

RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology (CDB)
2-2-3 Minatojima minamimachi, Chuo-ku, Kobe 650-0047, Japan

Joint Workshop on the Promise of Regenerative Medicine

October 25, 2004 – Marking a new step in the growth of the Kobe biomedical research park, the Ernst Schering Research Foundation (ESRF; Germany) and the RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology hosted a workshop on the promises and challenges of regenerative medicine in the CDB Auditorium. The three-day meeting featured talks and discussion by researchers from around the world on the science underlying stem cell biology and regenerative processes, and the potential for their application in health problems from heart disease to cancer.

Masatoshi Takeichi (Director, RIKEN Kobe Institute) greeted the delegates on the opening night of the meeting, which opened as scheduled despite the landfall of one of Japan's strongest typhoons in many years. Then, offering perspectives on regenerative medicine in his opening address, Ron McKay outlined the principles of cell replacement therapy, focusing on recent encouraging results in neuronal transplantation in animal models of Parkinson's disease and stressing the need for continuing research committed to finding cures for a range of degenerative diseases.

The workshop's four sessions brought together top scientists in an open and intimate setting made possible by the venue's relatively small size; attendance to Ernst Schering workshops is limited to 40 members, to encourage intensive discussions by all participants. Experts from all fields of stem cell biology responded to the opportunity to challenge and chat with their peers, with conversations frequently outlasting the sessions and spilling over into the coffee break periods in the CDB Salon.

Speaking at the conclusion of the workshop, Gunter Stock, president of the German pharmaceutical company Schering AG, congratulated the organizers on the success of the event and encouraged the scientists in their work. "One of the main messages I took from this workshop is that the research in these fields is progressing even faster than our expectations," said Stock. "We look forward to the translation of the progress in basic research labs like those at the RIKEN CDB into real medical therapies."