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VIA EMAIL/U.S. MAIL

July 6, 2010

California Institute for Regenerative Medicine
Chairman and Board Members
210 King Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Re: CIRM Meetings

Dear Mr. Chairman and CIRM Board Members:

It has come to my attention on Monday, June 14, 2010 two members of the general public, Dr. Tina Stevens and Dr. Diane Beeson appeared at the Marriott Hotel to attend an 11:10 meeting on "Procurement of Human Oocytes: What Has Been the Experience to Date?" Upon timely arrival, they were informed the meeting had taken place earlier, without notice, and the meeting then in progress, "Medical Research Council Human SCNT Workshop," was not open to them because of concerns over intellectual property. This was reported by David Jensen in his California Stem Cell Report.

Don Gibbons, chief communications officer for CIRM responded to Mr. Jensen's comments stating that CIRM's "scientific workshops" are by invitation only. This is, according to Mr. Gibbons, done in order to assure scientists their proprietary and unpublished information will not be made public. This seems less than a satisfactory response to the unsettling issues raised by this incident.

1. CIRM's Scientific and Medical Accountability Working Group meeting procedures state on the website, it is "committed to an open and public access." Continuing, it asserts, "the business of this Working Group will be conducted in a spirit of openness and participation so that the recommendations of the Working Group reflect both the expertise of its members and the input of the people of California." Apparently this philosophy does not extend to CIRM's "scientific workshops" meetings.

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2. In perusing the CIRM website, I was unable to find listings for any “scientific workshops” meetings, and although Mr. Gibbons claims in his response to the California Stem Cell Report that they will be publishing a report from the workshop on their web site, none has yet appeared. In fact, I was unable to find any reports from any “scientific workshops.” What are these “scientific workshops,” why aren’t they listed, why aren’t the agendas posted and why aren’t reports provided?
3. Although Mr. Gibbons stated the workshop this week (does this mean they are having a workshop every week without any public awareness), was not on egg donation but on nuclear transfer research, he failed to make clear what aspects of nuclear transfer research were being discussed, which did not include the issue of egg donation.
4. Both Dr. Stevens of San Francisco State University and Professor Beeson of California State University, East Bay have spent a great deal of time in research and writing related to women’s health and specifically to the issues surrounding egg donation by women. Their opinions and ideas in this area are invaluable. CIRM should be talking with such people, not excluding them.
5. As the anticipated meeting on “Procurement of Human Oocytes,” cannot be located on CIRM’s website, it begs the question of who is discussing this and when?

I have been concerned for years with the procurement of human oocytes given the lack of research into both the short-term and long-term sequella. In fact, in 2007 CIRM sponsored the National Academy of Sciences’ workshop on, *Potential Long-Term Fertility Effects, Assessing the Medical Risks of Human Oocyte Donation for Stem Cell Research*, and if I recall correctly, one of the main conclusions was there was a dearth of information about long-term effects and more research was needed. Unfortunately, while millions of dollars are spent on research on stem cells, no funding has been set aside to study the long-term effects on women who take fertility drugs in order to produce oocytes, for whatever purpose.

The voters of California in passing Proposition 71, prohibited payment of money to women for donating oocytes for stem cell research. It has since become clear that few, if any, women will donate without compensation. Through its Standards Working Group and subcommittees it appears CIRM has subsequently implemented interim California regulations (OAL process pending). This new pending regulation [CCR 100082] allows CIRM funded researchers to use embryos and oocytes procured from reproductive clinics for which women were paid. As CIRM members are well aware, this does nothing to address women’s health risks for which more research is needed, and raises serious potential conflicts of interest problems.

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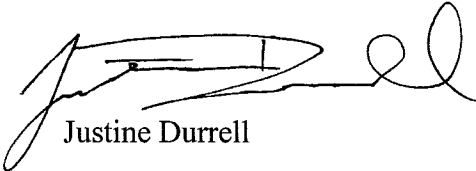
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I would not stand in the way of valuable research to benefit victims of devastating diseases and laud those who work diligently to make others' lives better. I will, however, request that CIRM take action on the conclusions from its NAS's sponsored workshop stressing more research is needed into the long-term health risks related to oocyte donation since CIRM has now decided to obtain and use for research oocytes/embryos for which women were paid.

Additionally, I emphasize the importance of CIRM's return to its commitment to an open and public process. In the end, openness and transparency will better serve all Californians. **Please obviously post in advance all meeting times and locations; the agenda; whether they are open or closed (the justifications therefore); and the transcripts/minutes/reports following the meetings.**

If I have misunderstood or misinterpreted some items as set forth above, I welcome your response.

Very truly yours,



Justine Durrell

cc: California Stem Cell Report