state governments are rushing to fill the gap between available federal funds and the needs of researchers. Last November, voters in California approved a public

initiative to provide \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research within that state over the next several years.

Literally millions of Americans can have their lives transformed and their suffering cured if the promise of stem cell research is realized. Prior medical advances, such as blood transfusion and organ transplantation, were originally viewed with suspicion by some segments of the public when they were first developed. They are now recognized as standard medical procedures that have saved countless lives. Thirty years ago, new advances in Recombinant DNA technology led some critics to predict the imminent creation of human cloning laboratories and designer babies. Instead, Recombinant DNA technology led to the growth of a biotech industry that has created drugs and diagnostic tests for dozens of diseases and that generates billions of dollars in annual revenues. Fears concerning embryonic stem cell research are similarly unfounded.

Fallone identified several arguments in support of public funding for stem cell research. First, the care of chronic diseases like diabetes and Alzheimer's involve expensive long-term treatments. For example, diabetics frequently develop kidney failure, resulting in the need to undergo costly kidney dialysis treatments on an ongoing basis. Alzheimer's patients may require admission to a nursing home, an expensive form of treatment. These and other similar treatments that focus on the symptoms of disease are a continually growing part of the health care costs of our state. The ever increasing portion of health care costs due to these treatments would be eliminated or greatly reduced if the underlying diseases could be treated or cured with stem cell therapies. If stem cell research leads to cures that reduce our health care costs by only 1%, it will pay for itself, and it could cut health care costs by tens of billions of dollars in future decades. Those who argue that Wisconsin cannot afford to fund stem cell research are wrong – we can't afford not to.

Second, by continuing Wisconsin's role as a leader in stem cell research, Governor Doyle's budget proposal gives our state the opportunity to continue to benefit from patent royalties, as well as the opportunity to foster new businesses that will bring thousands of new jobs and millions in new tax revenues to Wisconsin. Wisconsin needs to act now to maintain its momentum as a magnet for businesses related to stem cell research. The limitations placed on the federal funding of stem cell research have created a competition among the states to fund this important research. Wisconsin's prominence in the field is partly due to the fact that many of the federally allowed embryonic stem cell lines are at the University of Wisconsin. If Wisconsin does not join the ranks of other states making state-funded lines available as an alternative to the limited number of federally-funded lines, Wisconsin's current prominence in the field will quickly disappear.

Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc. will be one of the sponsors of the JDRF Kid's Campaign for a Cure that will take place in Madison on March 9, 2005. The organization plans additional public education and outreach activities in the coming weeks. In addition, the group also announced today the launch of its website, located at

wistemcellnow.org, which includes more information about the organization's activities and which offers interested persons a way to get involved in the organization.

Among the members of the Board of Directors of Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc. are fundraiser Heidi Fallone of Whitefish Bay, the Reverend James Bender of Wauwatosa, attorney Robyn Shapiro of Bayside, Dr. Chip Morris of Shorewood, attorney David Froiland of Whitefish Bay and marketing consultant Keith Schmitz of Shorewood. An Advisory Committee has also been formed to assist the Board of Directors. The members of the Advisory Committee include Andrew Cohn, Dr. Richard Cooper, Scott Beightol, Dr. Sanford Mallin and Elizabeth Hayes.

CONTACT PERSONS available for interviews and comment:

Ed Fallone is the President of Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc. He has been interviewed frequently by national and local media, such as National Public Radio, the Dow Jones Newswire, and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, on topics relating to law, public policy and health care. He has been involved in the formation of several successful nonprofit entities in southeastern Wisconsin, including the Latino Community Center, the legal services provider Centro Legal, Inc., and the Immigration Counseling Project of Catholic Charities.

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Heidi Fallone is a member of the Board of Directors of Wisconsin Stem Cell Now, Inc. She has lobbied federal legislators on behalf of increased funding for juvenile diabetes research, and her personal fundraising efforts have raised over \$35,000 towards that cause. She has been interviewed on the topic of diabetes research by several local Milwaukee media outlets, including the Fox Morning News, WTMJ Channel 4, and the "Adelante!" public affairs program on public television.

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