



European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy

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www.esgct.org

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Dear Colleague,

Convincing evidence continues to emerge from clinical trials that gene and cell therapy is effective in patients suffering from a wide range of diseases. Historic trials that were conducted in Europe demonstrate that children afflicted by life-threatening genetic diseases can now essentially lead normal lives after being treated by gene therapy. Recently, it has been shown that blind people can start to see following gene therapy. These few selected examples clearly indicate that the momentum in this field is building up.

Given the current global economic challenges it is even more important than ever to find sustainable solutions to treat diseases of high unmet medical need. It is therefore essential to continue to invest in gene and cell therapy since it may ultimately offer sustainable solutions, particularly for hereditary diseases but also for cancer, cardiovascular disease and neurodegenerative disorders, just to name a few. At the same token, many other biomedical disciplines are harvesting the fruits of the technologies that gene therapists are continuously developing. For instance, the recent development of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) for regenerative medicine is intrinsically linked to the concept of "genetic reprogramming". Other areas of translational research in which the gene delivery technologies are playing an increasingly important role is the field of RNA interference. However, despite these successes, the field has also faced some setbacks. Such challenges are not unique to gene therapy but are inherent to translational research in general. Fortunately, these hurdles are not insurmountable and it is important to take on these challenges, otherwise one risks throwing the baby away with the bathwater. Indeed, many recent successes in gene and cell therapy could be ascribed to the continuous improvement of gene transfer technologies.

The primary objectives of the European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy (ESGCT) are to:

- promote basic and clinical research in gene and cell therapy,
- facilitate education and the exchange of information and technologies related to gene transfer and therapy; and
- help forge collaborations in this multidisciplinary field.

ESGCT also serves as a professional adviser to the community and to the regulatory bodies and evaluation agencies, including the European Medical Agency (EMA) Committee of Advanced Therapeutics (CAT). From a small working group established in 1992 it has grown into one of the leading societies in gene & cell transfer with membership standing at over 600. The ESGCT Annual Congress provides a unique opportunity to interact with all the relevant stakeholders in this dynamic and exciting field at the forefront of biomedical research and clinical development. ESGCT also interfaces effectively with other national and international societies with a vested interest in gene and cell therapy. The continued success of the annual ESGCT gene therapy conference and the increasing number of attendees parallels the exciting developments in the field. I would like to invite all scientists, clinicians and representatives from industry, patient organisations and regulatory agencies with an interest in gene and cell therapy to join ESGCT as members and to participate in our Annual Congress. All together we can make a real difference in the hope to ultimately cure diseases by gene and cell therapy and alleviate human suffering...

Thierry VandenDriessche
President European Society of Gene & Cell Therapy



For further information on the European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy please contact
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