

Press Release

European Biotech Company Biocell Center Opens First U.S. Facility for Preservation of Amniotic...

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MEDFORD, Mass., Oct. 22 /PRNewswire/ -- European biotechnology company *Biocell Center*, the first firm to harvest and preserve amniotic [stem cells](#), announced today that it is expanding its tissue bank and research operations to serve families, medical centers and scientists in the United States.

The company officially opened its North American headquarters and laboratory today in Medford Massachusetts, in the heart of the Boston area's biotechnology hub. The company has other facilities in Italy and Switzerland.

Governor **Deval Patrick** welcomed Biocell Center to Massachusetts. "The Life Sciences Initiative was designed to bring jobs to Massachusetts and support vital research," he said. "We are thrilled that Biocell Center is opening its North American headquarters in Medford and welcome them to a diverse group of pioneering companies that are making Massachusetts a global leader in stem cell research."

Last year, Gov. Patrick signed into law the Massachusetts Life Sciences Initiative, a 10-year, \$1 billion commitment to maintaining and strengthening the life sciences as a major economic engine for the Commonwealth.

Biocell Center scientists have developed a method of preserving stem cells derived from amniotic fluid.

"With strong growth in Europe, Biocell Center now will provide pregnant women across North America who are having an amniocentesis for prenatal diagnosis the opportunity to bank stem cells derived from their amniotic fluid," said **Kate Torchilin**, CEO of **Biocell Center Corp.** "These cells can potentially be used in the future to treat various diseases and for tissue regeneration."

Biocell Center captures the stem cells from amniotic fluid if the family requests it and pays for the preservation of the stem cells. Families can choose whether to give written consent for use of the stem cells in research.

The first few milliliters of amniotic fluid withdrawn during amniocentesis, which typically would be discarded, are sent to the Biocell Center laboratory. The stem cells are frozen in liquid nitrogen and preserved in the company's state-of-the-art cryo-bank.

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that amniotic stem cells are pluripotent, i.e. able to differentiate into various cell types, and are considered particularly valuable because of their high capacity to proliferate.

"The medical community worldwide is already using stem cells for organ and tissue regeneration and even more important medical breakthrough applications are foreseen in the future treatment of diabetes, pathologic tissue and organ damage, neurodegenerative, hematologic and other diseases," said Dr. **Giuseppe Simoni**, Scientific Director of Biocell Center.

Dr. Simoni is internationally recognized in the field of medical genetics for developing a method for the diagnosis of fetal chromosomal matter during early pregnancy, a technique that is still used as a standard guideline procedure.

He pointed out that stem cells from amniotic fluid can be used for both allogenic donations and autologous use, and are often compatible between siblings.

State and local officials commended the company for choosing Massachusetts as the location for its North American headquarters.

"Massachusetts, with its world-class academic and medical centers, is a great place to do business for life sciences companies, both international and domestic, and we welcome Biocell Center to the world's leading life sciences SuperCluster," said Dr. **Susan Windham-Bannister**, President & CEO of the **Massachusetts Life Sciences Center**, the quasi-public agency charged with implementing the state's Life Sciences Initiative.

"We look forward to continuing the growing partnership between Massachusetts and the life sciences clusters in Italy," she said.

"Biocell Center's decision to grow in Massachusetts highlights the strength of the cluster here in the Commonwealth and the capacity for industry stakeholders to work together to get things done," said **Robert Coughlin**, President & CEO of *MassBio*, who worked with member companies **DTZ FHO Partners**, **Sullivan & Worcester** and **Cummings Properties** to help Biocell Center with its expansion.

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