

STEM CELL
NETWORK



RÉSEAU DE
CELLULES SOUCHES



*Tomorrow's
health is here.*

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

Vision

To capitalize upon Canada's competitive advantage in stem cell research for the benefit of Canadians.

Mandate

The Stem Cell Network (SCN) is a national, not-for-profit corporation dedicated to enabling the translation of stem cell research into clinical applications, commercial products and public policy.

Values

SCN was founded on a core set of organizational values that have shaped the way SCN has conducted itself over nearly two decades. The SCN community shares these common values and works to ensure they are expressed in all that it does:

- Requiring research excellence, integrity and a commitment to ethical practice;
- Fostering collaboration;
- Fostering equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Driving innovation; and
- Supporting continual learning and improvement.

SCN By the Numbers: 2001–2020

\$118 Million

direct investment in
Research, Training & Outreach



960 Patent applications

130 Patents issued

102 Licenses



\$116 Million

in Research Partnerships



3,362

Trainees & HQP supported



200+ Translational research
projects supported



24 Clinical trials

178 Research groups



21 RM biotechs

Table of Contents

A Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors, Scientific Director & CEO, Executive Director & COO	1
The Year in Review	3
Research Program	5
Accelerating Clinical Translation	7
Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships	8
Advancing Clinical Trials	9
Translation & Society	10
Disruptive Research Award	11
COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Initiative	12
Community Spotlights	13
Western Canada	13
Ontario	14
Quebec	15
Training	17
Training Workshops & Opportunities Supported by the Stem Cell Network	18
Training Communications Committee	19
Training Tomorrow's Research Leaders: An Impact Analysis of SCN's Training Program	21
Partnership Engagement	23
Innovate UK	23
Companies to Watch	24
Community Outreach	27
StemCellTalks	27
Till & McCulloch Meetings	28
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Events	29
Online Activity	30
A Look Ahead	31
SCN Board & Committee Members	33
Financial Statements	37



A Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors, Scientific Director & CEO, Executive Director & COO

(L) Andrew McKee (C) Dr. Michael Rudnicki (R) Cate Murray

Dear Friends:

It has been a memorable year for the Stem Cell Network (SCN). It started on a high note, with the Government of Canada announcing an additional three years of funding for SCN. We are honoured to continue to have the support and confidence of the federal government. We are equally proud to be able to provide continued leadership for Canada's stem cell research community.

Shortly after receiving this good news, SCN's management and Board of Directors started designing a new three-year strategic plan (ACCELERATE) that offers research and training programs that are driving stem cell research forward and building Canada's regenerative medicine ecosystem. Available on SCN's website, ACCELERATE sets a clear direction for the organization, including a commitment to fostering a culture that embraces the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. As part of our strategic planning we also refreshed the Stem Cell Network's branding. This annual report showcases our new brand and reflects the implementation of the first year of the strategic plan.

As part of SCN's rebuild, a third-party governance assessment was done to ensure SCN is aware of, and is implementing, best practices for governance. The review involved interviews with all members of SCN's Board of Directors, an update to SCN's bylaws, and terms of reference for committees, and a membership refresh for director positions. In November 2019, two new members were welcomed to SCN's Board, Sharon Louis, Vice President, Research & Development for STEMCELL Technologies, and Gail Garland, CEO of the Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization. With the inclusion of these dynamic and experienced women, SCN's Board of Directors is comprised of 58 percent women and 42 percent men. It is also important to note the election of Declan Hamill, Vice President, Legal, Regulatory and Compliance, Innovative Medicines Canada as Vice Chair of the Board. Declan will serve a two-year term as Vice Chair and has also taken on the position of Chair for the Audit and Finance Committee. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing directors, Drs. Allen Eaves and Robert Young. Both have been long-time champions of SCN and we would like to acknowledge their significant contributions to the organization.

With a new strategic plan in place and its governance renewal complete, SCN turned its focus to executing its research and training mandate. By the end of this fiscal year, SCN had completed the first round of funding (valued at \$6.9M) for its Research Program, and launched a second research-funding competition. SCN's Research Program benefits from a diverse set of partners, comprised of health charities, foundations, companies and research institutions. They provide in-kind and cash support for the research projects and clinical trials SCN supports. For our Round 1 competition, SCN's partners contributed \$11 million in cash and in-kind support. This significant contribution will undoubtedly strengthen research activity and outcomes. Highlights of these projects and clinical trials can be found in this annual report.

It was also an important year for training, as SCN was able to offer a variety of training opportunities for future stem cell researchers across the country. Training was offered through hands-on experience in the lab, specialized workshops, and participation in scientific conferences and meetings. The 2019 Till & McCulloch Meetings, known for the training opportunities it offers, drew record attendance this past November, with more than 500 participants turning out for the event, which is hosted by SCN and CCRM. The trainee community once again expressed their overwhelming support for the conference, which provided them with the opportunity to network with leading researchers, company representatives and peers. It also gave them the chance to share their research and learn about the latest trends in the stem cell field. The TMM meetings continue to be an annual highlight for the community, and we are looking forward to hosting the meetings, both virtually and face-to-face, in the years to come.

We hope you will take some time to read this annual report and learn more about the outstanding people and work that make up Canada's Stem Cell Network. It is clear that many of the best and brightest reside within our borders and are delivering on the promise of stem cells.

Finally, we would like to extend our deepest thanks to the Stem Cell Network staff, who have stuck with the organization during some very uncertain times. Their commitment to the community is second to none, and their dedication and professionalism continue to serve SCN well.

Please accept our best wishes and thanks for your support of Canadian stem cell research.

Sincerely,



Andrew McKee
Chair, Board of Directors



Michael Rudnicki, O.C., PhD, FRS, FRSC
Scientific Director & CEO



Cate Murray
Executive Director & COO

The Year in Review

2019

► APRIL

378 students engaged in StemCellTalks events in Hamilton and Ottawa

SCN undertakes a third-party governance review



► MAY

SCN hosts Women in Regenerative Medicine Breakfast in Vancouver

SCN sponsors & attends the Printing the Future of Therapeutics in 3D Symposium, & annual symposia of BCREGMED and OIRM

Dr. Connie Eaves inducted into the Canadian Hall of Fame

► JUNE

SCN launches Round 1 of its 2019-2022 Research Funding Competition

SCN Executive Director & COO, Cate Murray meets with CEO of Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences



► SEPTEMBER

SCN launches new brand and three-year strategic plan

SCN hosts A Focus on Diversity luncheon in Toronto

► OCTOBER

SCN sponsors & attends the Cascadia Corridor Research Symposium

Dr. Connie Eaves accepts 2019 Canada Gairdner Wightman Award



► NOVEMBER

500+ attendees from Canada and abroad attend the Till & McCulloch Meetings in Montreal, co-hosted by SCN and CCRM

Dr. Freda Miller wins 2019 Till & McCulloch Award for her research discovery in tissue repair and regeneration

Gail Garland and Sharon Louis are appointed to SCN's Board of Directors; Declan Hamill is elected as Vice Chair

Douglas Kondro from the University of Calgary (Mark Ungrin's lab) accepts Outstanding Innovation Award from Mitacs



2020

► DECEMBER

RMAC members welcome BioCanRx and discuss plans for a national strategy for stem cell and regenerative medicine research

SCN meets with delegates from 30 different countries at technical committee meetings for the International Standards Organization (ISO)

► JANUARY

SCN launches Round 2 of its 2020-2022 Research Funding Competition, including a new program for early-career investigators



► FEBRUARY



335 students participate in StemCellTalks events in Guelph and Toronto

SCN sponsors OBIO Investment Summit and key presentations by promising biotech start-ups and emerging technologies

► MARCH

Formal announcement of Round 1 Research Program, valued at \$6.9M, by Will Amos, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science) in Montréal

SCN issues COVID-19 update to the community and publishes statement warning about unproven stem cell treatments for COVID-19



Research Program

The Stem Cell Network (SCN) is the only national network of its kind: dedicated to enabling translational stem cell and regenerative medicine research across the country from the lab into the clinic for the health and economic well-being of Canadians. With support from the Government of Canada, SCN continues to foster the growth of a multidisciplinary community of stem cell and regenerative medicine researchers and fund innovative and leading-edge research.

In spring 2019, SCN launched the first of two translational research funding competitions for the 2019-2022 period. SCN received high-quality applications from across Canada for collaborative projects that included researchers at all career stages.

This peer-reviewed competition resulted in 13 highly ranked projects: nine research projects and four clinical trials with a total funding envelope of \$6.9 million. These innovative projects will help advance discoveries in areas such as type 1 diabetes, heart disease, severe burns and vision loss, as well as provide an ethical and legal framework for important regenerative medicine policy concerns. Notably, the success rate for early-career researcher applications was high (63%), highlighting the quality of Canada’s emerging research talent. The investment will advance high-impact projects and collaborations among 108 scientists and more than 90 trainees across the country and internationally with partner support valued at more than \$11 million from industry, not-for-profits, research institutions and other sources.

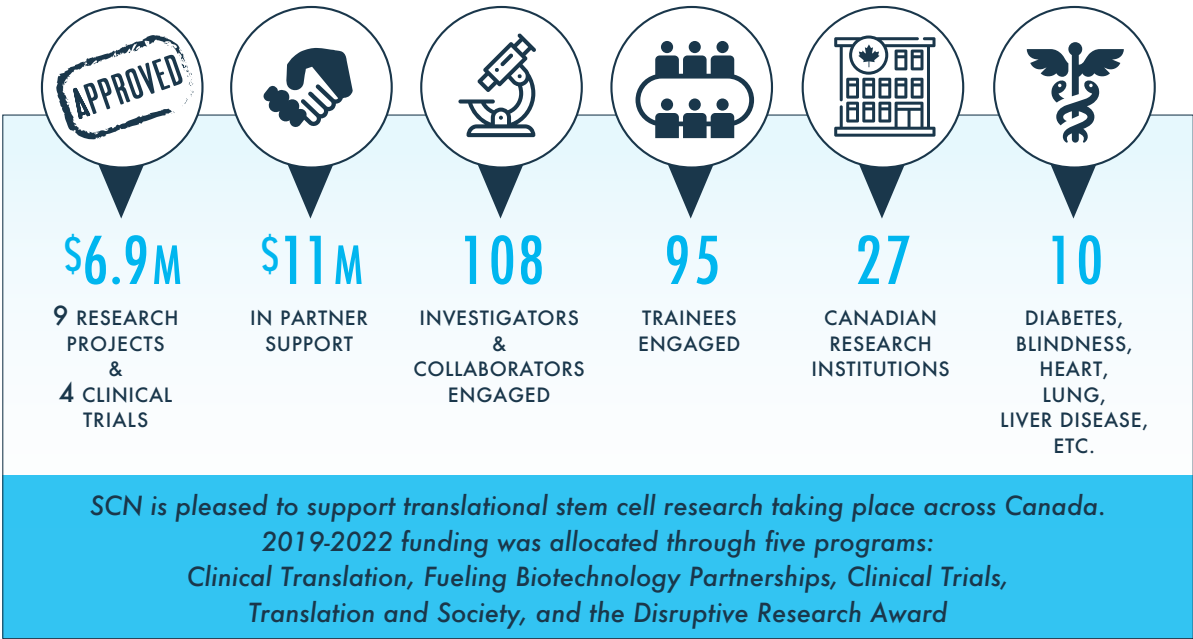


FIGURE 1: SCN Round 1 Funding 2019-2022



SCN's Round 1 Research Funding Results Announced by Will Amos, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science) and Soraya Martinez Ferrada, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, in Montreal on March 2, 2020.

