



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0657

Martedì 08.11.2011

CONFERENZA STAMPA DI PRESENTAZIONE DEL CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE "ADULT STEM CELLS: SCIENCE AND THE FUTURE OF MAN AND CULTURE" (VATICANO, 9-11 NOVEMBRE 2011)

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- INTERVENTO DEL REV.DO DON TOMASZ TRAFNY
- INTERVENTO DELL'ON. TOMMY G. THOMPSON
- INTERVENTO DELLA DOTT.SSA ROBIN L. SMITH

Alle ore 11.30 di questa mattina, nell'*Aula Giovanni Paolo II* della Sala Stampa della Santa Sede, ha luogo una conferenza stampa di presentazione del Convegno Internazionale "*Adult Stem Cells: Science and the Future of Man and Culture*", che si terrà in Vaticano, nell'Aula Nuova del Sinodo, dal 9 all'11 novembre 2011.

Intervengono: l'Em.mo Card. Gianfranco Ravasi, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura; il Rev.do don Tomasz Trafny, Responsabile del dipartimento scientifico del Pontificio Consiglio della Cultura; l'On. Tommy G. Thompson, già Ministro dei Servizi Umani e Sanitari del Governo degli Stati Uniti d'America; la Dott.ssa Robin L. Smith, Amministratore Delegato della NeoStem e Presidente della *Stem for Life Foundation*.

Pubblichiamo di seguito gli interventi del Rev.do don Tomasz Trafny, dell'On. Tommy G. Thompson e della Dott.ssa Robin L. Smith:

• INTERVENTO DEL REV.DO DON TOMASZ TRAFNY

Nel 1896 Edmund Beecher Wilson, uno zoologo e genetista americano, in un'opera intitolata: *The Cell in Development and Inheritance*, introdusse il termine "cellule staminali", descrivendo lo sviluppo di un parassita chiamato *Ascaris*. La sua idea non si basava sulle evidenze scientifiche, bensì su una deduzione derivante dall'attenta analisi dei processi evolutivi.

Ci sono voluti 65 anni perché due scienziati James Till e Ernest McCulloch confermassero non solo la validità dell'intuizione di Wilson, ma conducessero un esperimento in cui sono stati capaci provare l'efficacia rigenerativa di tali cellule selezionate e prelevate dal midollo osseo.

Oggi, esattamente cinquanta anni dopo la pubblicazione dell'articolo di Till e McCulloch, la ricerca sulle cellule

staminali adulte ha raggiunto un significativo stato di avanzamento che oltre a prospettare ulteriori sviluppi di tipo scientifico, pone importanti questioni di tipo filosofico, teologico, sociale, educativo e culturale.

La conferenza internazionale, che da domani si terrà nell'Aula Nuova del Sinodo, si prefigge due compiti. Prima di tutto vogliamo indagare sulla questione delle cellule staminali a partire da un orizzonte diverso rispetto all'abituale riflessione di tipo bioetico. La nostra iniziativa mira ad abbracciare molteplici problematiche in una chiave di lettura interdisciplinare che comprenderà sia la presentazione dello stato dell'arte della ricerca medica sulle cellule staminali adulte, sia la riflessione appartenente alle scienze umane. Vorremmo, inoltre, illustrare e discutere alcuni problemi e sfide che nascono nell'ampio orizzonte di interazioni tra la ricerca scientifica e la cultura, e che potranno avere un significativo impatto sul futuro dell'uomo. Per questo motivo vorremmo porre alcune domande importanti e a volte provocatorie: per esempio se il giuramento di Ippocrate debba essere esteso a tutte le scienze della vita, dal momento in cui oggi non solo i medici, ma anche gli scienziati di laboratorio hanno capacità di intervenire in tutte le fasi della vita dell'uomo.

Il secondo compito, che allo stesso tempo diventa una grande sfida, consiste nel tentativo di tradurre i risultati di scienze mediche molto sofisticate ad un pubblico che supera la ristretta cerchia degli esperti. Si tratta di un impegno difficile allo scopo di aprire un canale di comunicazione tra le comunità scientifiche e il grande pubblico. La conferenza è suddivisa in tre sezioni: medica, bioetica e culturale che comprende le questioni filosofiche ed educative. In tre giorni molto densi avremo possibilità di ascoltare più di 30 relatori e incontrare anche pazienti che hanno beneficiato della ricerca sulle cellule staminali adulte.

Alla conclusione dei lavori, venerdì 11 novembre alle 20.30, nella Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano si terrà un concerto della Cappella Musicale Pontificia "Sistina" diretta dal Maestro Massimo Palombella. L'invito a partecipare è esteso a tutti, non solo ai convegnisti.

Si tratta di un itinerario conosciuto con il nome "Armonie dello Spirito. Meditazioni Musicali per le Basiliche Italiane". Con esso si vuole valorizzare il repertorio musicale di ispirazione sacra, nel contesto dello straordinario patrimonio storico-artistico della Chiesa Universale.

