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Mahendra Rao Joins The New York Stem Cell Foundation Research Institute

NEW YORK, NY (April 9, 2014) – Dr. Mahendra Rao, who has directed the Center for Regenerative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health (NIH CRM) since 2010, will join The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) Research Institute as its Vice President for Regenerative Medicine, a newly created position, Susan Solomon, NYSCF Chief Executive Officer, announced today.

Dr. Rao, who holds an MD degree and a PhD in developmental neurobiology, is one of the nation's most prominent stem cell scientists. He has over twenty years of experience in all aspects of the stem cell field including government, academia, and business. Before joining the NIH, Dr. Rao spent six years as the vice president of Regenerative Medicine at Life Technologies, Inc. (now Thermo Fisher Scientific) after serving as the chief of Neurosciences at the National Institute on Aging and co-founding Q Therapeutics, a neural stem cell company based in Utah. Dr. Rao is tenured at the University of Utah School of Medicine in both Neurobiology and Anatomy and has over twenty submitted and ten issued patents.

“Dr. Rao’s expertise in translational research, academia, and industry make him a valuable asset in our mission to take stem cell research from the laboratory to the clinic in order to find cures for the diseases that affect those we love,” Solomon said. “We are delighted to have him on board.”

Solomon said that recruiting Dr. Rao is a major coup for NYSCF as it builds on its existing successes and carries out its strategic goals. Dr. Rao’s expertise and experience in setting up a company and in leading the translational effort at NIH will complement their expertise in automation and high-throughput induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cell generation.

“I am enthused about NYSCF’s efforts to generate high-quality stem cell lines and partner with the pharma and academic communities. I am excited to be joining them to advance their goals,” said Dr. Rao.

In addition to his business career, Dr. Rao has served on scientific advisory boards, editorial boards and review panels and on committees including as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Cellular, Tissue, and Gene Therapies Advisory Committee chair and as the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine and International Society for Stem Cell Research liaison to the International Society for Cellular Therapy. Currently, he sits on the board of Cesca Therapeutics, Inc. and serves as the Chief Strategy Officer and Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board at Q Therapeutics.

"Mahendra is a widely-recognized and accomplished leader in stem cell research. He will be a major asset for NYSCF as we continue to develop new therapeutics for patients," said Dr. Zach Hall, NYSCF Board Member and former Director of National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

About The New York Stem Cell Foundation

The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) is an independent organization founded in 2005 to accelerate cures and better treatments for patients through stem cell research. NYSCF employs over 45 researchers at the NYSCF Research Institute, located in New York, and is an acknowledged world leader in stem cell research and in developing pioneering stem cell technologies, including the NYSCF Global Stem Cell Array™. Additionally, NYSCF supports another 60 researchers at other leading institutions worldwide through its Innovator Programs, including the NYSCF – Druckenmiller Fellowships and the NYSCF – Robertson Investigator Awards. NYSCF focuses on translational research in a model designed to overcome the barriers that slow discovery and replaces silos with collaboration.

The NYSCF Research Institute conducts groundbreaking research in addition to partnering with leading institutions and stem cell researchers from around the world all towards treating and curing disease. This effort includes developing novel technologies such as the NYSCF Global Stem Cell Array™, the first ever fully automated, robotic system for deriving induced pluripotent stem cells on a massive and reproducible scale.

NYSCF researchers have achieved several major discoveries in the field, including: the first stem cell-derived beta cell model that accurately reflects the features of a genetic form of diabetes in June 2013; the generation of functional, immune-matched bone substitutes from patients' skin cells (featured in *The Wall Street Journal* in May 2013); the discovery of a clinical cure to prevent transmission of maternally inherited mitochondrial diseases in December 2012; the derivation of the first-ever patient specific embryonic stem cell line (#1 Medical Breakthrough of 2011 by *Time* magazine); the discovery of a new way to reprogram stem cells; and, the creation of the first disease model from induced pluripotent stem cells (also named the #1 Medical Breakthrough by *Time* magazine in 2008). More information is available at www.nyscf.org.