The following pages provide a summary of research activities achieved with SCN support.

Breakdown of Research Funding Programs:



FIGURE 2: Round 1 Research Program Summary Breakdown

Accelerating Clinical Translation Program

The Accelerating Clinical Translation Program provides \$2.4 million for four research projects that began in 2020 and will run through March 2022. A total of 28 investigators (four Principal Investigators and 24 Co-Investigators and Collaborators) at eight Canadian institutions, as well as 29 trainees, are engaged in these projects. These multi-disciplinary teams are overcoming key obstacles to moving research from the lab into the clinic in the areas of heart regulation and regeneration and the delivery of insulin-producing cells for type 1 diabetes.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Zachary Laksman, University of British Columbia (UBC)	
Pipeline Towards Stem Cell Driven Personalized Medicine for Atrial Fibrillation	Gordon Keller (University Health Network) Glen Tibbits (UBC), Liam Brunham (UBC), David Voadlo (Simon Fraser University), Francis Lynn (UBC), Lior Gepstein (Technion – Israel Institute of Technology), Patrick Boyle (University of Washington), Shubhayan Sanatani (BC Children’s Hospital Research Institute)
\$586,000	
Michael Laflamme, McEwen Stem Cell Institute, University Health Network (UHN)	
Heart Regeneration with Mature Ventricular Cardiomyocytes from Human Pluripotent Stem Cells	Nilesh Ghugre (Sunnybrook Research Institute), Graham Wright (Sunnybrook Research Institute), Gordon Keller (UHN), Ren-Ke Li (UHN), Terrence Yau (UHN), Kumaraswamy Nanthakumar (UHN), Lior Gepstein (Technion – Israel Institute of Technology), Matthew Kay (George Washington University)
\$599,685	
M. Cristina Nostro, McEwen Stem Cell Institute, University Health Network (UHN), University of Toronto	
Co-localized hiPSC-derived Beta Cells and Immunosuppression-loaded Micelles as a Novel Approach for T1D Treatment	Greg Korbitt (University of Alberta), Andrew Pepper (University of Alberta), Esme Dijke (University of Alberta), James Shapiro (University of Alberta), Joanna Preston (TEC Edmonton), Atul Humar (UHN)
\$600,000	
Bruce Verchere, University of British Columbia (UBC)	
Genetic Manipulation of hES-derived Insulin-producing Cells to Improve Graft Outcomes	Francis Lynn (UBC), Megan Levings (UBC), Tim Kieffer (UBC), Dina Panagiotopoulos (UBC), Brad Hoffman (UBC), Greg Korbitt (University of Alberta)
\$600,000	

TABLE 1: Accelerating Clinical Translation Summary Table

Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Program

The Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Program provides \$1.5 million for three research projects that began in 2020 and will run through March 2022. A total of 18 investigators (three Principal Investigators and 15 Co-Investigators and Collaborators) at eight Canadian institutions, together with 20 trainees, are engaged in these projects. Centered on partnerships between academic institutions and Canadian regenerative medicine biotech companies, this program is driving stem cell-based technologies and therapies into the clinic or market in the research areas of vision loss, type 1 diabetes and acute liver failure.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Gilbert Bernier, Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont (HMR), Université de Montréal (UMontréal)	
Photoreceptor Transplantation for the Treatment of Retinal Degenerative Diseases	May Griffith (HMR), Jean-François Bouchard (UMontréal), Stéphane Faubert (St-Hyacinthe Veterinary School), Cynthia Qian (HMR), Flavio Rezende (HMR)
\$500,000	
Tim Kieffer, University of British Columbia (UBC)	
A Bioprinted Insulin-Producing Device for Diabetes	Corinne Hoesli (McGill University), James Piret (UBC), Megan Levings (UBC), Steven Paraskevas (The Research Institute of McGill University Health Centre), Richard Leask (McGill University), Patrick MacDonald (University of Alberta)
\$500,000	
Massimiliano Paganelli, (CHU-Sainte-Justine, Université de Montréal (UMontréal))	
iPSC-derived Encapsulated Liver Tissue to Treat Acute Liver Failure: Pivotal Confirmation in Large Animals	Christopher Rose (UMontréal), Michel Lallier (CHU-Sainte-Justine), Constantine Karvellas (University of Alberta), Siofradh McMahon (CCRM)
\$500,000	

TABLE 2: Fueling Biotechnology Partnerships Summary Table

Advancing Clinical Trials Program

The Advancing Clinical Trials Program provides \$2.6 million for four clinical trials that began in 2020 and will run through March 2022. This program focuses on novel cellular or stem cell-related therapeutic approaches to tissue repair and regeneration for specific diseases. A total of 48 investigators (four Principal Investigators and 44 Co-Investigators and Collaborators) at 18 Canadian institutions, together with 36 trainees are engaged in these projects. The clinical trials will bring forward innovative therapies or technologies for leukemia, severe burns, vision loss and lung diseases caused by complications of severe prematurity.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Sandra Cohen, Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont (HMR), Université de Montréal (UMontréal)	
UM171-Expanded Cord Blood Grafts Offer Potential Cure for Very High-Risk Leukemia Patients	Jean-Sébastien Delisle (HMR), Gizelle Popradi (McGill University Hospital Center), Frédéric Barabé (Centre de recherche CHU de Québec-Université Laval), Nadia Bambace (HMR), Léa Bernard (HMR), Guy Sauvageau (UMontréal), Josée Hébert (UMontréal), Filippo Milano (Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center), Peter Zandstra (University of British Columbia), Sébastien Lemieux (UMontréal), Gabriel Tremblay (Purple Squirrel Economics), Lambert Busque (HMR), Denis-Claude Roy (HMR)
\$1,000,000	
Lucie Germain, Université Laval (ULaval)	
Cultured Epithelial Corneal Autografts for the Treatment of Canadians with Limbal Stem Cell Deficiency	François A. Auger (ULaval), Bartha M. Knoppers (McGill University), Richard Bazin (ULaval), Isabelle Brunette (UMontréal), Allan Slomovic (Toronto Western Hospital), Mohib Morcos (McGill University), Michel Ouellet (Patient representative), Charles Giguère (Centre de recherche de l'Institut universitaire en santé mentale de Montréal)
\$500,000	

continued on following page

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Véronique Moulin, Université Laval (ULaval)	
Self-Assembly Skin Substitutes (SASS) for the Treatment of Acute Wounds of Canadian Burn Patient	François A. Auger (ULaval), Lucie Germain (ULaval), Bartha M. Knoppers (McGill University), Isabelle Perreault (CHU-Sainte-Justine), Sarvesh Logsetty (Winnipeg Burn Unit), Ariane Bussière (Québec Burn Unit), Patricia Bortoluzzi (CHU-Sainte-Justine), Vince Gabriel (Calgary Firefighter Burn Treatment Centre), Duncan Nickerson (Calgary Firefighter Burn Treatment Centre), Sally Hynes (BC Children's Hospital Research Institute), Edward Tredget (Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre), Josh Wong (Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre), Peter Kwan (Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre), Joel Fish (The Hospital for Sick Children), Claudia Malik (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario), Marc Jeschke (Sunnybrook Research Institute), Sue-Ling Chang (Patient representative)
\$470,645	
Bernard Thébaud, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI), University of Ottawa (UOttawa), Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)	
HULC-I: Helping Underdeveloped Lungs with Mesenchymal Stromal Cells – A Phase I Trial	Dean Fergusson (OHRI), Justin Presseau (UOttawa), Kednapa Thavorn (UOttawa), Brigitte Lemyre (CHEO), Mario Ruediger (Technische Universität Dresden), Nadya Ben Fadel (CHEO), Robert Jankov (CHEO), Jana Feberova (CHEO), David Courtman (OHRI)
\$638,150	

TABLE 3: Advancing Clinical Trials Summary Table

Translation & Society Program

The Translation & Society Program provides \$75K for one project, that is working to develop an ethical and legal framework to address direct-to-participant patient recruitment. Within the two-year timeframe (2020-2022), this project will engage a total of nine investigators (one Principal Investigator and eight Co-Investigators and Collaborators) at four Canadian institutions, together with one trainee.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Bartha M. Knoppers, McGill University	
Ethical and Legal Framework for <i>Direct-to-Participant</i> (DTP) Recruitment	Christine Bear (The Hospital for Sick Children), Felix Ratjen (The Hospital for Sick Children), Amy Wong (The Hospital for Sick Children), Paul Eckford (The Hospital for Sick Children), Elizabeth Stephenson (The Hospital for Sick Children), Michael Szego (University of Toronto), Julie Fradette (Université Laval), Mark Rothstein (University of Louisville School of Medicine)
\$75,000	

TABLE 4: Translation & Society Summary Table

Disruptive Research Award

The Disruptive Research Award provides \$330K in funding through March 2022 for one project to investigate a novel approach to stimulate muscle stem cell function and reduce the progression of muscular dystrophy. It engages a total of eight investigators (one Principal Investigator and seven Co-Investigators and Collaborators) at five Canadian institutions, as well as nine trainees.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Florian Bentzinger, Université de Sherbrooke (USherbrooke)	
Targeting Endogenous Repair: A Novel Mutation Independent Pharmacological Approach for Treatment of Muscular Dystrophy	Eric Marsault (USherbrooke), Penney Gilbert (University of Toronto), Mannix Auger-Messier (USherbrooke), Ubaka Ogbogu (University of Alberta), Jerome Feige (Nestlé Research), Nicolas Dumont (CHU-Sainte-Justine), Alison McGuigan (University of Toronto)
\$330,000	

TABLE 5: Disruptive Research Award Summary Table

Round 2 Research Funding Program

In January 2020, SCN launched its second research funding competition for the 2020-2022 period. This funding competition will invest up to \$4.7M in three translational research programs, as well as a new initiative, the Innovation Research Program for early career investigators. The new SCN program will support investigators within the first five years of their academic appointment to establish or further develop an innovative stem cell and regenerative medicine program.

In total, SCN received 51 applications that will be peer reviewed with an intent to commence projects in October 2020. These projects will be funded for an 18-month period.

COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Initiative

SCN invests \$675,870 in two research projects and one clinical trial

In response to COVID-19, on April 1, 2020, SCN joined global research efforts to address this pandemic by launching a Rapid Response Research Initiative. This fast-tracked program sought to catalyze high-quality stem cell and regenerative medicine approaches to combat the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The initiative was open to translational research, early stage clinical trials or ethical, legal and social implications (ELSI) research associated with COVID-19.

A total of 22 applications were received and following peer review, three projects were recommended for funding. SCN demonstrated its ability to be nimble in its response to the pandemic, compressing the process from launch through peer review and Board approval into 16 days. Impressed by the quality of successful applications, SCN's Board of Directors decided to increase the original funding envelope by \$175,000 to enable three projects to move forward. In total, \$675,870 was allocated to these projects, with partner support valued at \$2,279,593 from the Ontario government, research institutions, industry and charities.

