

April 9, 2013

Putin watches as UMCG signs cooperation agreement to set up stem cell institute in Russia

President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte watched as Folkert Kuipers, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Supervisory Board of the UMCG, signed a cooperation agreement aimed at establishing a stem cell institute in Skolkovo, Russia. President Edward Crawley and director Nikolai Yankovsky signed the agreement on behalf of the Russian partners, the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech) and the Vavilov Institute of General Genetics, respectively. Signing this agreement was an official part of Putin's visit to the Netherlands on April 8 to mark the start of the Netherlands-Russia bilateral year.

The Skoltech Center for Stem Cell Research is the first Center for Research Education and Innovation to be based in Skoltech, just outside of Moscow in Skolkovo. Russia is building the Skolkovo Innovation Center as an innovation ecosystem to stimulate research and innovation. Top researchers, entrepreneurs and investors will pool resources working in up to 15 Centers to study IT, energy, space travel, biomedical science and nuclear technology.

Researchers from the UMCG and ERIBA, the Hubrecht Institute and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) will work together in the new stem cell research institute to increase fundamental knowledge of stem cells and help promote and advance stem cell science in Russia. Among their tasks will be the training of Russian and international students of biology and computer sciences, and junior researchers recently awarded a PhD in these fields. The first students and postdoctoral researchers are expected to start in the labs of the scientists from the institutes working in this collaboration in September of this year, in preparation for their research in Skolkovo.

The research will focus on identifying and isolating adult stem cells in tissue and organs, production of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS cells) and differentiating of such cells into adult stem cells that can be used for the development of drugs and novel therapies. In the long term, developing stem cell models for use in research into neurodegenerative diseases such as cancer and auto-immune disorders will help to make new stem cell treatment and drugs available to patients.

Note for the press

For more information, please contact the UMCG press information office on: +31 (0)50 361 22 00.

Photo

Dean Folkert Kuipers (right at the table) and Skolkovo-president Edward Crawley signing the cooperation agreement. In the background (left) Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Mark Rutte.



More about Skoltech and ERIBA here:

<http://www.eriba.umcg.nl>

<http://www.skoltech.ru/news/skoltech-signed-agreement-found-center-stem-cell-research>