Nel segno dell'ideale rapporto tra Musica e Beni Culturali aderiscono all'iniziativa le maggiori Istituzioni Musicali ed artisti internazionali, per testimoniare il Valore e la Bellezza, con l'auspicio di suscitare ascolto, meditazione, preghiera.

Fonte di ispirazione per l'iniziativa sono state le parole di Sua Santità Benedetto XVI quando ha formulato voti "che l'armonia del canto e della musica, che non conosce barriere sociali e religiose, rappresenti un costante invito per i credenti e per tutte le persone di buona volontà, a ricercare insieme l'universale linguaggio dell'amore che rende gli uomini capaci di costruire un mondo di giustizia e di solidarietà, di speranza e di pace".

Questa Conferenza oltre a vedere la partecipazione di illustri relatori e ospiti, gode della collaborazione e sostegno di altri due dicasteri della Santa Sede: il Pontificio Consiglio per gli Operatori Sanitari (per la Pastorale della Salute) e la Pontificia Accademia per la Vita. Ai Presidenti di questi due dicasteri S.E.R. Mons. Zimowski, S.E.R. Mons. Carrasco de Paula, e ai loro rappresentanti i Monsignor Musivi Mpendawatu e Jacques Suaudeau, va la nostra gratitudine per la loro disponibilità, entusiasmo e competenza con cui hanno voluto sostenere questa iniziativa.

[01557-01.01] [Testo originale: Italiano]

● INTERVENTO DELL'ON. TOMMY G. THOMPSON

Thank you so much, Card. Ravasi, and thanks also to NeoStem, The Stem for Life Foundation, and of course, The Vatican for bringing us all together on this historic day.

As many of you know, I was The U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services from 2001 to 2005. This was obviously a great privilege for me, and while I am no scientist or doctor, the job gave me a unique understanding of the many issues driving today's dialogue on healthcare.

And adult stem cells deserve to be at the heart of this discussion – and it's a subject I'm very passionate about.

Throughout the course of my career, whether in the public or private sector, the best ideas I've come across have always been the simplest ones. And frankly, I just don't believe that man can engineer something superior to what The Good Lord has already given us. That's what I love about adult stem cells – we're using the divine wisdom inside of us to supercharge our bodies and wipe away disease. And as we do this, not one single human

embryo is destroyed.

And that to me is a very big idea – but this idea has been shrouded in an ugly political argument that has served no one.

When I talk to the average American about adult stem cells, many of them are really surprised. All they have ever heard about are embryonic stem cells and this political battle about who is right and wrong. They see the constant finger pointing in Washington – and instead of focusing on "what we can do right now" with adult stem cells, our leaders argue about "what we should not do" with embryonic stem cells.

That doesn't make any sense to me at all – and that's why today is such an important, historic day, and I'm just thrilled to be a part of it.

The 246 million people in this world suffering from diabetes need to hear our voices today. The 770,000 Americans that will have a heart attack or stroke this year need to hear this message. Our men and women in uniform need to know that there is so much to be hopeful for – a day when our wounded veterans can regrow their own skin, organs and bones. And maybe, just maybe, one day our quadriplegics will rise up from their wheelchairs.

This is not wishful thinking, folks – that day is here if we want it – and that's why I want to share my vision for a future of cellular collaboration.

President John F. Kennedy once challenged the nation and in fact the whole world to put a man on the moon in a historic research and development initiative. It was a race against the clock and an unprecedented era of scientific collaboration.

Ladies and gentleman, if we can put a man on the moon, then we can surely unite to return health to the hundreds of millions of people suffering needlessly throughout the world. And we can do so without destroying one human life.

And we're in our own race against the clock. The American baby boomers are just hitting retirement, so we're going to see a huge spike in chronic disease in the years ahead. Just look at diabetes. Currently, one out of every eight Americans has diabetes and by 2050 one out of every three of us will have it. And already our nation is spending \$200 billion dollars per year to manage this disease.

Can you believe this? \$200 billion a year for this one disease? Can you imagine what diabetes will cost us when one third of all Americans have it?

This makes no sense to me. We're wasting money managing a chronic disease instead of finding a cure for it. And ironically, the cure is sitting right inside of our own bodies, a divine intelligence just sitting there to be harvested and given back to us.

So why not create a coordinated network of scientists and professionals devoted to discovering and funding these vital therapies? We must tap the best of private enterprise to "get the job done fast". We must turn to America's brightest companies and business leaders to take the best research from our universities and translate them into here-and-now cures.

Today I am calling on President Obama to create a Presidential-level commission of private sector business leaders to begin this important work. This group should evaluate all of the Federal efforts to date surrounding regenerative medicine, and they should make specific recommendations to our President on how we can better coordinate these efforts and unite them with the best of private enterprise. And I'm not alone in calling on our President to lead us in this initiative. Just this year The Alliance for Regenerative Medicine called on The Obama Administration to develop a national strategy for regenerative medicine.