On April 23, the three projects – one clinical trial and two research projects – were formally announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, as part of the Government of Canada's support for a national medical and research strategy to fight COVID-19.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROJECT TITLE WITH SCN FUNDS ALLOCATED	CO-INVESTIGATORS AND COLLABORATORS
Duncan Stewart, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI)	
Cellular Immuno-Therapy for COVID-19 induced Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome: the CIRCA-19 Trial	Dean Fergusson (OHRI), Shane English (OHRI), Manoj M. Lalu (OHRI), Bernard Thébaud (OHRI), David Courtman (OHRI)
\$300,000	
William Stanford, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI), Amy Wong, The Hospital for Sick Children	
Identifying and targeting pulmonary and immune mechanisms in COVID-19 using human stem cell derived lineages	Molly Shoichet (University of Toronto), Stephen Juvet (University of Toronto), Samira Mubareka (Sunnybrook Research Institute), Scott Gray-Owen (University of Toronto), Mitchell Sabloff (OHRI)
\$195,870	
Julien Muffat, The Hospital for Sick Children, Yun Li, The Hospital for Sick Children	
Investigating the role of inflammatory responses in neurological effects of COVID-19, using patient-derived stem cell models	Samira Mubareka (Sunnybrook Research Institute), Scott Gray-Owen (University of Toronto), Jason Moffat (University of Toronto), Louis Flamand (CHU de Québec-Université Laval)
\$180,000	

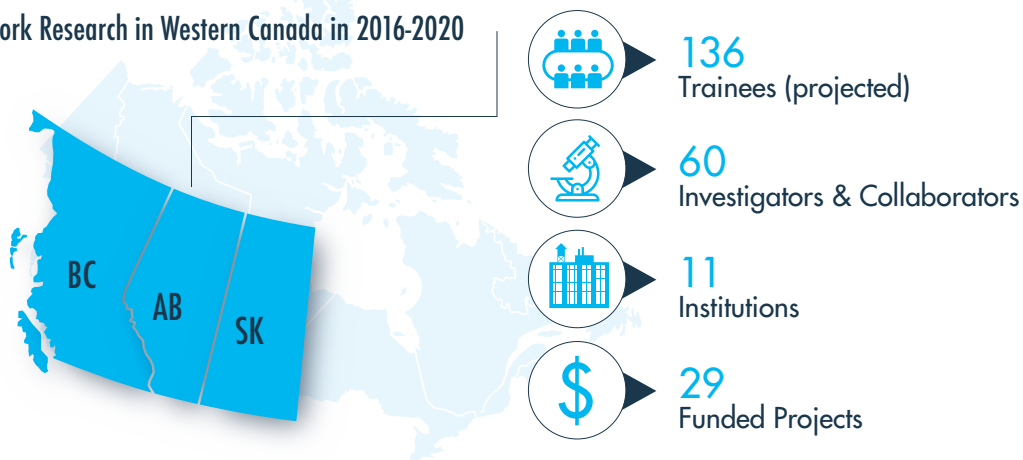
TABLE 6: COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Initiative Summary Table

Community Spotlights

Western Canada (B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan)

Researchers in Western Canada are investigating stem cell therapies for cancer, type 1 diabetes, and heart conditions among many other diseases, and their discoveries will improve treatments worldwide. Many of these discoveries are linked to Stem Cell Network support, which has allocated \$6.8M for stem cell research in Western Canada since 2016, with an additional \$17.6M in partner funding.

Stem Cell Network Research in Western Canada in 2016-2020



Some of Western Canada's diabetes scientists attending Vancouver Diabetes Research Day.

Photo courtesy BCRRegMed

FOCUS ON: Type 1 Diabetes

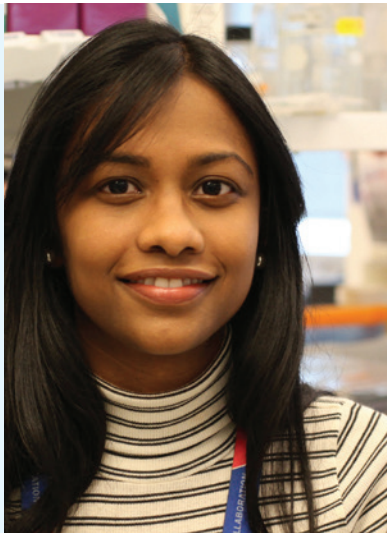
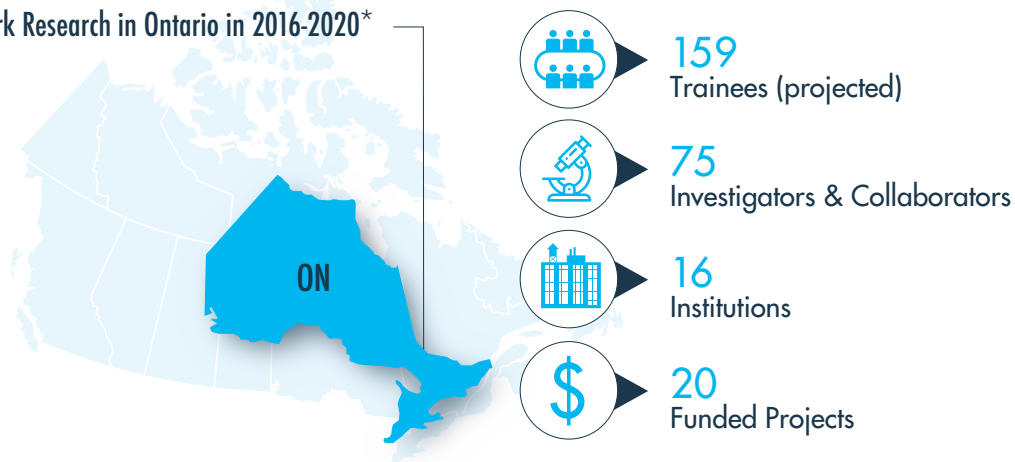
Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that affects the daily lives of approximately 300,000 Canadians. It occurs when the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. The positive news is that an innovative stem cell therapy may be the best answer for future treatment – and some of the most advanced research for this is taking place in Western Canada.

Twenty years ago, the Edmonton Protocol demonstrated that replacement pancreatic tissue could temporarily alleviate the need for daily insulin injections, and it kickstarted research that is now in clinical trials. SCN has supported this work along the way. In Alberta, Edmonton Protocol leaders, Drs. Greg Korbitt and James Shapiro are currently working on a SCN-funded project led by Dr. Cristina Nostro (University of Toronto) that is seeking to optimize replacement beta cells and better protect them from immune attack in preparation for larger-scale delivery to patients. Concurrently, Drs. Timothy Kieffer, Megan Levings, Francis Lynn, and Bruce Verchere at the University of British Columbia are also working on SCN-funded projects to improve both the quality of the cells for transplant and refine a method of creating replacement tissues using 3D printing technologies, innovated by Aspect Biosystems.

Ontario

Ontario is a dynamic centre for stem cell and regenerative medicine exploration. It was in Ontario where Drs. James Till and Ernest McCulloch discovered transplantable stem cells in 1961. Since then, scientists in the province have made critical advances in vision loss, neural and skin repair, and cardiovascular disease research. In recent years (2016-2020), the Stem Cell Network has provided more than \$6.9M towards research in Ontario, with an additional \$11.8M leveraged in partner funding.

Stem Cell Network Research in Ontario in 2016-2020*



Neemat Mahmud, PhD candidate

FOCUS ON: Regeneration Capacity

Limb or organ regeneration is relatively common among some invertebrate species of animals, such as salamanders and lizards, sea cucumbers and starfish. Mammals are not so lucky in this respect, where regeneration is limited to the ends of fingers and toes. While the regeneration process in these invertebrates has been well studied, much less is known about how the process works in mammals. Neemat Mahmud, a PhD candidate in Dr. Freda Miller's lab at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, is adding to this vital knowledge through her study of the types, origin and particular characteristics of the cells found in the digit tips of injured and uninjured mammals.

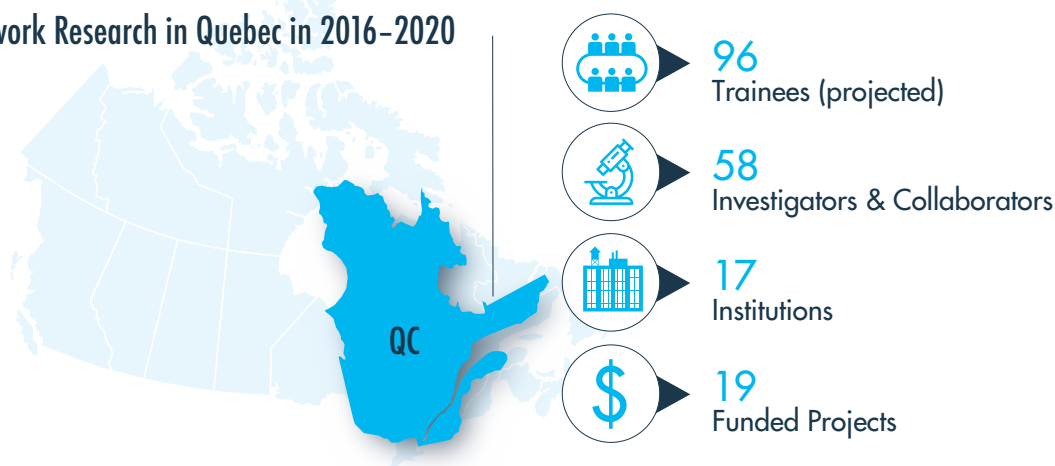
Ms. Mahmud was the recipient of the 2019 Drew Lyall Award of Excellence for her discovery that the cells responsible for regeneration can be found in the digit tips of injured mice and that they are different from those normally found there. Mahmud's award-winning research also showed that these regenerative cells were created only in the presence of an injury and were responsible for the generation of new bone and skin tissues. Such work may one day lead to new strategies to help humans and other mammals recover or heal from severe injuries or disease.

*COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Initiative funding amounts and project numbers are not included in this Ontario profile as the program was launched in FY2020/21.

Quebec

Scientists in Quebec have been at the cutting edge of stem cell research for more than 20 years. There is immense potential in the work of investigators across the province for the treatment of blood, eye and liver diseases, and for patients recovering from severe burns and skin injuries. Between 2016-2020, SCN supported 19 Quebec-based projects valued at more than \$6.6M, making Quebec a powerhouse in the sector and a leader in translating science from bench to bedside. Partner support has contributed an additional \$14.2M towards the success of these projects.

