

Media Contact: Sally Stewart
Telephone: 310-248-6566
E-mail: sally.stewart@cshs.org

STEM CELL AND NEUROBIOLOGY EXPERT CLIVE SVENDSEN, PH.D. JOINS CEDARS-SINAI TO HEAD NEW REGENERATIVE MEDICINE INSTITUTE

LOS ANGELES (May 28, 2009) – Clive N. Svendsen, joint leader of the widely-respected Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Center at the University of Wisconsin, has been named director of the new [Cedars-Sinai](#) Regenerative Medicine Institute, effective Dec. 1, 2009.

Currently a professor of neurology and anatomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and consulting professor at Stanford University, Svendsen's groundbreaking research focuses on both modeling and treating neurodegenerative disorders such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) and Parkinson's disease using a combination of stem cells and powerful growth factors. As director of the National Institutes of Health-funded Stem Cell Training Program at University of Wisconsin-Madison and editor of the Encyclopedia of Stem Cell Research, he has also had a longstanding interest in stem cell education, public policy and community outreach.

Under Svendsen's direction, the Cedars-Sinai Regenerative Medicine Institute will bring together basic scientists with specialist clinicians, physician scientists and translational scientists across multiple medical specialties to translate fundamental stem cell studies to therapeutic regenerative medicine. The Institute will be housed in new state-of-the-art laboratories being constructed for stem cell and regenerative medicine research. At the heart of the Institute will be a specialized core facility for the production of pluripotent stem cells (capable of making all tissues in the human body) from adult human skin biopsies. Cells produced within the Institute would be used in a variety of Cedars-Sinai Medical [research programs](#) (initially focusing on understanding the causes of and finding treatments for diseases of the brain, heart, eye, liver, kidney, pancreas and skeletal structures, as well as cancer and metabolic disorders).

"Under Dr. Svendsen's inspiring leadership, Cedars-Sinai will integrate all of our stem cell research into one streamlined translational effort. The synergy of our clinical strengths and the scientific expertise of Dr. Svendsen will empower us to accomplish unparalleled medical advances," said Shlomo Melmed, MD, senior vice president of academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Cedars-Sinai. "This is an exciting time in regenerative medicine and we look forward to understanding more about disease and discovering new treatments for our patients that will emanate from stem cell research."

"I was attracted to join Cedars-Sinai because of the medical center's strong commitment to translational medicine, its outstanding faculty and resources, and its willingness and ability to move research from the lab to the patient as quickly as possible," Svendsen said. "Stem cell therapies offer new hope to patients with many life-threatening diseases, but require the integration of both basic and clinical scientists along with a careful balance of hype and hope in this very emotive field. We plan to recruit some of the best researchers to join with the current Cedars-Sinai physicians and scientists to ensure that Cedars-Sinai will be at the forefront of this endeavor."

(more)

Although the Regenerative Medicine Institute is new, in recent years Cedars-Sinai scientists have already initiated basic and clinical experimental studies involving adult stem cells in areas such as cardiology and neurosurgery, liver disease and connective tissue dysfunctions.

Svendsen, a native of Sidmouth, England, has seen dozens of his research studies published in prestigious medical journals including Science and Nature. He is at the forefront of the national effort to translate stem cell science to the betterment of patients. Following a productive research period at Harvard in his early years, Svendsen then earned his doctoral degree at the University of Cambridge in England studying neural growth factors – proteins that control the growth and survival of neurons in the brain and spinal cord. Since then he has been fascinated by the idea of regenerating or replacing dying tissues in the body using a combination of growth factors and stem cells. His latest translational work is focused on the generation of a clinical grade bank of human neural stem cells releasing growth factors which could be used to treat diseases such as Parkinson's and ALS in the future. But it was a recent discovery by his friend, collaborator and renowned stem cell biologist James Thomson at the University of Wisconsin that moved his lab in a new direction.

"When Jamie Thomson showed that you could take adult human skin cells and reprogram them back to an embryonic state, it changed the way I thought about biology" Svendsen said. The Svendsen and Thomson laboratories went on to generate and characterize these induced pluripotent stem cells from a child with spinal muscular atrophy, a severe neurological disorder that causes paralysis by a child's first birthday due to a loss of motor neurons in the spinal cord. "We were amazed to see that the cells could generate motor neurons that underwent the same disease process seen in the babies" Svendsen said. "We can now replay the disease over and over again in the culture dish and begin to ask questions about how this happens, and perhaps find drugs to prevent it. It's revolutionary science." In addition to his translational work, Svendsen hopes to use this technique in collaboration with Cedars-Sinai faculty to model many other disorders of the human body.

Svendsen will always look back at his time in Wisconsin with fond memories. "It has been an amazing experience - - surrounded by really great scientists and clinicians working at the cutting edge of stem cell biology. I will miss all of my friends, but hope to keep strong ties with my many colleagues through continued collaborations with the Cedars-Sinai Regenerative Medicine Institute."

For more information, visit <http://www.cedars-sinai.edu>.

###