

UK NATIONAL STEM CELL NETWORK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Minutes of the first meeting of the UK National Stem Cell Network (UKNSCN) Advisory Committee held on 16 September 2009 at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Portland Place, London.

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee (in person)

Dr Catherine Prescott	Biolatris Ltd (Chair)
Dr Tim Allsopp	Pfizer Regenerative Medicine
Dr Joshua Brickman	University of Edinburgh
Professor Ruth Chadwick	University of Wales, Cardiff
Professor Jon Frampton	University of Birmingham
Professor Nagy Habib	Imperial College London
Professor Alicia el Haj	Keele University
Professor Neil Hanley	University of Manchester
Mr Gerry Kamstra	Bird and Bird LLP
Mrs Shirley Nurock	Lay Member
Dr Paul Riley	University College London
Professor Brian Salter	King's College London
Professor Andrew Webster	University of York

Advisory Committee (by teleconference)

Professor Anthony Hollander	University of Bristol
Professor Lorraine Young	University of Nottingham

Secretariat

Mr Ben Sykes	UKNSCN Executive Director
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Sponsor Observers

Dr Colin Miles	BBSRC
Dr Catriona Crombie	MRC

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received in advance from Professor Welham, Professor Oreffo, Mr Sharp and Mr Raymond MBE from the Committee, and also from the UK Stem Cell Bank representative.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Oral

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new UK National Stem Cell Network Advisory Committee and notified the Committee of apologies for absence as above. The Chair indicated that written comments were tabled from absent members for the Committee's consideration, and invited all members to briefly introduce themselves.

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- 1.2 The Chair reminded members that they were entitled to reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred in attending meetings of the Advisory Committee, and that claim forms were available to be taken away from the meeting.

2. UKNSCN REVIEW 2008 – RE-STRUCTURING AND MANAGEMENT

UKNSCN01/09

- 2.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper. The main purpose of the paper was to bring the Committee up-to-date with the sponsors' progress in implementing the five recommendations of the review, and to present the memberships and relative roles of the new UKNSCN Management Board and Advisory Committee. The Chair then invited comments on the new governance arrangements for UKNSCN and, in particular, the proposed frequency of meetings of the Advisory Committee.
- 2.2 Written comments were submitted on the role of the Advisory Committee, recommending that the primary role of the Committee be re-drafted slightly to read as follows: *to work with, and provide scientific advice to, the Executive Director and the UKNSCN Management Board on the current and future activities of the UKNSCN.* Other written comments also focused on the Network's revised objectives, suggesting in particular that Objective 1 was vague and difficult to measure as currently drafted.

ACTION: Executive Director

- 2.3. The Committee agreed that it should hold at least three meetings during its first year, deciding that a second meeting should take place in January 2010 and that the third meeting should be co-located with the UKNSCN conference in Nottingham in July 2010. The Executive Director agreed to make the necessary arrangements.

ACTION: Executive Director

3. UKNSCN 3-YEAR CORPORATE PLAN 2008-11

UKNSCN02/09

- 3.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper, which presented a re-draft of the Network's Corporate Plan 2008-2011 based on its revised objectives effective from 1 April this year. The Chair explained that the changes had received approval from the Management Board at its recent meeting on 20 July, but that the Advisory Committee's input was being sought prior to final publication.
- 3.2 The Committee proposed a number of detailed changes to the Plan, including revision of the banner headline on page 2, use of the term 'incurable' rather than 'untreatable', replacing the term 'disease' with 'disorder' or 'condition' throughout the document, avoiding hype, making greater reference to the role of the NHS, focusing upon 'medicine' rather than just 'regenerative medicine', re-instating the Network's role in providing independent advice, and broadening the text associated with its international activities. In addition, the Committee wished to see greater reference to business included within the Plan.

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- 3.3 The Executive Director was asked to re-draft the Corporate Plan in line with these suggestions, for onward submission to the next meeting of the Management Board.

ACTION: Executive Director

4. UPDATE ON UKNSCN ACTIVITIES SINCE OCTOBER 2008 UKNSCN03/09

- 4.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper, which presented a detailed report on the various activities which the UKNSCN has delivered over the past year against the 2008/9 Delivery Plan prepared by the original Steering Committee. The paper set out achievements against each of the original five objectives assigned to the Network, and was designed to bring the Committee up-to-date so that its subsequent discussion of the new Delivery Plan for 2009/10 would be meaningful. The Chair invited comments from the Committee.
- 4.2 The Committee requested an update on the use of the UKNSCN's On-Line Discussion Forum and the development of the on-line searchable database of UK stem cell expertise. The Executive Director indicated that the Forum was being under-used and may have been overtaken by new technology available elsewhere. Work on the on-line database was on-going, but was unlikely to be completed until the Network acquired an additional full-time staff member to whom the project would be assigned.
- 4.3 In addition to the patents digest currently provided by UKNSCN, the Committee indicated that the Network should look at collating information on clinical trials using stem cells for the community's benefit, and that this might be included in the current Delivery Plan for 2009/10.

