Novocell and UCSF Receive CIRM Disease Team Award

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Last month, the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) [1] awarded a Diabetes Disease Team Award [2] to Novocell, Inc., a San Diego-based stem cell engineering biotech, and the UCSF Diabetes Center, led by Jeffrey Bluestone, PhD, Michael German, MD, Matthias Hebrok, PhD, and Qizhi Tang, PhD. Called the "dream team" by CIRM working group reviewers, this group’s goal is to encapsulate islet progenitor cells generated from human embryonic stem cells in a durable, retrievable device and implant them into patients.

If successful, a Phase 1 safety trial in patients with type 1 diabetes could begin in 3-4 years. [ New York Times ] [3] CIRM was established five years ago this month when Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act, was passed by California voters. CIRM funds are also being used to build UCSF's state-of-the-art, 75,000 sq. ft. stem cell research facility. In September, UCSF officials topped off the new building by placing the final structural steel beam. A number of UCSF diabetes researchers are expected to move into this building in September 2010. [ San Francisco Business Times ] [4]

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