

Protein helps grow stem cells in adults

► The new research could mean better outcomes for cancer and leukemia patients.

WORLD CAPITOL BUREAU

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientists have identified a protein responsible for triggering the growth of adult stem cells, which could have an impact on treat-

ment for cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

Researchers determined that a protein, called Id1, controls the proliferation of marrow or adult stem cells.

The cells spend most of the time in a slumberlike state in bone marrow, according to

the Medical Research Foundation, an independent, nonprofit biomedical research institute based in Oklahoma City.

When the body produces the protein, it kicks the stem cells into action, keying their growth into mature, infection-fighting blood cells, said Xiao-Hong Sun, the senior author of a paper explaining the process in *Blood*, a scientific journal.

Sun said the protein had been identified some time ago. However, the fact it controls stem cell growth had not been known, she said.

She said the next step will be determining how to grow the stem cells outside of the body and returning them to the body at appropriate levels.

She said it could result in more stem cells available for transplants.

Sun said the key is being able to control the growth of the stem cells.

"If we can translate the basic research into a method of regulating adult stem cells in humans, it could spell better outcomes for cancer patients who undergo chemotherapy, for leukemia patients undergoing bone marrow transplants, and also for those who suffer from immune deficiencies," she said.

The research, which was supported by grants from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, used stem cells obtained from the bone marrow of mice.

These type of stem cells, possessed by humans of all ages, are not embryonic stem cells, which are found only in early-stage embryos.

Researchers battle believers in ghosts

Dear Action Line: An Associated Press story Friday — "That's the spirit: Belief in ghosts high" — reminded me of an old concern: "Is there no one out there to remind these believers in ghosts that there is no such thing?" These people vote and raise children — even though they believe in utter nonsense! Who straightens them out? — B.O.O., Tulsa.

The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (www.tulsaworld.com/csi) does. Its scientists and researchers have battled pseudoscience and the paranormal for the past three decades. Formerly the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, the group changed its name a year ago to avoid confusion brought by the word paranormal in its title.

"It always required an explanation that we weren't the promoters of the paranormal but the scientific investigators, the critical evaluators," writes Kendrick Frazier, the editor of its bimonthly magazine, *The Skeptical Inquirer*, in its Janu-



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ary/February 2007 issue.

The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry encourages the critical investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims from a responsible, scientific point of view and disseminates factual information about the results of such inquiries to the scientific community and the public.

It also promotes science and scientific inquiry, critical thinking, science education, and the use of reason in examining important issues.

To do so, the committee maintains a network of people interested in critically examining paranormal, fringe science and other claims. In contributing to consumer education, it also prepares bibliographies of published materials that carefully examine such

claims, encourages research by objective and impartial inquiry in areas where it is needed, convenes conferences and meetings, and publishes articles that examine claims of the paranormal. It does not reject claims on religious grounds without inquiry, but examines them objectively and carefully.

The committee is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization, started in 1976. *The Skeptical Inquirer* is its official journal. Some of CSI's founding members are scientists, academics and science writers such as Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Philip Klass, Paul Kurtz, Ray Hyman, James Randi, Martin Gardner, Sidney Hook and others. A list of CSI fellows is published in every issue of the magazine.

Initially, the group concerned itself with "the proliferation of paranormal claims in the media that were unexamined by scientific investigators — often on the borderlines of science," said Kurtz, the founder and chairman of the group's Center for Inquiry.

The center's scientists have unraveled and debunked astrology, psychokinesis, acupuncture, mummy's curses, perpetual motion machines, levitation, UFOs, psychics, police psychics, ESP, plant perception, faith healing, ghosts, cults, Mothman, Bigfoot, folk remedies, supernatural powers, paranormal gifts, the Bermuda Triangle, the Bible code, Voodoo, the Jupiter effect, the Shroud of Turin, intelligent design and hundreds more.

Contact CSI: Write to Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, Box 703, Amherst NY 14226 or call (716) 636-1425 or see an index of its reports and articles (1976 to 2003) in the magazine at www.tulsaworld.com/skepticalinquirerindex and a list of online articles since then at www.tulsaworld.com/skepticalinquireronline.

Submit Action Line questions to 699-8888. Action Line pursues consumer complaints submitted with photocopies of documentation to Tulsa World Action Line, P.O. Box 1770, Tulsa, OK 74102-1770.

OU receives \$11 million for diabetes study

By S.E. RUCKMAN
World Staff Writer

NORMAN — A high concentration of American Indian tribes and the incidence of diabetes among them helped state researchers land an \$11 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, officials said Monday.

The Institutional Development Award, one of three given nationally, went to the Harold Hamm Oklahoma Diabetes Center at the University of Oklahoma's Health Sciences Center.

OU will use the five-year renewable grant from the NIH's National Center for Research Resources to develop the research staff at the health sciences center to study diabetes, especially among Indians, said Dr. Jian-Xing Ma, principal investigator for the project.

"Nationally, the percentage of diabetes is 6 percent, but in Oklahoma that number is 10 percent, but we are finding that is a 2 to 40 percent rate among tribes here," he said.

"We will study why in

some tribes that incidence is higher than others."

Ma said the grant would help fund research that looks at variable factors such as diet and environment against constant factors such as genetics.

Diane Warren, a biological anthropologist at OU, said researchers would examine whether disparities exist among tribes with diabetes patients.

"One of the things we're hoping to do is get DNA samples from saliva samples to help us look at the environmental and genetic link to diabetes," she said. "Our long-term goal is to develop culturally appropriate intervention and treatment."

OU was one of three grant recipients with multidisciplinary research structures.

Other awards went to Rhode Island Hospital to study cartilage and joint health, and the University of Kansas Medical Center to study cell development.

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Young professionals will get government lesson

TYPros will present "Government 101" at noon Tuesday at the Tulsa Metro Chamber, 2 W. Second St., Suite 150. Admission is free, and the event is open to the public.

"Government 101" is a new

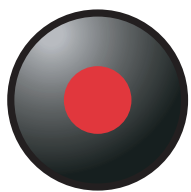
series designed to give young professionals a better idea of how government works and will educate from the inside-out on how government works on the local, state and federal levels.

Young professionals elected to office or working in politics will describe their governmental duties, share a few stories and answer questions about structure, responsibilities and experience.

This month, the focus will be on local government featuring Tulsa City Councilor Carson Carter and Tulsa County Commissioner John Smaligo.

For more information, call 560-0286.

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