BioSpectrum
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

BlueRock Therapeutics strengthens collaboration with McEwen Stem Cell Institute

08 December 2018 | News

The partnership encompasses an operations and infrastructure expansion. BlueRock will be moving into an additional 14,000 square feet within UHN in Toronto's MaRS Discovery District, co-located with the McEwen Institute.



BlueRock Therapeutics, LP, an engineered cell therapy company leveraging its novel *Cell+Gene* platform to develop regenerative medicines for intractable diseases, has announced the strengthening of its ongoing strategic collaboration with the McEwen Stem Cell Institute at the University Health Network (UHN) in Toronto.

"Toronto is an incredible scientific ecosystem and a world-renowned center for stem cell biology and regenerative medicine," said Emile Nuwaysir, PhD, Chief Executive Officer of BlueRock Therapeutics. "The McEwen Stem Cell Institute at UHN is the epicenter of that ecosystem, and we have been very pleased with our relationship to date. The expansion of that partnership deepens the relationship, broadens our access to that foundational science and accelerates the development of our therapeutic programs."

The partnership encompasses an operations and infrastructure expansion. BlueRock will be moving into an additional 14,000 square feet within UHN in Toronto's MaRS Discovery District, co-located with the McEwen Institute. The new lab will be in close proximity to the already established 7,000 square foot faculty housing BlueRock process development and manufacturing teams as well as the new pilot Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) facility, which will open in early 2019.

The strengthened partnership will also provide funding to support a BlueRock-endowed research chair in regenerative medicine for Dr. Stephanie Protze, PhD, principal investigator, McEwen Stem Cell Institute. While a post-doctoral fellow in Dr. Gordon Keller's lab, Dr. Protze successfully transformed human stem cells into functional pacemaker cardiac cells; these cells were able to elicit a rodent's heartbeat. Today her work is focused on further validating if these pacemaker cells can function as biological pacemaker using additional models and on using developmental biology-based approaches to establish strategies to guide the differentiation of hPSCs into the second type of pacemaker cell found in the heart.

"The collaboration between BlueRock and the McEwen Institute at UHN will continue to greatly enrich and expedite the development of regenerative therapy approaches for cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Protze. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to develop BlueRock's unique *Cell+Gene* therapy platform and translate its capabilities to new treatments."

Additionally, BlueRock will increase the amount of funding and the breadth of sponsored research programs with Dr. Gordon Keller, PhD, Director, McEwen Stem Cell Institute, Dr. Protze and Dr. Michael Laflamme, MD, PhD, Principal Investigator. This funding will enable BlueRock to advance native and engineered cell programs in cardiac indications as well as additional areas.

BlueRock Therapeutics is an engineered cell therapy company with a mission to develop regenerative medicines for intractable diseases. BlueRock's *Cell+Gene* platform harnesses the power of cells for new medicines across neurology, cardiology and autoimmune indications. BlueRock's cell differentiation technology recapitulates the cell's developmental biology to produce native cell therapies which are further engineered for additional function. Utilizing these cell therapies to replace damaged or degenerated tissue brings the potential to restore or regenerate lost function. BlueRock was founded in 2016 by Versant Ventures and capitalized with one of the largest-ever Series A financings in biotech history by Bayer AG and Versant.