ACTION: Executive Director

- 4.4 The Committee requested an update on the Network's publication of position statements. The Executive Director confirmed that the original Steering Committee had approved only one for publication, on stem cell tourism, which had been well received.

5. UKNSCN 1-YEAR DELIVERY PLAN 2009-10 UKNSCN04/09

- 5.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper, which set out a draft Delivery Plan for 2009/10 comprising a number of on-going projects, new projects, and projects carried over from 2008/9. The Chair then invited the Committee to prioritise the Network's projects, adding and removing tasks as necessary.
- 5.2 The Committee discussed the draft Delivery Plan at length, making a number of recommendations. It agreed that the On-Line Discussion Forum should be discontinued as a project, and that the tasks concerning the provision of materials and resources via the website should be given the greatest priority. These included:
- Provision of website educational materials;
 - Completion of the on-line searchable expertise database;
 - Preparation of further UKNSCN position statements;

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- Enhancement of hyperlinks library with further linked sites;
- Production of a lay statement on the state-of-the-art in stem cell research.

ACTION: All members to forward hyperlinks

- 5.3 The Committee suggested that the Network's regular e-bulletins should be reduced in content to provide a headline and hyperlink only, and that the provision of additional information on research grant/journal highlights should be considered, together with information on the on-going ethical debate surrounding stem cells.

ACTION: Executive Director

- 5.4 The Committee discussed in detail expanded work on UKNSCN position statements, suggesting that these could be prepared and made available via the website for a number of high-profile medical conditions. Professor Hollander agreed to forward further ideas for suitable position statements.

ACTION: Professor Hollander

- 5.5 The Committee discussed the idea of UKNSCN holding a programme of annual workshops beyond the Annual National Scientific Meeting, which would provide fora for practical discussions on a range of issues pertinent to stem cells and the wider regenerative medicine field. Examples given included navigating the new regulatory framework and addressing issues of re-imburement for companies investing in stem cell therapies. It was agreed that the Executive Director should solicit views from the community as to which workshops it would like to see the UKNSCN provide for consideration at the next meeting in January, together with suggestions for community members to whom the organisation of the workshop might be delegated.

ACTION: Executive Director

- 5.6 The Committee briefly discussed the provision of small amounts of funding from UKNSCN to the community for travel purposes and/or to assist with the costs of national-level meetings on stem cell science and its associated disciplines. The discussion was unresolved and will be taken forward by the Executive Director and Chair in conjunction with the Management Board.

ACTION: Chair/Executive Director

- 5.7 The Executive Director was asked to prepare a revised Delivery Plan based on the discussions minuted above, for circulation to the Committee and consideration by the Management Board at its next meeting on 8 October.

ACTION: Executive Director

6. 2010 UKNSCN ANNUAL SCIENCE MEETING – PLANNING/FUNDRAISING UKNSCN05/09

- 6.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper, which set out the progress to date concerning the organisation of the UKNSCN's 2010 annual conference. A contract had now been signed with the venue and Dynamic Events

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were proceeding with the logistics and development of the on-line registration system for the conference. £8k sponsorship had already been secured towards the event from the University of Nottingham and the provisional budget showed that, assuming no further funding (unlikely), the net cost of the conference to UKNSCN would be of the order of £21k. The Chair invited the Committee to comment on any aspect of the planning or fundraising for the conference.

- 6.2 The Committee expressed some concern that the Programme Steering Group had not yet decided upon a speaker programme for the conference and that invitations remained to be issued. The Executive Director and former members of the original Steering Committee sought to re-assure the Committee that the timeframe was in line with the first two conferences and that the national nature of the conference with its focus on UK speakers meant that more time was available than would have been the case with a major programme of international speakers. Nonetheless, it was agreed that the Programme Steering Group should decide upon a programme rapidly so that the Executive Director could begin issuing formal invitations and producing publicity materials. The Committee requested that due consideration be given to inviting a larger number of international speakers than previously in order to attract further delegates.

ACTION: Programme Steering Group Members/Executive Director

- 6.3 Dr Crombie (MRC) left the meeting at this point.

7. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE FUNDING OF UKNSCN FROM APRIL 2011 UKNSCN06/09

- 7.1 The Chair introduced this paper, which set out a number of proposals for the future funding of UKNSCN activities from April 2011. The Chair explained that, whilst the current four sponsors of the Network have increased their total funding to £180kpa for the next two financial years, this would not be maintained beyond April 2011 when the sponsors would be expecting to significantly reduce their financial commitment to the Network. She explained that the Management Board was looking to the Advisory Committee to discuss the various options and make its own recommendations on future funding.

- 7.2 The Committee discussed the various options presented and raised a number of questions for the sponsors. In particular, these covered whether the BBSRC as hosting organisation would continue to provide those 'in kind' services despite reducing its hard capital input from April 2011, and what might be the consequences of state aid rules in this respect if the Network was to become a company limited by guarantee from April 2011. The BBSRC agreed to investigate these questions further with the other sponsors of the Network.

ACTION: BBSRC

- 7.3 The Committee added philanthropy and institutional subscriptions as possible additional sources of funding for the Network. The reliability of the subscription model was questioned in the stem cell field when it was likely that more of the regional stem cell networks around the UK would be moving to subscriptions in future to finance their activities. Forcing the community to choose, rather than pay two subscriptions,

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could be counter-productive and would at the very least require the UKNSCN to be providing an indispensable list of activities for the community by April 2011.

- 7.4 The establishment of a UKNSCN Funding Group was mooted, with a remit to pursue funding for 2011 onwards. Whilst this might ultimately prove necessary, the Committee agreed that the Executive Director should begin a systematic survey of potential sponsors for the Network, covering publishers, medical charities (including the Wellcome Trust) and industry, reporting back to the next meeting in January.

ACTION: Executive Director

8. UKNSCN COMMERCIALISATION WORKING GROUP REPORT UKNSCN07/09

- 8.1 The Chair invited the Executive Director to introduce this paper, which presented a near-final draft of the UKNSCN's Commercialisation Working Group report. This was an activity initiated in November last year under the chairmanship of Professor Chris Mason who at that time was a member of the UKNSCN's original Steering Committee. The Chair then led a discussion on what should be done with the report, given the sponsors' view that a majority of the recommendations have now been superseded by other initiatives, such as the BIGT *Refresh of UK Bioscience 2015* and the OLS Blueprint for the Life Sciences.
- 8.2 Following a lengthy discussion, with a number of opposing views exchanged, the Committee agreed that the time which would have to be spent in bringing the report up to date and publishing it would outweigh its impact on the commercialisation of stem cell therapies. The establishment of RIG in this area was also considered in the Committee's decision. The Committee therefore agreed to maintain the document as it stands and, in conjunction with the Management Board, use it to deliver a series of UKNSCN workshops as part of the 2009/10 Delivery Plan which address some of the issues it contains, such as reimbursement and the role of the NHS.

ACTION: Chair/Executive Director

9. MEMBERS' OPEN FORUM Oral

- 9.1 The Chair invited members of the Committee to raise any issues they considered pertinent to the business of UKNSCN, indicating that this item would be a standing item at each Committee meeting. She also explained that it was incumbent on Committee members to try to represent the views of the wider community within their own particular field of expertise and that this item was dedicated to achieving that feedback on UKNSCN's past, current and future activities.
- 9.2 The Committee considered two tabled papers under this item from absent members: Professor Oreffo and Mr Raymond MBE. The Chair thanked the authors in their absence, and postponed discussion on Mr Raymond's substantial paper until the next meeting in January to allow members more time to digest its contents.

ACTION: Executive Director

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- 9.3 In the absence of the UK Stem Cell Bank representative, the Executive Director tabled a paper proposing that the UKSCB holds an Open Forum each year for users of stem cell lines as a satellite event to the UKNSCN Annual Scientific Meeting. He explained that this Forum would be the successor to the now disbanded Stem Cell User and Clinical Liaison Committee, and that it was proposed to hold the first meeting at the UKNSCN's 2010 conference in Nottingham. The Committee approved the collaboration between UKNSCN and UKSCB to deliver the annual Open Forum for users of stem cell lines.

ACTION: Executive Director

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETINGS **Oral**

- 10.1 The Committee discussed this item at an earlier point in the agenda. A second meeting would be arranged for January 2010, with a third meeting taking place alongside the UKNSCN's Annual Scientific Meeting in Nottingham in July 2010.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS **Oral**

- 11.1 There was no other business. The Chair closed the meeting by thanking members for their attendance and contributions.