

Hopkins stem cell researcher tells Congress the cells aren't there

BY PATRICE DICKENS

Daily Record Business Writer

A Maryland researcher yesterday claimed that he has been waiting more than a year to receive the first of a number of human embryonic stem cell lines he needs to advance his cancer research.

"Embryonic stem cell research is crawling like a caterpillar," said Dr. Curt I. Civin, professor of oncology and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in his written testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. The committee was meeting to discuss the barriers researchers said they have encountered in trying to get the stem cells they need for their research.

"It may hold the key to expanding proven adult stem cell therapies to many more patients, but administrative and technical barriers are impeding the progress of this vital research," Civin said.

Civin was one of four doctors who testified before the Senate subcommittee.

Civin said researchers are encountering barriers such as administrative red tape, intellectual property rights and high prices that hampering their research. President Bush said more than a year ago that existing embryonic stem cell lines could be used in federally funded research.

"Some of the lines have been tied up in questions of ownership," Civin said in his written testimony.

"Many of the owners of lines, not in dispute, are not anxious to share them with other researchers. Those that are willing to share the lines are not willing to do so without getting a piece of the profits of future discoveries made using the lines. The terms of material transfer agreements are often difficult and time consuming to negotiate. The owners also expect an up-front fee," Civin said.

According to Civin, the current rate for a stem cell line is \$5,000. That is 50 to 100 times greater than the \$50 to \$100 he is accustomed to paying.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has identified fewer than 100 embryonic stem cell lines eligible for federal research funds.

Civin, however, claims that, in real-

ity, the number of stem cell lines advertised on NIH's Web site is really less.

"There are only really three today," Civin said.

McCormick hits earnings forecast

BY LILY HENNING

Daily Record Business Writer

McCormick & Co. Inc. reported yesterday a third-quarter sales increase of 2 percent.

That news was partially offset by costs associated with the implementation of Beyond 2000, the Hunt Valley-based spice company's ongoing efficiency improvement and cost-reduction program, and continued weakness in the British bond brokerage business, both of which lowered earnings for the quarter, McCormick said.

Core consumer and industrial food sales continued to perform well, McCormick executives said. Sales in the third quarter were \$545 million, an increase of 2 percent compared to the third quarter of 2001. Favorable foreign exchange and higher volume impacted the sales, McCormick said.

The company reported net income of

In his written testimony, Civin urged NIH to develop a stem cell repository that would aid in reducing the cost for stem cell lines.

\$35.2 million, or 25 cents per share, for the quarter ended Aug. 31. That includes \$2.9 million in charges for organizational improvement operations. During the same quarter last year, the company earned 27 cents a share, excluding goodwill amortization.

McCormick met its June forecast for earnings of 25 cents a share for the third quarter, but its gross profit margin fell to 34.8 percent from 35.3 percent last year, as retail and food service customers in the United States responded to a reduction in customer purchases.

The company acquired the brokerage business in conjunction with its purchase of Schwartz herbs and spices in 1984. McCormick had problems with the distribution company that was handling the customer service operations for the brokerage, and acted early in the third quarter to bring

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