Stem Cell Network Research in Quebec in 2016-2020



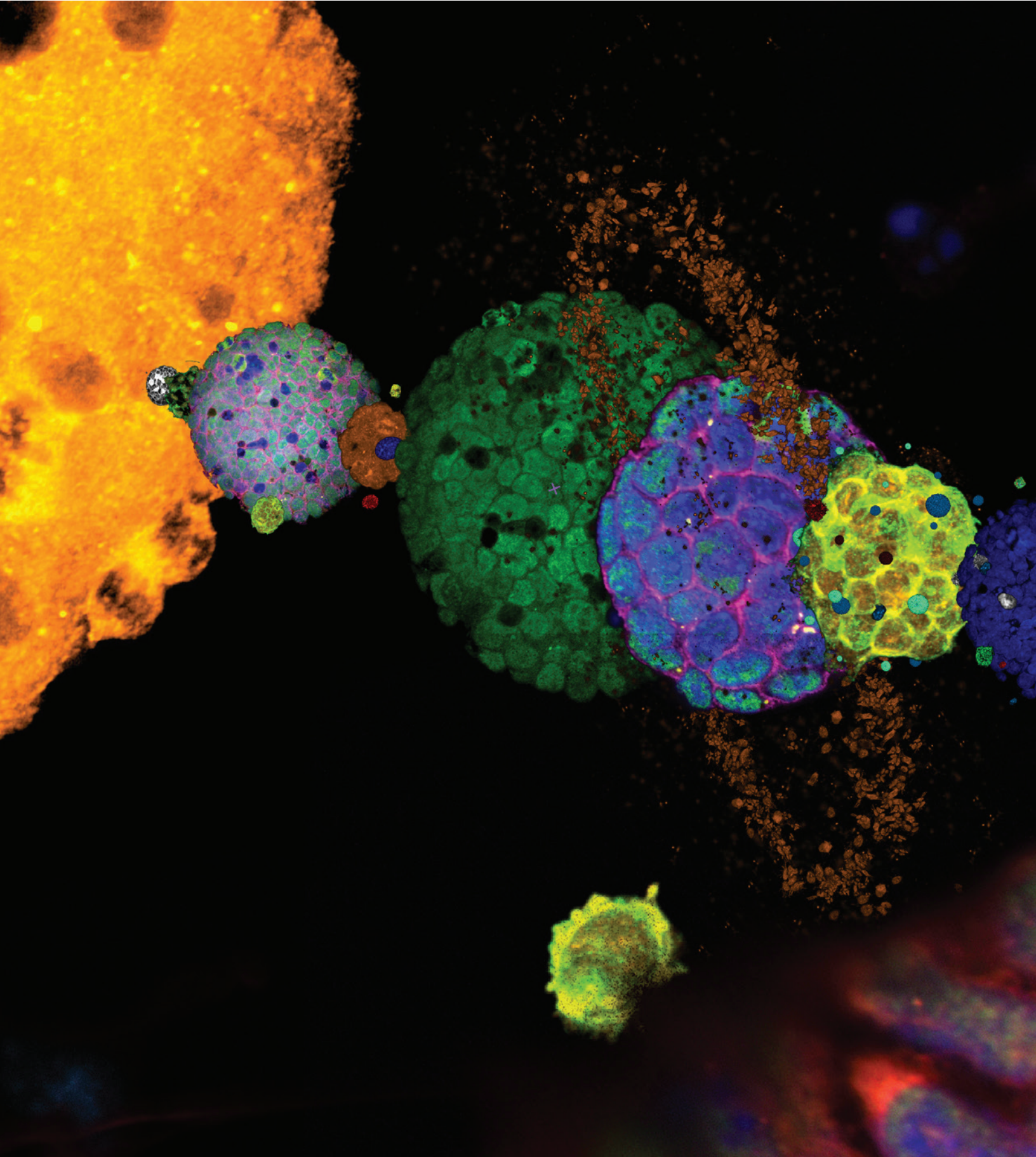
Dr. Véronique Moulin

FOCUS ON: Clinical Trials in Quebec

Since 2016, SCN has supported five cell therapy clinical trials in Quebec valued at nearly \$3.5M. These trials are advancing leading research in the following areas:

- Blood stem cell expansion technology for patients with high-risk blood disorders such as leukemia and multiple myeloma. Three phase I-II clinical trials have been supported.
- Corneal autografts for patients with vision impairments caused by limbal stem cell deficiency. One phase I-II trial is being supported.
- Self-assembled skin substitute for patients with severe burns. One phase I-II trial is being supported.

Dr. Véronique Moulin at Université Laval is advancing a clinical trial on tissue-engineered skin substitutes that can be produced from only a small skin biopsy and could permanently cover an entire burn area. The new skin, referred to as self-assembled skin substitute (SASS), allows the replacement of both layers of skin (dermis and epidermis) in a single surgical procedure. So far, 20 patients in Quebec and Alberta have been treated with SASS, with positive results. With the support from SCN, this clinical trial will be expanded to include patients from five new centres in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario over the next two years. It is expected that the SASS treatment will result in important health and social benefits and if successful, will improve upon the current standard of care – most notably, by decreasing pain for patients and reducing the need for further surgery, while improving the quality of post-burn scars.



The View from Eris | Photo credit: Joshua Dierolf
Grand Prize Winner of the 2019 *Cells I See* art contest at the Till & McCulloch Meetings

Training

Training the next generation has been an integral part of SCN's mandate since its inception. For nearly two decades, SCN has provided approximately 7,000 training opportunities to more than 3,000 trainees and highly qualified personnel (HQP) who will lead and grow Canada's stem cell and regenerative medicine sector. During this fiscal year, SCN developed three streams of training activities: Advanced Scientific and Core Skills; Commercialization and Industry Integration; and Clinical Translation, which are outlined in SCN's Accelerate Strategic Plan 2019-2022. The streams will position trainees for roles within Canada's regenerative medicine industry to successfully move research from bench to bedside.

In 2019-2020, SCN provided 420 learning opportunities for trainees (see Table 7, pages 18-19), which included workshops and seminars offered in all three streams. Trainees were particularly interested in the innovative clinical translation workshops to help improve the quality of translational research projects and increase their likelihood of advancement to the clinic. These workshops also supported a trainee as well as their senior investigator, an uncommon approach that creates 'lab memory,' ensuring that clinical translation principles on the reproducibility of scientific results, and processes to navigate Canada's regulatory landscape were better understood and therefore can be more effectively integrated into lab practices.

Gender Breakdown of HQP who Attended Training Events – 2019-2020

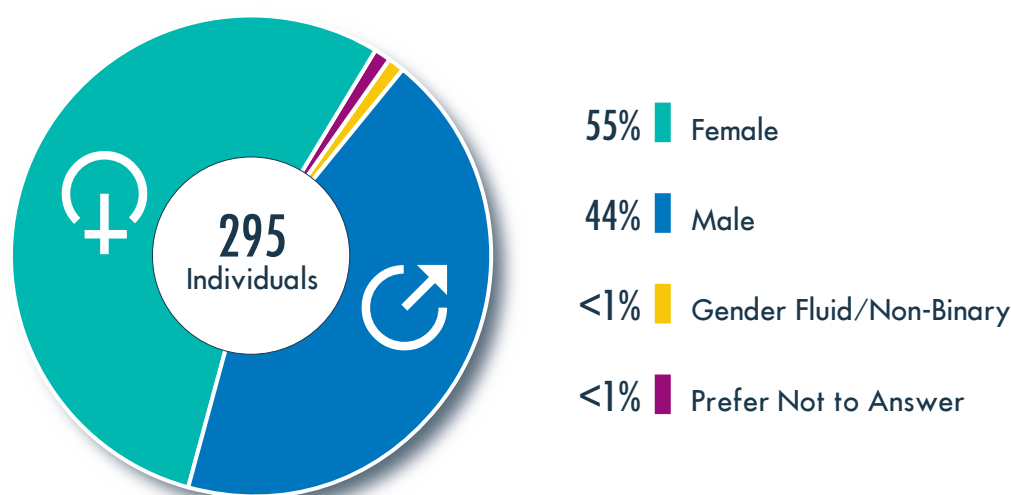


FIGURE 3: 2019-2020 Summary of HQP Gender Breakdown

SCN's training program is not only offered through workshops and conferences, but also comes through hands-on job experience. These next generation investigators are learning from, and working with talented scientists in leading-edge research activities across the nation. This important work is contributing to the development of novel therapies for disease treatments such as diabetes, vision loss, and heart failure.

STEM education and skills continue to play a vital role in Canada's workforce, enabling it to adapt to market needs and compete on an international level. SCN's specialized training and skills development program will strengthen Canada's competitive edge today and tomorrow.

Training Workshops & Opportunities Supported by SCN

In 2019-2020, SCN and its partners supported 11 workshops, courses or other events, providing 420 key training opportunities for 295 individual trainees. During this fiscal year, SCN also provided 13 travel awards to enable HQP from across the country to participate in international conferences.

TRAINING, DESCRIPTION AND PARTNERS	DATE	ATTENDEES
Current Trends in Biotherapeutics This workshop introduced participants to the current trends and disruptive technologies in the biotherapeutics space.	September 27, 2019 <i>BioCanRx, Centre for Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine (CCRM), CellCAN, Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR), Ontario Institute for Regenerative Medicine (OIRM)</i>	50
RNA-Seq Analysis Workshop Participants gained a more in-depth understanding of the design and analysis of OMICS projects by focusing on RNA-Seq, which is being widely adopted in the stem cell community.	October 16-18, 2019 <i>OIRM, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute</i>	16
Good Manufacturing Practice Workshop Attendees learned the essentials of GMP requirements and experienced workflow in a GMP facility.	November 17-19, 2019 <i>CellCAN, Center for Commercialisation of Cancer Immunotherapy (C3i), Centre d'Excellence en Thérapie Cellulaire (CETC)</i>	5
Sex & Gender in Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine Research Webinar Participants learned the importance of considering sex as a biological variable in stem cell research and how sex and gender can be integrated into research.	November 28, 2019 <i>Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Gender & Health</i>	30
UBC Flow Cytometry Course This intensive workshop advanced participants' skills in flow cytometry through hands-on experience and provided an introduction to mass cytometry (CyTOF).	December 3-6, 2019 <i>UBC Flow Cytometry Facility, Biomedical Research Centre</i>	10
Regulatory Steps Workshop The workshop provided participants with an overview of the regulatory landscape and clarified the processes to translate discoveries into clinical trials.	January 16-17, 2020 <i>BioCanRx, OIRM</i>	33

continued on following page

TRAINING, DESCRIPTION AND PARTNERS	DATE	ATTENDEES
Best Practices Workshop	February 25-26, 2020	28
Trainees were provided with foundational knowledge in key areas that are critical to establishing the robust experimental evidence necessary for successful clinical or commercial translation.	<i>CellCAN, OIRM, ThéCell</i>	
TPRM Annual Regenerative Medicine Symposium 2019-2020	April 22-23, 2020	10
This symposium covered broad topics, including: clinical transplant medicine, stem cell therapeutics, commercialization, and ethics and society.	<i>Training Program in Regenerative Medicine (TPRM)</i>	
The 2019 Till & McCulloch Meetings	November 3-6, 2019	160
Attendees learned the essentials of GMP requirements and experienced workflow in a GMP facility.	<i>CCRM</i>	
Scientific Communications Workshop	November 3, 2019	23
This workshop discussed methods to communicate effectively and how best to improve scientific abstracts for higher impact.	<i>SCN's Trainee Communications Committee</i>	
Scientific Innovation Workshop	November 3, 2019	55
Trainees learned how discoveries are translated from the bench to bedside and how academia and industry inform decision making and structure their research to bring innovation to life.	<i>SCN's Trainee Communications Committee</i>	

