

Pioneer Civin Is Recruited to Lead New Stem Cell Center



Curt Civin

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Curt Civin, MD, a pioneer in cancer research who is known for developing a way to isolate stem cells from other blood cells, has joined the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Civin will become a professor of pediatrics in the Division of Hematology/Oncology, as well as associate dean for research and the founding director of the School's new Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine.

The quality of the School of Medicine's faculty was a draw for Civin as he pondered joining the University of Maryland.

"I was so impressed by the recruitments the School of Medicine has made in recent years, from Dr. Robert Gallo, the co-discoverer of HIV, and his team at the Institute of Human Virology, to Dr. Claire Fraser-Liggett and her team at the University of Maryland Institute for Genome Sciences," Civin says. "I was encouraged by how happy these people were, and by the collaborative culture the School maintains for all its faculty members. I'm looking forward to working with my new colleagues."

Civin comes to the School of Medicine from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine,

where he has served since 1979. He currently leads projects totaling \$21.5 million in extramural research funding. He will bring to the School of Medicine his entire research team, including 15 postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and research technicians.

Dean E. Albert Reece, MD, PhD, MBA, who appointed Civin to his new positions, says, "With the recruitment of Dr. Civin and the founding of the new Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, the University of Maryland steps into a leadership position in the burgeoning field of stem cell research and regenerative medicine."

Reece, who is also vice president for medical affairs at the University of Maryland, and the John Z. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor of the School of Medicine, adds, "Research into stem cells and regenerative medicine will be a key frontier in medicine in the next two decades."

Civin became well-known and earned the 1999 National Inventor of the Year Award for his groundbreaking scientific discovery in 1984 of a method for isolating stem cells from other blood cells, a critical step in studying them and for transplanting these cells into patients. Discoveries from his laboratory are used today in both clinical bone marrow stem cell transplantation and leukemia diagnosis.

Civin's studies now focus on the genes expressed in stem cells. By understanding the inner mechanics of how stem cells work, he hopes to learn how to modify the key properties of stem cells in order to increase their therapeutic potential. In addition, his research includes learning how normal stem cells become cancerous.

His goals for the Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and for the field of stem cell biology are twofold. The center will explore how to manipulate stem cells to allow for much better transplantation and transfusion therapies. Its scientists also will work to understand how stem cells contribute to diseases in order to develop ways to improve conventional treatment and prevention of these disorders.

"Our dream for the new center is to make a significant impact on curing disease," says Civin. "That's really what biomedical research is all about—providing better diagnoses, treatments, and preventions."

Partnerships with other researchers within the University of Maryland School of Medicine will be critical to achieving the goals of the scientists at the Center for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine.

Those scientists will include the School of Medicine researchers who already are studying stem cell biology. The School of Medicine's stem cell research encompasses more than \$2 million in extramural funding annually, including several grants from the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund, chaired by Karen H. Rothenberg, JD, MPA, dean of the University of Maryland School of Law.

"As I complete 30 years of wonderful experience at Johns Hopkins, I'm confident I will maintain my friendships and working relationships with colleagues there," says Civin. "I want this new center and its work to have a global impact. To that end, I look forward to collaborating with colleagues at Johns Hopkins and at other prestigious Maryland institutions such as the National Cancer Institute and the rest of the National Institutes of Health, as well as other scientists around the globe."