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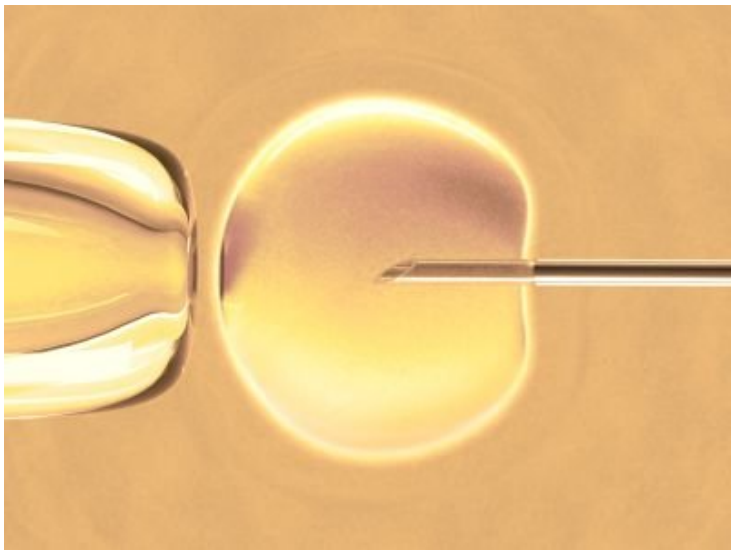
GE fortifies iPS cell-derived cellular assay avenue

December 19, 2012 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau



Singapore: GE Healthcare Life Sciences has licensed Cellular Dynamics International, US-based commercial producer of human induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cell lines and tissue cells, to develop, manufacture and sell cellular assays and models derived from induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells for use in drug discovery and toxicity screening.

As the worldwide pharmaceutical industry seeks to reduce drug development costs and bring more effective, safer drugs to market, the availability of more biologically relevant and predictive cell models becomes increasingly important. GE Healthcare is pioneering the development of human cell-based assays and models for use in drug discovery and predictive toxicity screening.

In 2010 the company launched Cytiva cardiomyocytes (human heart cells), stem cell-based assays that are already helping pharmaceutical companies identify drug candidates that show toxic effects much earlier in the discovery process.

Cellular Dynamics develops, manufactures and sells human cells based on iPS cell technology and currently offers iCell Cardiomyocytes, iCell Neurons (brain cells), iCell Endothelial Cells (blood vessel cells) and iCell Hepatocytes (liver cells). CDI has also launched MyCell Services, a custom cell manufacturing service that leverages the ability of iPS cell technology to make stem cells or terminal cells from any individual, including those with diseases of interest to pharmaceutical companies and academic scientists.

Dr Amr Abid, general manager, Cell Technologies, GE Healthcare Life Sciences, said, "We believe it is important that stem cell-based assays are available to researchers so that progress can be made in drug discovery; clarity and freedom to operate is fundamental to advancing the use of such assays. Our recently extended agreement with Geron provided the foundation for the type of agreement we are announcing today. GE Healthcare believes that such agreements are the next step to enabling the wider industry to benefit from the use of this key intellectual property without violating patent rights. We are delighted that Cellular Dynamics International is the first company to work with us to bring greater clarity to the marketplace."

Mr Bob Palay, CEO of Cellular Dynamics International, added, "CDI's mission is to provide human cell-based research and drug discovery tools that enhance scientists' ability to better understand human biology, increase efficiency of the discovery process and ultimately improve human healthcare. The IP space surrounding stem cell technology is complex. With the licencing of the GE-Geron intellectual property portfolio, CDI now has more than 700 licenced or owned patents and patent applications. We have built our IP portfolio intending to ensure broad freedom to operate and to offer customers products that they can use with confidence and the knowledge that their subsequent discoveries are protected by this IP portfolio."