But to date, nothing has been done.

That's why I am so excited to be with all of you. Today, here in The Vatican, we are beginning that process – we are ushering in a new era of scientific collaboration – a true 'race for the cure' that will bring hope to the entire world.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for listening. And now I'll be glad to answer any of your questions...

[01563-02.02] [Original text: English]

• **INTERVENTO DELLA DOTT.SSA ROBIN L. SMITH**

On behalf of NeoStem, our shareholders and the Stem for Life Foundation, I'm so honored to be here today and would like to offer my sincere appreciation for the vision and leadership of Cardinal Ravasi and the Vatican Pontifical Council for Culture, and for the support of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers and the Pontifical Academy of Life.

Rome is the birthplace of many of the world's greatest ideas. Here we can find the works of Michelangelo and Caravaggio, and some of our best poets, architects and philosophers. It is the birthplace of some of the first public health programs and the development of aqueducts and sewage systems – innovations that have helped control the spread of dangerous disease.

I think adult stem cells are another great classical masterpiece. But this masterpiece is not made with human hands – they are already inside of our own bodies, just waiting to be used to combat deadly disease and dangerous medical conditions.

We are making history as NeoStem joins hands with the Vatican, STOQ International and the Stem for Life Foundation. Together we're embarking on a multi-year journey to usher in a new era of regenerative medicine. And at the heart of our partnership lies a very simple idea – by uniting our forces we can produce the biggest social impact. At this conference, we will have political leaders and governmental representatives from around the world, Ambassadors to The Holy See, European parliamentarians, and members of international organizations like UNESCO. We will have the world's leading scientists in adult stem cell medicine, as well as business leaders, dignitaries, doctors and patients who have benefited from adult stem cell therapies. We have theologians, including Cardinal Ravasi and Monsignor Ignacio Carrasco de Paula of the Vatican.

We will be many voices joined together. And our cause is urgent. Right now, there are more than 12.7 million people living with some form of cancer, and 346 million living with diabetes. And autoimmune disorders now affect over 583 million people worldwide. These diseases, which include Lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, leukemia, bladder cancer and cardiovascular insufficiency and many others, can be debilitating and life threatening. But behind each of those statistics are real people – and a lot of hope.

I would like to tell you about Bethany Pappalardo, a college freshman who was suffering from multiple sclerosis. Every day Bethany lived in fear that a new attack would strike. And one morning she woke up and felt numbness in her legs. By the end of that day she was numb from the neck down. A young woman with the world in front of her saw her health slipping away. Five years ago Bethany had an adult stem cell transplant and, since then, her MS attacks have stopped and today she is living a normal, happy life. Adult stem cells rebooted her immune system, harnessing the power of her own body to keep this deadly disease in check. We are honored that her doctor, Richard Burt will join us at this summit to share advances in using adult stem cell therapy to treat autoimmune disorders.

Another patient, Stephen Sprague, contracted Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia 14 years ago. He was in blast crisis giving him 3-6 month to live. Being turned away by other physicians, Stephen found Dr. Andrew Pecora and, with the assistance of Dr. Robert Preti, the FDA granted special permission for a one time compassionate use that leveraged technology developed to expand the adult stem cells from a single umbilical cord blood unit. After chemotherapy, Mr. Sprague's immune system was rebuilt and reconstituted. Today these doctors and Stephen Sprague himself gather to tell the story of their incredible journey and how the field has advanced over the past decade.

In the not too distant future we will be able to use adult stem cells to rebuild damaged tissue and repair organs such as the heart. Today technologies are being rapidly developed, such as Amorcyte's lead product, AMR-001 designed to treat patients 6-10 days after an acute heart attack to prevent adverse remodeling and worsening of cardiac function leading to premature death.

These miracles come without the ethical dilemma posed by the use of embryonic stem cells. Adult stem cell

research and therapy allow us to advance scientific knowledge while protecting every stage of existence. Advances need resources and tomorrow we will announce the extraordinary individual who will be the recipient of the Key Guardian Award at a very special event planned in 2012. This award honors a corporation, institution or individual for their efforts to increase the well being of humankind through their support of new innovative sciences and medicine. This individual's generous support of cutting edge technologies gives all of us resources and hope.

We must also say a special thank you to Father Trafny for his incredible dedication to understand the impact of scientific discovery on culture, and lead the effort to improve humanity by uniting science and faith. We are privileged to have the Honorable Tommy Thompson, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services and governor of Wisconsin, who will share with all of us how policy and economics shape our health care system. Through Tommy's unique understanding of what these therapies might mean to modern day healthcare, he can guide us on how we can successfully advance new discoveries from the lab into the clinic in a complicated political environment.

It's certainly going to be an historic three days. This is just the beginning of our mission over the next four years is to educate society about the therapeutic potential of adult stem cells, to advance adult stem cell therapies, and to understand the impact this new medicine will have on culture and the impact it will have on people's faith to unite and end human suffering.

[01562-02.01] [Original text: English]

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