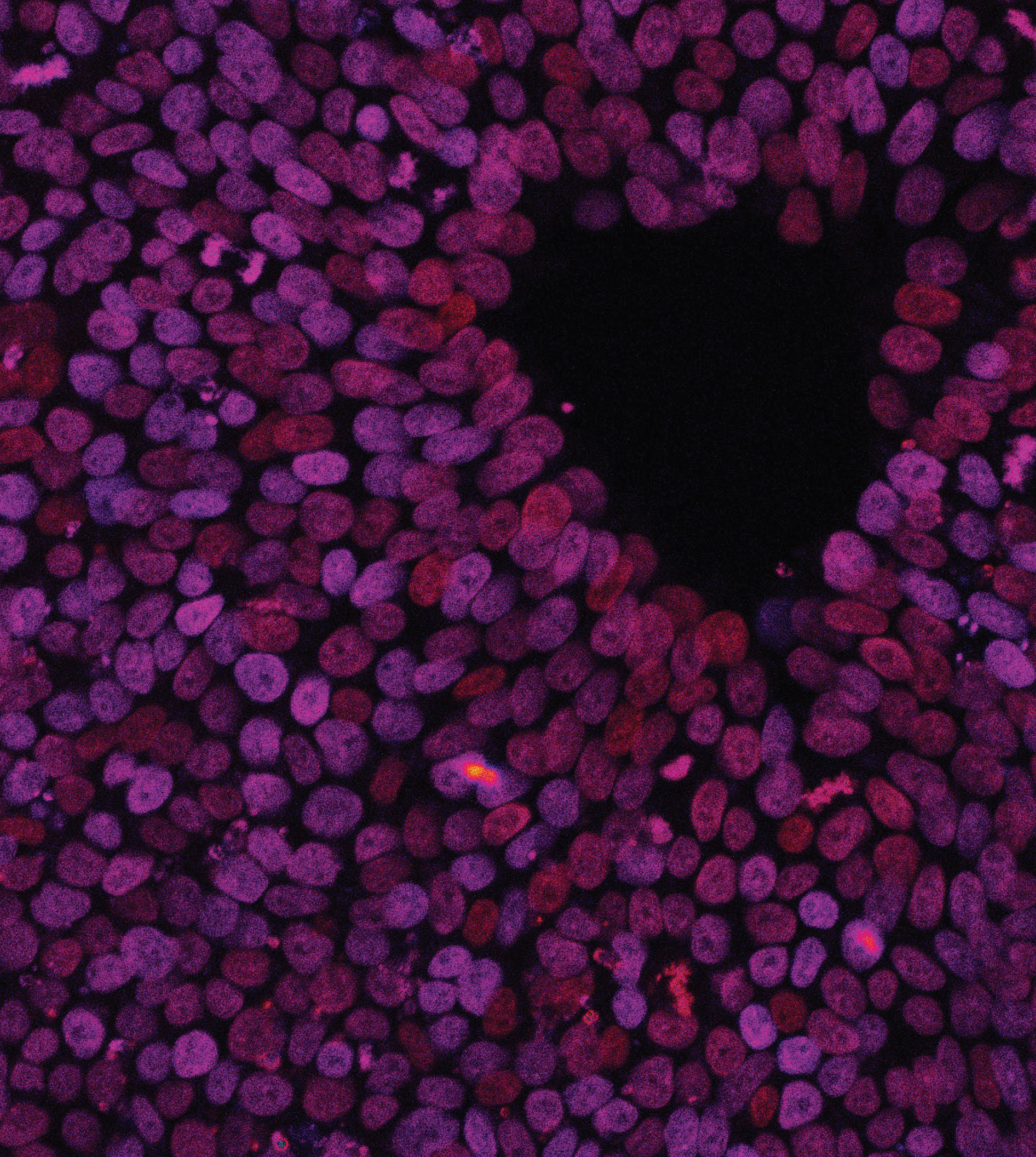
TABLE 7: 2019-2020 Training Workshops and Opportunities Supported by SCN

Trainee Communications Committee

SCN engages with trainees and early-career investigators to incorporate their needs and viewpoints into its annual training events. Established over 10 year ago, SCN's Trainee Communications Committee (TCC) plays a vital role in the development of training programs for the next generation of investigators and highly qualified professionals. TCC members provide insight and recommendations on the types of workshops and skill development activities that would best support trainees in the stem cell and regenerative medicine space and ensure that trainees remain informed about these activities.

In the past fiscal year, the 12-member committee was chaired by Tarryn Bourhill, a PhD candidate from the University of Calgary, and supported by Dr. Kelly McNagy, a talented leader in stem cells and inflammatory diseases from the University of British Columbia.

Trainees make up about half of the attendees at Canada's largest stem cell and regenerative medicine conference, the Till & McCulloch Meetings (TMM), so it represents an ideal opportunity to offer training workshops and facilitate networking. Each year, SCN tasks the TCC to plan and develop a number of activities to meet these objectives. This past year at TMM in Montreal, the TCC worked collaboratively to implement a fantastic suite of ancillary events that included workshops on science communications, clinical translation and the ethical, legal and social implications of stem cell research, as well as a Meet the Experts luncheon.



Your Cells Love You | Photo credit: Elli Kubarakos
Entry in the 2019 *Cells I See* art contest at the Till & McCulloch Meetings

Training Tomorrow's Research Leaders, An Impact Analysis of the Stem Cell Network's Training Program

SCN provides unique, specialized training for highly qualified personnel (HQP) that contributes to their career progression in the Canadian stem cell and regenerative medicine landscape, and ultimately fuels growth in research and industry sectors across the nation. To capture the effectiveness of SCN's training programs over its nearly 20-year history, SCN conducted a comprehensive assessment in 2019 of the career paths of current and former SCN trainees. This assessment formed the basis of a report entitled, Training Tomorrow's Research Leaders: An Impact Analysis of the Stem Cell Network's Training Program that was published in May 2020. The report reviews HQP employment trends based on factors such as sector, gender, and geographic distribution, to assess how SCN training has affected career development.

As part of the assessment, SCN collected employment information from public sources on the internet, using an existing database to identify trainees. A total of 1,500 trainees were tracked, and the resulting data was evaluated based on a number of measures. This work was complemented by a survey sent to trainees to obtain their opinions on the value and impact of SCN training. Selected quotes from the survey are included below.



"The Stem Cell Network (SCN) has enriched my postdoctoral experience in Canada by supporting my participation at both national and international conferences to present stem cell research. Through its workshops, I have learnt many valuable professional skills, including negotiation, and aspects of clinical translation. Undoubtedly, my involvement with the SCN has furthered my resolve to contribute to the expanding Canadian stem cell community."

– Miriel Ho, PhD, Researcher at CReATe Research Inc.



"The SCN is the backbone of the Canadian stem cell community, and participating in its programs enrich [sic] the scientific and professional training of all its members. Cohesion across the country has been foundational for the success of the Canadian stem cell research landscape, and I hope we don't lose out on that for future generations."

– Samantha Yammine, PhD, Founder of Science Sam Media



"The training I received during my time as a SCN trainee was invaluable in helping advance my career. The formal training I received through SCN-led workshops and other opportunities, including oral and poster presentation experience, helped deepen my understanding of the field and hone core academic abilities."

– Amy Zarzeczny, PhD, Assistant Professor,
Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina

The results from the data collected illustrate that former SCN trainees now work in a variety of employment sectors. Over half of trainees currently employed are working in the university, hospital and research institution sector and since 2001, approximately 55% of SCN trainees are women.

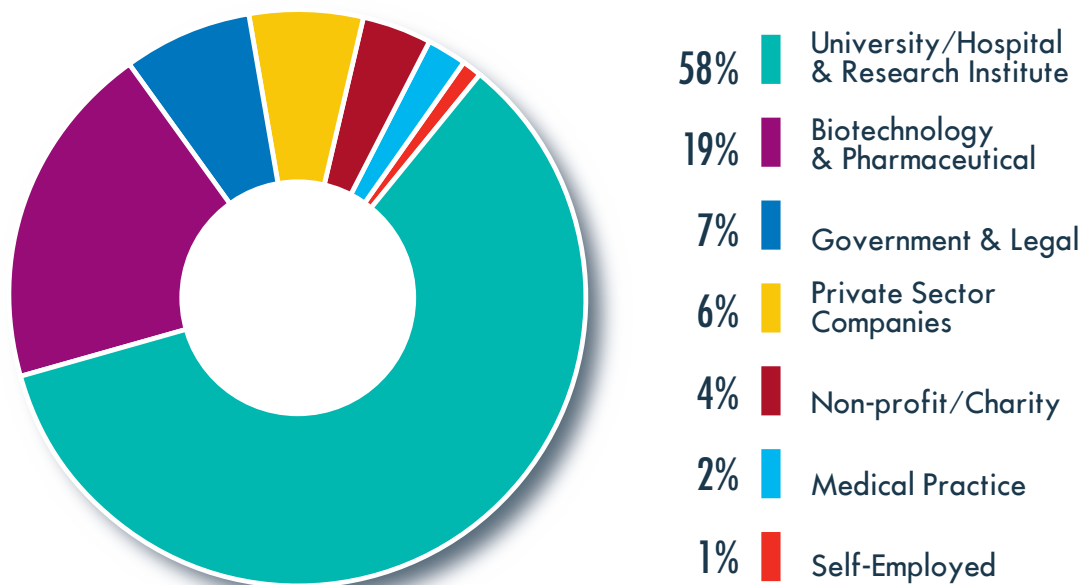


FIGURE 4: Trainee Employment Breakdown

The findings revealed that 80% of trainees identified as Canadians or permanent residents at the time of their training and 82% are currently employed in Canada, demonstrating the robust rate of retention of highly skilled stem cell and regenerative medicine experts.

HQP require every possible advantage to have a successful career. SCN aims to continue supporting them on their journey to become regenerative medicine leaders. SCN will strive to ensure that trainees receive valuable support and are ahead of the curve, with the requisite skills and knowledge to set them up for success in their careers, while also positioning them as highly skilled contributors to, and members of, the Canadian stem cell community.

Today, former trainees are working in impactful positions and adding significant value to the production of academic knowledge and the development of new therapies and novel technologies, forming an integral part of a strong Canadian community driving collaboration and innovation in the stem cell and regenerative medicine field.

Partnership Engagement

In FY2019/20, SCN supported the following events in partnership with other organizations:

Aspect Biosystems – Printing the Future of Therapeutics in 3D

May 7-8, 2019, Vancouver, BC

2019 BC Regenerative Medicine Symposium

May 15, 2019, Vancouver, BC

OIRM Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Symposium

May 15, 2019, Toronto, ON

2019 Cascadia Corridor

Research Symposium

October 24-25, 2019, Victoria, BC

International Standards

Organization (ISO) Meeting

December 2-6, 2019, Toronto, ON

Ontario Biosciences Innovation Organization (OBIO) 2020 Niagara Investment Summit

February 5-7, 2020, Niagara, ON

Partnerships with other organizations have always been integral to SCN's activities. SCN partners with industry, government, and not-for-profit sectors to provide support for stem cell and regenerative medicine collaborations, outreach and training opportunities at various events and workshops.

SCN also works with its partners to foster commercialization wherever possible. In February, 2020, the Network partnered with OBIO to bring SCN investigators to the Niagara Investment Summit. This event brings investors, researchers, angel funders and others together in an intimate setting that encourages networking and catalyzing of new partnerships. SCN also sponsored five biotech companies (profiled within this report) that have benefitted from SCN research funds to attend the Summit. In addition, SCN was able to showcase three other SCN-funded stem cell-based technologies that are preparing to be commercialized. The event was found to be highly valuable as an opportunity to network and learn more about how to develop a Canadian biotech firm successfully.

Innovate UK

In 2020, SCN had the opportunity to meet with the Innovate UK delegation, a business arm of UK Research and Innovation that brings together research innovation funding. Innovate UK was interested to learn about the latest scientific activity taking place across Canada. SCN briefed the delegation about Canada's national research and training ecosystem and highlighted clinical trials and start-ups that have benefitted from being part of the Stem Cell Network community.

The meeting was also a great opportunity for Innovate UK and SCN to discuss how best to build out research partnerships across the Atlantic. It was the start of an important conversation that will continue in the near future as SCN and Innovate UK establish concrete ways to further research collaborations.



Innovate UK visit to Canada, March 3, 2020

Companies to Watch

SCN has played a key role in enhancing the launch or growth of regenerative medicine biotechnology companies that will ultimately bring new products and therapies to market to benefit Canadians.



