

Stem Cell special Issue of

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Guest Articles

Stem cells & their status in India

CRISPR-Theory and Technology

News in Focus

Fasting boosts stem cells' regenerative capacity

Scientists generate Atlas of the human genome using stem cells

Biohacker Who Injected Himself with Untested Herpes Vaccine Found Dead

Editorial

STEM CELL DRUGS AND NOT THERAPY WOULD BE SUBJECTED TO REGULATIONS, ACCORDING TO HEALTH MINISTRY

NEWS: Novartis appoints John Tsai Head of Global Drug Development and Chief Medical Officer

Startup Stories

What is so unique about SanoStem's Stem cells



Leader's Talk

Ready to make big changes in Biopharma industry through applications of Stem Cells

Dr. Subhadra Dravida, Founder, Transcell

Ready to make big changes in Biopharma industry through Stem Cell applications – Dr Subhadra Dravida, Founder, Transcell

There are few companies that can boast of being insightful, cost-effective in the first year of operations and Transcell is one such. At present, the group comprises of 40+ members including technologists and sales personnel taking in-house research based service and product offerings to the market.

We arranged a talk with CEO of India's pioneer biotech company built on stem cell based technologies at Hyderabad, India. She talks about current govt. regulations and business revenue generation of Stem cell industry. Recently govt. has also decided to frame Stem Cell therapy guidelines with high possibility to bring it in the gamut of health-care industry.

The purpose of this talk is to share the experience of leaders of this niche biotech business and to help next generation entrepreneurs understand the nuances to take risks and stay motivated.



Image: Dr Subhadra Dravida

Brief profile of Founder of Transcell – a stem cell based biotech organization

S Dravida, PhD is an experimentalist turned entrepreneur, Founder of Transcell group of biotech companies, www.transcellbio.science, based in Hyderabad, translating adult stem cell technologies prowess into clinical reality.

Transcell is into biobanking, R&D of drug discovery (Oncology & Neuro) and regenerative medicine research (Muscular dystrophies & Periodontal diseases) based on adult stem cell technologies as platforms.

She is a technocrat, successfully running the teams converting evidence based science to business opportunities with an intent to reach the patient communities. It is her chronic optimism; >13 yr of R&D experience from elite institutions of India, US and Canada; unwavering drive to crack the mysteries of cancers and neurodegenerative diseases using stem cells as tools (has patents to her credit) through her venture helping her to stand through the ups and lows of startup disease in India.

It is a long journey and commitment

Leader's Talk

in sciences that she has embraced while attempting to combine innovation in sciences and commerce to drive through Transcell from India that makes her stand stable in the striving ecosystem.

Outside of her work, she likes to explore monasteries, trek, write her heart out and enjoys reading science fiction. The latest one that she read was Dan Brown's Origin – Where did we come from; Where are we going?

Dr. Dravida is a biologist by education with clinical informatics research experience having associated professionally with the University of North Carolina, USA, Ottawa Health Research Institute, Canada.

First of all how you are going to describe your venture - Transcell?

Transcell Biologics (Transcell) is a biotech company, founded on original research driven hypothesis i.e processing adult stem cells for the intended applications. The emphasis was on harvesting, processing and handling the right kind for the requirement.

As a researcher and bench side scientist with my experience in the same domain of translational research, I could distinguish the domains of applications i.e regenerative medicine and drug discovery using stem cells as platforms. So, Transcell true to it's theme of pluripotency and self renewing has built capacities and Intellectual property in Cancers, Neurodegenerative diseases, Muscular dystrophies and Periodontal diseases like indications based on in-house research



Images: Transcell facilities in Hyderabad, India

findings on it's proprietary platform technology (developed for both therapeutic and non-therapeutic applications).

All along, the Company has been creating the wealth of unique repository of India specific donor/patient sourced samples both for private and intended research use.



Images: Transcell facilities in Hyderabad, India

How is Transcell going to bring benefits to the biotech and healthcare industry in India?

We have been in the market, offering biobanking services for personalizing medicine along with some of the cell based products as prototype models to third party researchers in translational research and drug discovery programs. Our group has functional molecules as products in pipeline for Cancers and Neurodegenerative diseases with novel stem cell formulae in pre-clinical stage of development addressing Muscular dystrophies (Orphan disease) and Periodontal diseases.

Is stem cell therapy covered under insurance in India?

No, it is not covered under any insurance scheme. Till date, both research and applications have been treated as experimental in India and there has been no consensus with the regulations as well. So, was the resistance and confusion in the insurance providers' mind.

What are the stem cell therapies approved and what not, and what may be the 'possible' reason(s) for delay in framing regulation in India?

The only stem cell-based products that are approved for use consist of blood-forming stem cells (hematopoietic progenitor cells) derived from cord blood. It is fantastic now in India with clarity given to all the stakeholders on regulating stem cell therapies by DCGI while processed stem cells being categorized as "drugs" that have to go through the cycle of clinical trials like any new chemical entity. For hematological malignancies and for Orthopedic applications with no manipulation of stem cells to be applied, remain approved with clinical evidence proven. So, with the current regulatory regime introduced, clinical practitioner has the discretion to practice in the benefit of the patient instead of Big Pharma dumping their medicines to prescribe.

Did you ever feel accomplished on global level?

Honestly, for me, success is when the products or services from Transcell reach the suffering patients in India and do good in curing the debili-

tating condition. The social cause is highlighted in scoring my journey and self-assessment at any level. The awards and recognitions in sciences do not measure one's real contribution.

Did you have enough money to start your company or you had helping hand when you needed?

My story was not built on an idea like how most of the startups in other domains would have come into existence. It was logical extension of my career in research towards productization with heavy lab driven data in place. So, I brought intellectual property, proprietary data, technical knowhow, >10 yr of bench to bed side scientific and translational skills of commercial success to the venture. It is not just money that played role in starting the company and my skin is deep in the game with all savings put in. I am first generation entrepreneur and had no help till I found my true angels in 2016 boosting the very proposition.

Do you have any IP product and what are their applications?

Transcell has several first-in-class chemistry, biology platforms with protected processes and compositions for Neurodegenerative disorders, Cancers, Regenerative Medicinal applications.

What are market projections of stem cell industry?

Stem cell industry is a very heterogenous segment with varied projections based on practice area. Stem cell banking, Regenerative medicine,

Cell therapy, Basic research, Clinical research, Drug discovery are some of the practice areas pegged upto 300 b \$ global market while we have no statistics available for Indian market value.

How do you see yourself and your company as a part of stem cell and biotech Industry? Or does company collaborates regularly with other players of industry?

Our collaborating partners are academia, established cross functional industry players, clinicians and patient communities than players like Transcell. We believe in strengthening our position and value proposition through complementary tie ups to complete our offerings and development.

What is your advice to young entrepreneurs who wish to look into starting a biotech company in India?

I always said, unless it is your technology and you are from the domain, don't dream to become an entrepreneur on borrowed ideas as it will be a futile attempt. Entrepreneurship in biotech space is a serious and intense practice with high stakes involved and requires not just money but conviction, belief and grip on science.

Related Video: <https://www.justdial.com/photos/transcell-biologics-pvt-ltd-jubilee-hills-hyderabad-stem-cell-banks-crr5uo-pc-7176022-sco-28ldkyiu>

