

## **Global Humanitarian Sir Bob Geldof Celebrates Opening of University Health Network's McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine**

(Toronto, October 25, 2006) – The potential to repair injured spinal cords, replace damaged heart tissue, grow new insulin-producing cells, and target cancerous cells are some of the exciting areas of research for University Health Network's (UHN) McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine (MCRM), announced Dr. Gordon Keller, founding Director and leading stem cell scientist at the official opening in the Toronto Medical Discovery Tower at MaRS. The official opening began with a scientific symposium with leading stem cell scientists.

Regenerative medicine is an emerging area of science with the potential to transform the delivery of patient care by harnessing the remarkable potential of stem cells to repair or replace damaged tissues and organs. Scientific breakthroughs in regenerative medicine could eventually lead to more effective treatments for patients suffering from a number of diseases, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, spinal cord injuries and Parkinson's Disease. A unique feature of regenerative medicine is its interdisciplinary nature, drawing expertise from a range of areas including developmental biology, stem cell biology, genetics and organ transplantation

“UHN has a long, proud history of advancing the field of regenerative medicine, beginning with the discovery of the very existence of stem cells more than 40 years ago by Drs. Till and McCulloch,” said Dr. Christopher J. Paige, Vice President of Research of UHN. “Under Dr. Keller's stewardship and with our pool of scientific and clinical talent cutting across many disciplines, I believe the MCRM will significantly add to Canada's strength as a leading hub for scientific research.”

Some of the exciting research underway at UHN includes:

- Discovering the “SOS” distress signal that mobilizes specific repair cells from the bone marrow to the injured heart after a heart attack.
- Pioneering approaches to use stem cells to repair damaged spinal tissues and help restore function in rats with spinal cord injuries.
- Targeting stem cells responsible for acute myeloid leukemia in mice.

To launch the MCRM, Sir Bob Geldof – a renowned visionary who has dedicated his life to raising support and awareness about world hunger and poverty – met with a team of leading scientists and toured the lab facilities to learn about regenerative medicine’s breakthrough potential.

“Every one of us can make a difference in somebody else’s life,” said Sir Geldof who has received several prestigious awards for his humanitarian work, including six nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Nobel Man of Peace Award, Rose d’Or Charity Award, and the Holocaust Museum Houston’s Lyndon Baines Johnson Moral Courage Award. “It’s exciting to hear how these scientists and clinicians are pushing the envelope to develop new treatments that may, one day, tackle some of the world’s debilitating diseases. Their vision is global and inspiring.”

“Sir Bob Geldof is a global visionary who has demonstrated how the power of one individual can lead to major change,” said Rob McEwen, founding donor. “His humanitarian work is impressive. We are delighted that he could be here today to share his insights with us.”

#### **About University Health Network**

University Health Network is a major landmark in Canada’s healthcare system, and a teaching hospital of the University of Toronto. Building on the strengths and reputation of each of our three hospitals, Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital, UHN brings together the talent and resources needed to achieve global impact and provide exemplary patient care, research and education.

#### **About the McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine**

The McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine was established in 2003 with a generous donation from Rob and Cheryl McEwen. Its mission is to be a catalyst for regenerative medicine by facilitating collaboration and promoting research and awareness in the field. The McEwen Centre’s ultimate goal is to accelerate the development of better and more effective treatments for life-threatening conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and spinal cord injury. The McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine is fully affiliated with University Health Network.

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