Tamer Mohamed
President & CEO, Aspect Biosystems

Emerging Leaders



Aspect Biosystems is a privately held biotechnology company, located in Vancouver. Led by co-founder and CEO Tamer Mohamed, it operates at the leading edge of 3D bioprinting and tissue engineering. Aspect's proprietary Lab-on-a-Printer™ platform technology is enabling advances in the understanding of fundamental biology, disease research, the development of novel therapeutics, and regenerative medicine. Aspect is focused on strategically partnering with pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, as well as academic researchers, to create physiologically and commercially relevant tissues. These tissues are used to advance and accelerate drug discovery and development, and enable the creation of cutting-edge tissue therapies of the future.



Dr. Guy Sauvageau,
Co-Founder & CEO, ExCellThera
Anne Marinier, PhD
Scientific Founder, ExCellThera



Montreal-based ExCellThera is at the forefront of global efforts to increase the quality and quantity of healthy blood stem cells available to treat people with blood malignancies. This company is led by Co-Founder and CEO Guy Sauvageau, whose team discovered the UM171 molecule, which can substantially increase the number of stem and immune cells for therapeutic use. ExCellThera's platform combines this molecule with an optimized culture system that allows the rapid preparation of the therapeutic cells. Results from early phase clinical trials show that the technology significantly reduces the complications of transplantation and provides faster and better recovery for patients. With SCN support, ExCellThera has emerged as a Canadian commercialization success and is now expanding its reach into the United States and Europe.

Start-ups



Dr. Massimiliano Paganelli,
Co-Founder & Interim CEO,
Morphocell Technologies

Dr. Claudia Raggi,
Co-Founder & Chief Technology
Officer, Morphocell Technologies



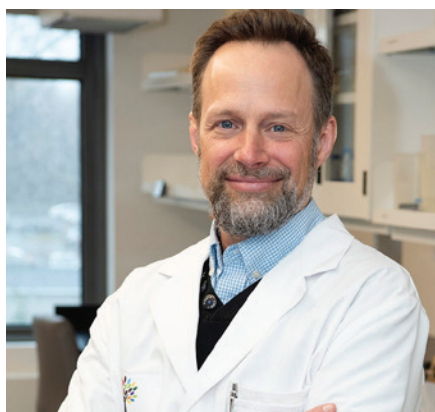
Morphocell Technologies was company founded by Drs. Massimiliano Paganelli and Claudia Raggi in 2018 to develop and commercialize stem cell therapies and engineered tissues aimed at treating liver diseases. Stem Cell Network grants enabled Paganelli and his team to develop stem cell-derived tiny liver organoids, which are encapsulated in a special biomaterial to form a tissue that performs like a human liver. When transplanted into a patient, this tissue, ReLiver™, replaces the key vital functions of the diseased liver, while accelerating its regeneration and healing. This technology has the potential to prevent up to 80% of liver transplants for acute liver failure. The company is seeking to initiate human clinical trials within the next two years.



Michael Rudnicki, O.C., PhD, FRS, FRSC
CSO, Satellos



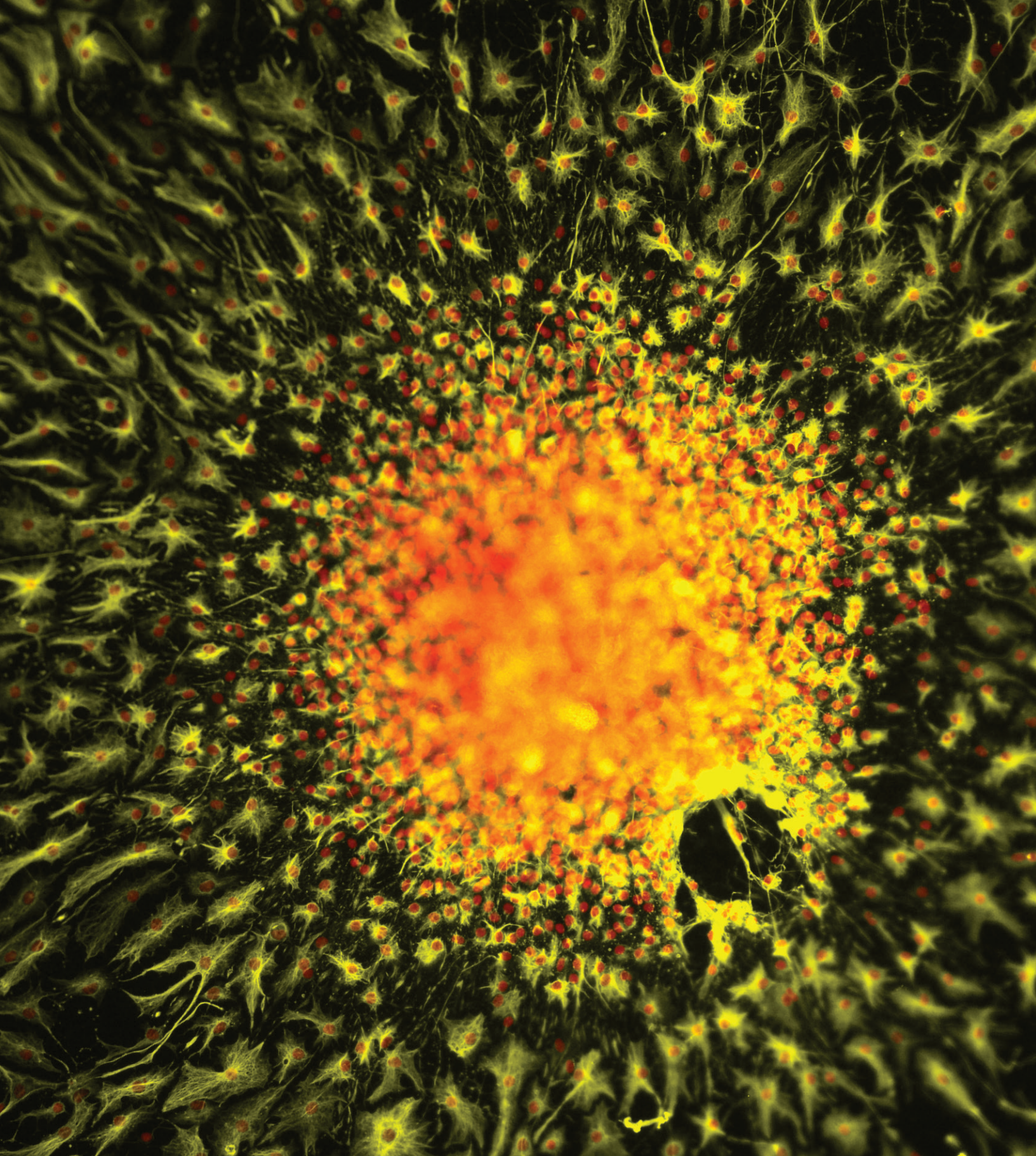
Satellos was founded by Dr. Michael Rudnicki with a platform to regenerate muscle tissue more effectively. Effective muscle repair requires resident stem cells to successfully balance the production of new muscle tissue with replenishment of the stem cell pool. However, this process can become imbalanced by injury, chronic illness, disease or aging, effectively impairing muscle regeneration and function. The Satellos pharmacologic approach restores this balancing act for greater muscle repair and healing. The company has invented novel drug candidates, established a strong management team and is seeking Series A financing to continue development of its unique approach to tissue repair and regeneration for a range of neuromuscular diseases.



Gilbert Bernier, PhD
CEO & Co-Founder, StemAxon



StemAxon, founded by SCN-supported investigator Dr. Gilbert Bernier, is pursuing breakthroughs in both neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, and retinal diseases. The company provides an innovative platform to test compounds against Alzheimer's directly, thereby speeding the discovery of potential new treatments. Through StemAxon, and with the support of SCN, Dr. Bernier is also exploring how neural cell transplantation can treat macular degeneration and other retinal conditions that lead to blindness. Having discovered how to grow stem cells into the cone photoreceptors needed for functional eyesight, Dr. Bernier and the StemAxon team are now in the process of moving their discoveries to the clinic.



Astrocyte Astronomy | Photo credit: Ahmad Galuta
Entry in the 2019 *Cells I See* art contest at the Till & McCulloch Meetings

Community Outreach

The Stem Cell Network engages in and supports community outreach and education activities through funded research, public policy, and by communicating effectively about the potential of stem cell and regenerative medicine to the general public, while also bringing to light the misconceptions surrounding unapproved therapies in this field. SCN also provides tools, training and financial incentives for early-career researchers to engage with the public through public speaking opportunities and specialized programs such as *StemCellTalks*.

StemCellTalks

Educating the next generation about the potential of stem cell and regenerative medicine is crucial. SCN has a longstanding partnership with Let's Talk Science, an organization that promotes STEM research to young people, to expand the understanding of stem cells among high school and undergraduate students from across Canada through *StemCellTalks*. This program is a nationwide initiative in which students learn about stem cell and regenerative medicine from scientists and experts in the field. In FY2019/20, SCN supported nine *StemCellTalks* events, in which more than 1,200 high school students learned about stem cells and regenerative medicine in areas such as cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases (see Table 7 for details).

SITE AND DATE	THEME	PARTICIPANTS
FEBRUARY 2019		
Montreal, QC	Vision	24
APRIL 2019		
Hamilton, ON	Islet Cell Transplantation for Diabetes	87
Ottawa, ON	Crossroads – An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Stem Cells	291
MAY 2019		
London, ON	Stem Cell Therapies for Respiratory Diseases	90
Calgary, AB	Stem Cells and the Immune System	176
Edmonton, AB	Regenerative Medicine	100
Vancouver, BC	Stem Cells and Cancer Immunotherapy	150
FEBRUARY 2020		
Toronto, ON	Applications of Stem Cells in Organoids	125
Guelph, ON	Nutraceuticals: A New Form of Therapy	210
		TOTAL: 1,253

TABLE 7: 2019/20 *StemCellTalks* Locations and Themes

Till & McCulloch Meetings

The Till & McCulloch Meetings (TMM) are Canada's largest stem cell and regenerative medicine conference that dates back to 2001 with the formation of the Stem Cell Network. Initially a smaller, researcher conference, it grew significantly when SCN also invited representatives from industry, government, not-for-profit sectors and most notably, trainees to attend. By 2012, the conference had become a major event in Canada within the sector, and the Centre for Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine (CCRM) came onboard as a co-host.

Fast forward to present day and the Till & McCulloch Meetings continue as Canada's premier stem cell research event gathering stem cell scientists, clinicians, ethicists and policy-experts as well as industry representatives from Canada and abroad. The event showcases Canada's place in the global stem cell ecosystem and provides attendees with unparalleled opportunities to network, knowledge exchange and hear about the latest scientific advancements.

In 2019, TMM was held in Montreal with the support of 27 sponsors, representing industry and NGOs. The program attracted more than 500 delegates from across Canada and internationally — the highest attendance since the Meetings' inception. More than half of the delegates were trainees, who engaged in valuable professional development activities through poster and oral presentations, workshops and learning about career opportunities within and outside of academia.



(L) Neemat Mahmud and
(R) Dr. Freda Miller

The prestigious Till & McCulloch Award, created in honour of Drs. James Till and Ernest McCulloch, is presented annually to a Canadian-based researcher who has made an exceptional contribution to global stem cell research in that year. In 2019, Dr. Freda Miller, from the Hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto, accepted the award for her research discovery in tissue repair and regeneration. The fourth annual Drew Lyall Award of Excellence was awarded to Neemat Mahmud, a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto in recognition of her top-ranked abstract on limb regeneration (profiled on page 14).



