

## Official opening of two new laboratories at Genopole (Evry, France) in the presence of Valérie Pécresse, the French Minister for Higher Education and Research

Evry, France, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007- The INSERM (the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research), the AFM (the French Muscular Dystrophy Association) and the University of Evry-Val d'Essonne (UEVE) inaugurated two new laboratories on the Genopole campus in the presence of Valérie Pécresse, French Minister for Higher Education and Research: " Structure-Activity of Normal and Pathologic Biomolecules " (the joint INSERM/UEVE Unit 829, headed by Patrick Curmi) and the Institute for Stem cell Therapy and Exploration of Monogenic diseases (I-STEM, the joint INSERM/UEVE/AFM Unit 861, headed by Marc Peschanski).

I-STEM, the Institute for Stem cell Therapy and Exploration of Monogenic diseases is setting out into one of today's most promising fields in terms of medical treatment, biological research and biotechnology. The laboratory explores the therapeutic potential of embryonic and adult stem cells in rare genetic diseases. In early 2005, I-STEM was the first lab in France to obtain an authorization to work on (imported) human embryonic stem cell lines. Then, in June 2006, it was authorized by the French Agency for Biomedicine to set up a library of mutated cell lines that could serve as models for the study of monogenic diseases. Michel Pucéat's I-STEM research team has demonstrated the ability of human embryonic stem cells to differentiate into cardiac cells in diseased rat hearts (published in *Stem Cells* in June 2007). In order to study the effect of various molecules on cell-based genetic disease models on a broader scale, I-STEM has acquired a high-throughput screening robot capable of automatically managing cell cultures in as many as 40,000 wells. Headed by Marc Peschanski (an INSERM Research Director), co-funded by Genopole and located at the heart of the Evry biopark, I-STEM has grown out of a joint venture between the French Muscular Dystrophy Association (AFM), the INSERM and the University of Evry-Val d'Essonne. It has also gained funding from several institutions (the Ile-de-France Regional Council, the Essonne General Council, the French National Research Agency and the European Union) and participates in the Medicen Paris Region competitiveness cluster's IngeCELL project. Mark Peschanski also coordinates an EU-funded STEM-HD research project on Huntington's disease.

The primary goal of the " Structure-Activity of Normal and Pathologic Biomolecules" laboratory is to understand the atomic structure of protein from microtubule cytoskeleton and thus find out how they work. Microtubule cytoskeleton abnormalities are involved in pathologies like cancer, developmental diseases and genetic & acquired neurological diseases. As an extension of this work, the laboratory is developing (in collaboration with the Bioquanta company) drug candidates able to target disease whilst having as few adverse effects as possible. The laboratory's skills are also aimed at contributing to resolve two major public health problems: genetic anomalies and HIV/AIDS. Headed by Patrick Curmi MD (also an INSERM Research Director), the laboratory has grown out of Genopole's "Thematic Action" program, the goal of which is to attract tomorrow's future scientific leaders, help them set up their own research group and enable them to benefit from Genopole's cutting-edge biotech environment and infrastructure. The new lab's ambition is becoming one of the leading centers of excellence on the microtubule cytoskeleton. Patrick Curmi also coordinates the EU-funded "Nano4Drugs" project, which seeks to use diamond nanoparticles to transport drug compounds into cells. Whilst benefiting from the Genopole's biotech environment and support services, the laboratory's supervisory bodies are the INSERM and the University of Evry-Val d'Essonne; it also receives funding from the French Cancer Research Association (ARC), the AFM, the French National Agency for AIDS Research (ANRS), the French National Cancer Institute (INCa) and the European Commission.

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