

## Donation will create Canada's first human embryonic stem cell library

June 27, 2007

Canada will have its first human embryonic stem cell library based at McMaster University thanks to a multi-million-dollar commitment this morning from a Hamilton businessman.

The library is one component in a \$50-million gift from David Braley that will transform family medicine, and forge new discoveries within the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine to treat such catastrophic illnesses as cancer, Alzheimer's and spinal cord injuries, as well as common illnesses like heart disease and diabetes.

In making the announcement, a clearly delighted Peter George, president of McMaster University, called Braley "a wonderfully generous citizen who feels the best investment for our region is to enhance education and health care." He credited Braley with recognizing the city's growth as a biomedical powerhouse.

"This commitment to the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine is an investment in education and health care for the people of Hamilton, Ontario and Canada," said Braley. "I see this as seed money that should be amplified by our Government and industry to continue to build the medical school, the Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University, and the Hamilton region.

"In the near future the Family Medicine Centre (which I hope will be located where it is most needed, right downtown), will help the people of Hamilton, including my employees. It is one way of giving back to my community.

"I am enthusiastic about the commitment to human embryonic stem cells research," said Braley. "It is an investment in our top scientists who will help develop cures for terrible illnesses.

"Finally, the third component of this gift -- an endowment fund -- will allow the medical school and its researchers and scientists an opportunity to achieve greater breakthroughs in health care. This fund will allow them to amplify their research by leveraging further investments from other groups."

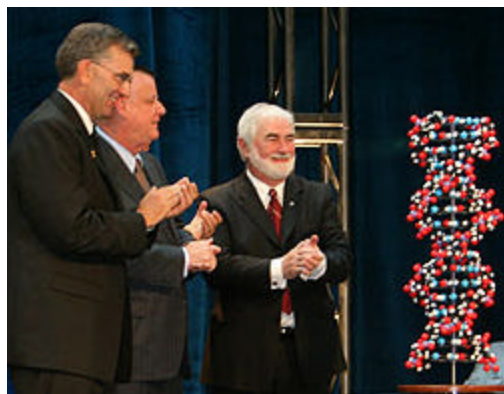
John Kelton, McMaster's dean & vice-president, Faculty of Health Sciences, said the investments will capitalize on the strengths of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine and the entire Faculty of Health Sciences.

"Mr. Braley's gift represents three important components: First, we will begin to develop a Family Health Centre where our physicians, nurses, midwives and rehabilitation specialists provide comprehensive care," he said. "We will seek partnerships from the province and our city to provide a comprehensive education, care and research centre that should be located in downtown Hamilton. The second component of the gift, the \$25 million endowment, will allow our scientists and health professionals the opportunity to develop new initiatives.

"Perhaps the boldest component of the gift is the \$15 million dedicated to enhancing human embryonic stem cell research through a stem cell library. This research holds promise to treat catastrophic illnesses that range from



David Braley donated \$50 million to the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, of which \$15 million will be used to establish a human embryonic stem cell library. Below, Roger Trull, vice-president University Advancement, David Braley and president Peter George unveil a DNA model. Below, David Braley addresses the audience that filled the student centre. Photos by Susan Bubak.



cancer to Parkinson's to spinal cord regeneration."

Human stem cells have shown to be a source of replacement cells, but early research suggests they can also be used to treat a variety of diseases and disorders, from Parkinson's to diabetes. McMaster's Stem Cell & Cancer Research Institute is the only facility in Canada dedicated to human embryonic stem cell research and is now expanding the use of human embryonic stem cell to understand cell growth especially in cancer and cell regeneration.

"Working with human embryonic stem cells is prohibitively difficult, so there are very few places in the world with the trained scientists, experience and the specialized infrastructure to overcome the barriers to success. McMaster is one of those places," said Mick Bhatia, scientific director of the McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute. "This is a distinct investment opportunity, and David Braley sees our vision of creating a platform for significant innovations in stem cell based tissue repair and novel therapeutics to eradicate human cancer."



Braley's commitment includes:

- \$10 million for a Family Medicine Centre that will not only serve the health care needs for Hamilton residents, it will be a model for family practice. Patients will benefit from care by a responsive, dynamic health care team that addresses the total need of the individual.

Innovations will include self-management programs for conditions such as diabetes, and better use of leading edge information technologies. This will allow McMaster to build on its strength in interprofessional collaborations as evidenced by McMaster's unique Maternity Centre. The Family Medicine Centre will be led by David Price, chair of the Department of Family Medicine.

- A \$25-million endowment fund available for research or capital. The intent of this fund is to allow flexibility to respond to new opportunities and to pursue research that holds the greatest promise to improve health. Because medical discoveries are often unexpected and sometimes unpredictable, this fund will allow the researchers greater opportunity to build on their discoveries as they happen.
- Canada's first human embryonic stem cell library will receive \$15 million. This will allow scientists in the Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine to dramatically amplify their research investigating the potential of human embryonic stem cells.

This initiative will be led by stem cell biologist, Mick Bhatia, a renowned leader in human stem cell research. Partnering with the Bhatia team of scientists will be Dr. David Andrews and his biochemistry group. This library will serve as a platform for stem cell study and therapeutics and has already attracted industry support.