The 2020 Meetings will take place virtually from October 26 to 28.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The Stem Cell Network recognizes the importance of valuing and supporting fair treatment, showing respect, and recognizing the unique qualities of all. However, SCN also understands that obstacles to EDI still persist in the stem cell and regenerative medicine field. As part of our initiative to reduce these barriers, SCN hosted four events on this topic in 2019-20, drawing a total of more than 300 participants. Held in Vancouver, Toronto and at the Till & McCulloch Meetings in Montreal, the events focused on a variety of topics related to diversity and encouraged the participation of men in EDI activities and conversations.

The Vancouver breakfast event was held in partnership with BCRegMed and addressed the challenges of diversity and inclusion, including those in the LGBTQ+ community which brought together just over 40 participants. Building on this conversation, SCN hosted “A Focus on Diversity” luncheon in Toronto with experts on EDI such as Dr. Imogen Coe who spoke about both positive and negative experiences that are occurring in the research sector, and how unconscious bias is at the root of our behaviours. Presentations about mental health in the lab and LGBTQ+ were also highlighted and provided participants with more knowledge about the subject area.

Three additional sessions were held at the Till & McCulloch Meetings in Montreal. One of these events featured EDI professional Kelly Nolan, who discussed how people can think and work inclusively, and outlined methods for breaking the exclusion habit. Ms. Nolan also led a closed session with SCN’s Board of Directors on the topic of unconscious bias. Finally, more than 70 attendees filled a Women in Regenerative Medicine luncheon to hear noted Canadian expert Shari Graydon share six strategies to activate women’s voices in society, communication tips, followed by a round table discussion for attendees to share challenges they’ve faced within the stem cell and regenerative medicine sector. The events were successful and well received.

SCN will continue to host EDI events with a focus on building allies, to support those who are under-represented or who are at risk of discrimination. SCN intends to offer tailored workshops and presentations on this issue and other EDI concerns, in partnership with Medicine by Design, BCRegMed and others.

“Thought-provoking and evidence-packed presentation by Kelly Nolan on the business case for equality, diversity and inclusion.”

“Women in regenerative medicine with Shari is so empowering! Practical tips to communicate. Showing smart women how to speak their minds!”



Women in Regenerative Medicine luncheon with Shari Graydon at the 2019 Till & McCulloch Meetings

Online Activity

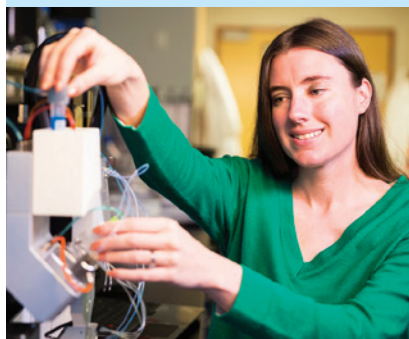
More than ever, web-based communications today play a vital role in the dissemination of information. SCN continues to ensure that its online activities are both engaging and relevant, that they reflect the current best practices, and provide timely information on the latest scientific advancements, workshops, training opportunities and much more. This past year, SCN reached a benchmark on Twitter, surpassing 20,000 followers; it also had more than 1,500 subscribers to its monthly CellLines newsletter.

In FY2019/20, SCN continued its successful Twitter live interviews to keep the research community and broader public informed about the latest scientific advancements, and the promise that stem cell and regenerative medicine holds. The various stem cell and regenerative medicine related topics included researchers from across Canada, a patient advocate and an international perspective with the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine.

Twitter Live Interviews:



May 6, 2019



Future of science and medicine using 3D printing
Stephanie Willerth, PhD,
University of Victoria

1,100 views

October 17, 2019



Importance of sex in stem cell research
Cindi Morshead, PhD,
University of Toronto

308 views

October 22, 2019



Stem cells and muscular dystrophy
Michael Rudnicki, O.C., PhD, FRS, FRSC,
Stem Cell Network

879 views

November 4, 2019



Making space for patients in research
Geoff Lomax,
California Institute for
Regenerative Medicine

333 views

November 5, 2019



Patient 1 in a stem cell clinical trial
Kerry Elliot,
type 1 diabetes patient

623 views

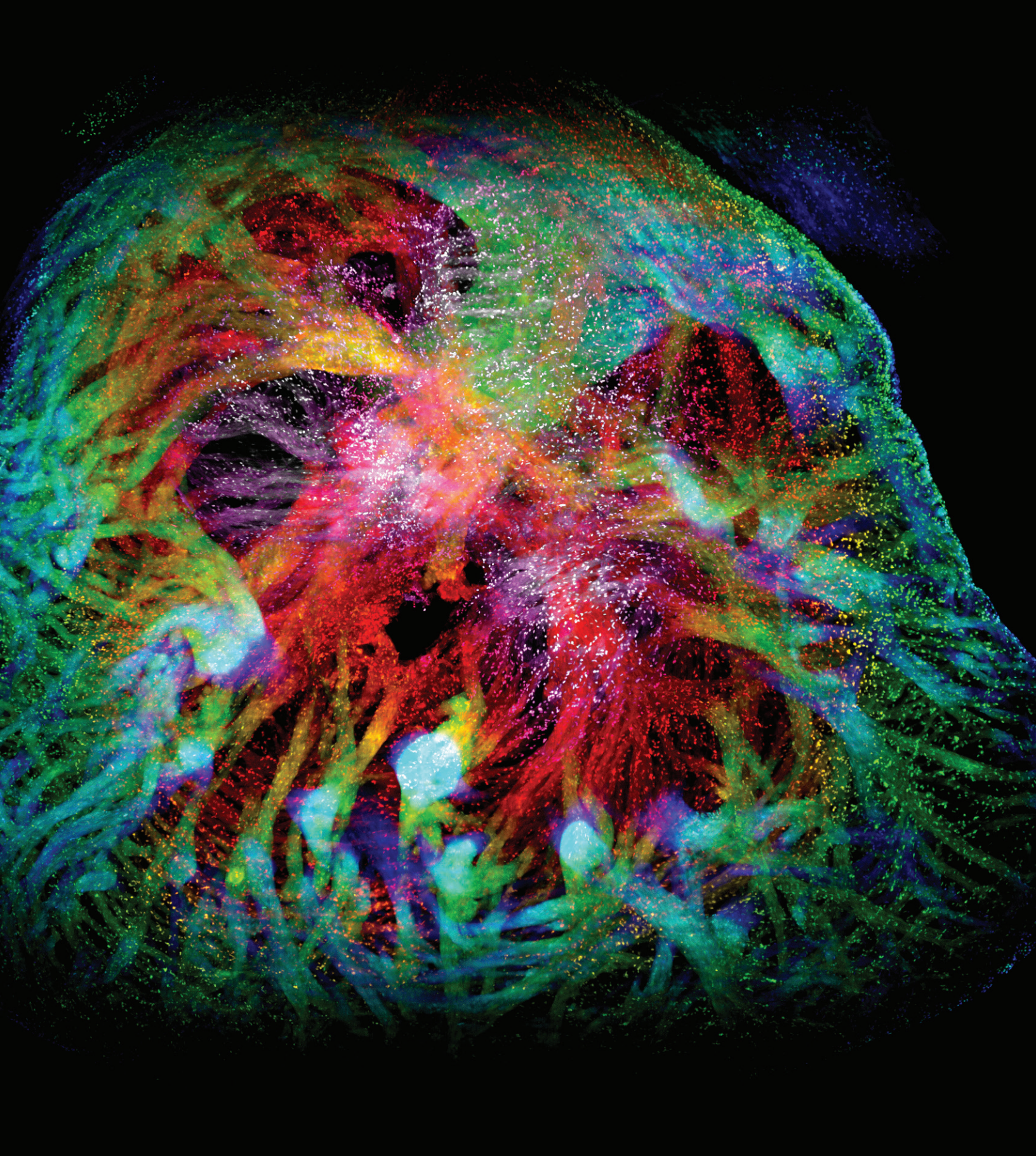
A Look Ahead

As the fiscal year came to a close, the world was in the midst of a global health pandemic. Since that time, the SARS-CoV2 virus has continued to change the way we work, connect and conduct research. In spring 2020, SCN moved quickly to support its community by taking immediate steps, including: extending the timelines for our Round 2 Research Program competition; launching a rapid-response research initiative; working with partners to move training programs online; and issuing a public statement on unproven therapies for the treatment of COVID-19.

Stemming from the rapid-response call for projects, SCN was able to fund a clinical trial and two research projects focused on treating COVID-19 and understanding the impact of the virus on the lungs and brain. SCN's commitment for this initiative is valued at \$675,870, with partner support of \$2,279,593, bringing the full investment to \$2,955,463. In addition, SCN saw excellent uptake of its Round 2 funding competition, receiving over 50 applications. These applications will be peer reviewed over the spring-summer of 2020, and results will be announced in the fall of 2020. Through this competition, SCN is looking forward to catalyzing new research by early-career investigators, and furthering translational research, which will ultimately result in new regenerative medicine therapies and treatments.

One of the annual highlights is the Till & McCulloch Meetings, which brings together the stem cell and regenerative medicine community from across Canada and abroad to network, learn and share research advances. This year the event will be held virtually, with the goal of providing interactive forums that will continue to inspire research collaborations and innovation. We are excited about the conference and look forward to delivering an online experience that provides value for all involved.

The Stem Cell Network remains steadfast in its commitment to deliver on its mandate and the programs outlined in its three-year strategic plan, *ACCELERATE*. SCN has the track record, expertise and ability to deliver on the promise and power of stem cells, and will provide Canada's stem cell research community with the support and leadership needed to drive regenerative medicine forward. We look forward to the challenges ahead and will continue to realize success through a culture that embraces equity, diversity and inclusion, and, above all else, research excellence.



Rainbow Heart | Photo credit: Hesham Soliman & Elena Groppa
Entry in the 2019 *Cells I See* art contest at the Till & McCulloch Meetings

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ERIKA KLEIDERMAN

Academic Associate, McGill University

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PhD Candidate, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

KELLY MCNAGNY

Professor, University of British Columbia

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Academic Associate, McGill University

KELLY MCNAGNY

Professor, University of British Columbia

STEM CELL NETWORK

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

MARCH 31, 2020

STEM CELL NETWORK

CONTENTS

MARCH 31, 2020

	Page
Independent Auditors' Report	1 - 2
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Revenue and Expenditures	4
Statement of Changes in Net Assets	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Notes to Financial Statements	7 - 12



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Members of Stem Cell Network:

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Stem Cell Network (the "SCN"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2020, and the statements of revenue and expenditures, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the SCN as at March 31, 2020, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNFPPO).

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the SCN in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

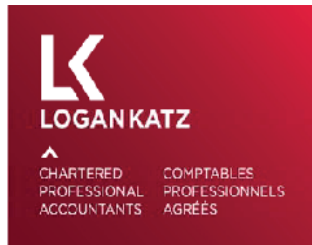
Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with ASNFPPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing these financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the SCN's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to a going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the SCN or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the SCN's financial reporting process.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT (continued)

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements (continued)

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the SCN's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the SCN's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the SCN to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure, and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during the audit.

