

Research to use adult stem cells for diabetes cure

NUS and SCTi hope to raise \$10m to fund the research

By Uma Shankari

THE National University of Singapore's Department of Surgery and Stem Cell Technologies (i) (SCTi) will collaborate on research into using adult stem cells to find a cure for diabetes.

The research project is described as "purely academic but with clinical possibilities" by SCTi founder Susan Lim, who will be working on it.

She says any successful investment involving diabetes is likely to be profitable, as the number of diabetic patients worldwide is likely to hit 300 million by 2025.

SCTi was set up a year ago to investigate the possibility of using adult stem cells for application in cell replacement therapies.

Dr Lim believes that using adult stem cells is more

politically and ethically viable than using embryonic stem cells, as much past research has done.

The cutting-edge collaboration will be the first in Singapore to work with adult stem cells.

NUS and SCTi hope to raise about \$10 million to fund the research, which is expected to be completed in 2007.

They are looking to venture capitalists and private and institutional investors to raise funds. They also hope for funding from the government's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

This funding will be in addition to \$1.5 million already invested by both NUS and SCTi for items such as personnel and equipment.

Dr Lim believes stem cell research will be the next area targeted by global pharmaceutical firms after drug research. Therefore, in the long run, it will have huge commercial viability.



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