Logan Katz LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants

Ottawa, Canada
June 22, 2020

Logan Katz LLP | SRL 105-6 ch. Gurdwara Rd, Ottawa, ON K2E 8A3 | 613.228.8282 | logankatz.com

STEM CELL NETWORK

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT MARCH 31, 2020

	2020	2019
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 1,055,713	\$ 673,472
Accounts receivable	35,372	43,744
Harmonized sales taxes recoverable	23,992	36,631
Prepaid expenditures	78,589	235,632
	1,193,666	989,479
RESTRICTED CASH EQUIVALENTS (Note 2)	50,000	50,000
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 3)	17,601	14,660
	\$ 1,261,267	\$ 1,054,139
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (Note 4)	\$ 42,870	\$ 12,808
Deferred revenue	5,000	-
	47,870	12,808
DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS (Note 5)	77,527	241,524
NET ASSETS		
Invested in property and equipment	17,601	14,660
Unrestricted	1,068,269	735,147
Externally restricted (Note 2)	50,000	50,000
	1,135,870	799,807
	\$ 1,261,267	\$ 1,054,139

Commitments (Note 6)
Economic dependence (Note 9)
Financial instruments (Note 10)
Subsequent event (Note 11)

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:

STEM CELL NETWORK

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

	2020	2019
REVENUE		
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada Grant (Note 5)	\$ 6,163,997	\$ 5,845,482
Networks of Centres of Excellence Grant	-	25,000
Annual conference sponsorship and registration	494,882	432,328
Contributed services in-kind (Note 8)	71,280	71,280
Interest	63,254	18,119
	6,793,413	6,392,209
EXPENDITURES		
Administration and general support (Notes 7 and 8)	493,807	508,155
Amortization	8,196	4,990
Annual conference (Note 7)	693,437	623,317
Business development	11,322	10,953
Communication and outreach (Note 7)	556,530	552,823
Research programs (Note 7)	4,364,273	4,198,991
SCN board and committees	76,842	6,720
Training program (Note 7)	248,556	120,289
Workshops	4,387	21,246
	6,457,350	6,047,484
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES	\$ 336,063	\$ 344,725

STEM CELL NETWORK

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

	2020				2019	
	Invested in Property and Equipment	Unrestricted	Externally Restricted	Total	Total	
BALANCES AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 14,660	\$ 735,147	\$ 50,000	\$ 799,807	\$ 455,082	
Excess of revenue over expenditures	-	336,063	-	336,063	344,725	
Amortization of property and equipment	(8,196)	8,196	-	-	-	
Acquisition of property and equipment	11,137	(11,137)	-	-	-	
BALANCES AT END OF YEAR	\$ 17,601	\$ 1,068,269	\$ 50,000	\$ 1,135,870	\$ 799,807	

STEM CELL NETWORK

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

	2020	2019
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 336,063	\$ 344,725
Adjustments for:		
Amortization	8,196	4,990
Recognition of deferred contributions	(6,163,997)	(5,845,482)
Changes in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	8,372	(789)
Harmonized sales taxes recoverable	12,639	(7,259)
Prepaid expenditures	157,043	(148,626)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	30,062	(37,421)
Deferred revenue	5,000	(34,441)
	(5,606,622)	(5,724,303)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from deferred contributions	6,000,000	6,000,000
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Acquisition of property and equipment	(11,137)	(14,588)
INCREASE IN CASH	382,241	261,109
Cash position at beginning of year	673,472	412,363
CASH POSITION AT END OF YEAR	\$ 1,055,713	\$ 673,472

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

GENERAL

The Stem Cell Network ("SCN") was established on November 19, 2001 as an independent not-for-profit corporation and accordingly, is exempt from income taxes. The mission of SCN is to be a catalyst for enabling translation of stem cell research into clinical applications, commercial products or public policy.

As of March 19, 2019, SCN was approved for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada ("ISED") funding of \$18,000,000 for fiscal years 2020 to 2022 inclusive.

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations ("ASNFO") and include the following significant accounting policies:

Revenue Recognition

SCN follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which related expenditures are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Grants

Grant revenue represents funds received from the federal government for specific initiatives administered by SCN. Grant revenue is recognized as revenue when costs are incurred in relation to the specific initiatives. Grant funds that have not been fully spent at year end are reported as deferred contributions.

Annual conference sponsorship and registration

Registration fees and sponsorships to events, including the conference, are recognized as revenue in the year the event is held.

Interest

Amounts received for interest income are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Contributed Services In-Kind

Because of the difficulty of determining their fair value, contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements unless a fair value can be reasonably estimated, the services are used in the normal course of operations and the provider of the services has explicitly defined the value of the services to SCN.

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Research Programs Expenses

Costs relating to research programs are recorded as expenses when they become payable. The research grants are determined to become payable at the time when the board of directors approves the grant and the grant recipient investigator has submitted a signed acceptance of award and related documentation formally acknowledging the grant. Research grants that have been identified as payments in future periods are disclosed as commitments.

Should the recipients of the grants not fulfill their obligations, the funding will need to be returned to SCN. The return of funding is accounted for as a reduction to the research grant expenditure when it is determined by the board to become repayable.

Allocation of Expenses

SCN allocates subcontractors and salaries and benefits to applicable programs based on an estimate of the percentage of time spent on the program.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, cash held on deposit with a Canadian chartered bank and highly liquid investments with original maturities of twelve months or less, including cashable guaranteed investment certificates. The fair value of cash equivalents approximates the amounts shown in the financial statements.

Foreign Currency Transactions

SCN uses the temporal method to translate its foreign currency transactions.

Monetary assets and liabilities are translated at the rate of exchange in effect at year end. Other assets and liabilities are translated at their historic rates. Items appearing in the statement of revenue and expenditures are translated at average year rates. Exchange gains and losses are included in the statement of revenue and expenditures.

Property and Equipment

Property and equipment are recorded at cost. Amortization is provided using the straight-line basis over the following periods:

Leasehold improvements	3 years
Computer equipment	3 years
Furniture and fixtures	3 years

Amortization of an asset commences in the month of acquisition. No amortization is recorded in the month of disposal.

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

1. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Financial Instruments

Measurement of financial instruments

SCN initially measures its financial assets and liabilities at fair value. SCN subsequently measures all its financial assets and financial liabilities at amortized cost.

Financial assets measured at amortized cost include cash, accounts receivable, and restricted cash equivalents.

Financial liabilities measured at amortized cost include accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

Impairment

Financial assets measured at amortized cost are tested for impairment when there are indicators of impairment. The amount of the write-down is recognized in the statement of revenue and expenditures. The previously recognized impairment loss may be reversed to the extent of the improvement, directly or by adjusting the allowance account, provided it is no greater than the amount that would have been reported at the date of the reversal had the impairment not been recognized previously. The amount of the reversal is recognized in the statement of revenue and expenditures. The accounts receivable is netted by an allowance for doubtful accounts of \$Nil (2019 - \$Nil).

Transaction Costs

Transaction costs are financing fees or costs that are directly attributable to the financial assets or financial liabilities origination, acquisition, issuance or assumption. Transaction costs relating to financial assets or financial liabilities that are carried at amortized cost or cost are netted against the carrying value of the assets or liabilities and then recognized over the expected life of the instrument using the effective interest method. All other transaction costs are recognized in the statement of revenue and expenditures in the period incurred.

Use of Estimates

These financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with ASNFPO and accordingly, require management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amount of revenues and expenditures during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from these estimates. The significant estimates in the financial statements include the estimated useful lives of property and equipment, allowance for doubtful accounts, the potential recovery of research grants awarded, the amount of certain accrued liabilities and the allocation of salaries and benefits to applicable programs.

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

2. RESTRICTED CASH EQUIVALENTS

Restricted cash equivalents are amounts invested in a non-redeemable guaranteed investment certificate (GIC) which is held by SCN's bank as collateral for their credit card account. The non-redeemable GIC bears interest at 0.5% and matures on March 19, 2021.

3. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

	2020		2019	
	Cost	Accumulated Amortization	Net	Net
Computer equipment	\$ 44,851	\$ 40,032	\$ 4,819	\$ 4,704
Furniture and fixtures	10,356	3,708	6,648	9,956
Leasehold improvements	8,497	2,363	6,134	-
	\$ 63,704	\$ 46,103	\$ 17,601	\$ 14,660

4. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES

SCN does not have any government remittances owing at year end.

5. DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada ("ISED")

SCN was approved for ISED funding for \$6 million per year commencing fiscal 2020 under the terms of the ISED program, ending March 31, 2022.

ISED funds are managed in accordance with the funding guidelines contained in the funding agreement between ISED and SCN, whereby the funding transits directly to SCN.

The changes in the deferred contributions balance for the period are as follows:

	2020	2019
Balance at beginning of period	\$ 241,524	\$ 87,006
Restricted contributions received	6,000,000	6,000,000
Amount recognized as revenue	(6,163,997)	(5,845,482)
Balance at end of period	\$ 77,527	\$ 241,524

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

6. COMMITMENTS

SCN has agreed to provide funding for research and grants related to various programs, trials and studies that are not accrued in SCN's financial statements as they are not yet payable. SCN future commitments related to these research grants amount to \$8,146,877 and are scheduled as follows:

2021	\$ 4,017,256
2022	4,129,621

7. ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES

Subcontractors and salaries and benefits of \$900,568 (2019 - \$891,161) have been allocated as follows:

	2020			2019
	Subcontractors	Salaries and benefits	Total	Total
Administration and general support	\$ -	\$ 314,435	\$ 314,435	\$ 348,261
Annual conference	-	27,348	27,348	31,796
Communication and outreach	10,914	320,799	331,713	281,708
Research programs	-	111,339	111,339	197,600
Training program	-	115,733	115,733	31,796
	\$ 10,914	\$ 889,654	\$ 900,568	\$ 891,161

8. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Under an agreement, the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute ("OHRI") provides administrative support services as well as office space and furniture without charging SCN. The value of the in-kind contributions received for services is estimated to be \$71,280 (2019 - \$71,280) and is recorded in administration and general support expenditures.

9. ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

SCN received ISEDC funds under a three year funding agreement. Revenues pertaining to this grant account for 91% (2019 - 91%) of SCN's revenue.

STEM CELL NETWORK

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

10. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Risks

It is management's opinion that SCN is not exposed to significant credit risk, interest rate risk or concentrations of risk through its financial instruments. The following analysis provides a measure of SCN's risk exposure as at the statement of financial position date:

Currency Risk

Currency risk is the risk that the fair value of future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in foreign exchange rates.

SCN holds activities in foreign countries and as such is exposed to the fluctuations of foreign and Canadian currencies.

Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that an entity will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. SCN is exposed to this risk mainly in respect of its accounts payable and accrued liabilities. SCN manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its requirements through use of budgets and cash forecasts.

Credit Facility

SCN has access to \$50,000 secured credit on a credit card, bearing interest at 19.99% per annum, for which the balance is required to be fully paid on a monthly basis. The credit used at March 31, 2020 amounts to \$14,093 (2019 - \$Nil) and is included in the balance of accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

11. SUBSEQUENT EVENT

In January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak to constitute a public health emergency of international concern. The COVID-19 outbreak has caused disruptions to operations. The extent of the impact of COVID-19 on SCN's operational and financial performance will depend on certain developments, including the duration and spread of the outbreak, and its impact on employees and vendors all of which are uncertain and cannot be predicted. As such, the extent to which COVID-19 may impact SCN's financial condition or results of operations cannot be reasonably estimated at this time.



**STEM CELL
NETWORK**

Tomorrow's health is here.