

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Stem Cell Research

Recently the editors of *Cell* published a powerful statement on racism in science (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2020.06.009>). In their Editorial, our colleagues first summarized critical areas in which racism has been manifest in the scientific enterprise, including the racism that loomed over the early history of genetics, the exploitation of minority research subjects, the disparities in representation of many communities in biomedical databases, and the underrepresentation of minorities in the profession itself. Regarding the latter, although there is undoubtedly a pipeline problem with entry into the biomedical sciences at the undergraduate level, it is also clear that there are barriers to progression all along the path to a faculty position (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0190606>). To this list of wrongs, we should add the substantial inequities in disease burden and access to preventative medicine and medical treatment. We must bear this in mind particularly as stem cell research moves toward clinical translation.

The ISSCR, which owns *Stem Cell Reports*, has issued its own [statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). That statement noted the significant progress the Society has made with respect to the inclusion of women on its committees, in its leadership, and as invited speakers at its meetings, but also recognized that we have far to go in terms of other underrepresented groups.

The *Cell* Editorial outlined some concrete initiatives that journal would take to address the problem of racism, some of which were endorsed by Cell Press (<https://www.cell.com/black-lives-matter>), which publishes *Cell*. *Stem Cell Reports* will launch our own version of anti-racism and diversity initiatives as well. Our plans are as follows.

1. **Highlighting contributions from members of underrepresented communities.** If you are a member of an underrepresented community, and you wish for us to raise awareness of your work, we will publicize your contribution to the journal through social media and other means.
2. **Raising community awareness.** We need better hard data to understand this problem and to test the efficacy of potential solutions. We will strive to publish studies that provide information about representation of underserved populations in the profession and the barriers to their progress. We will also be interested to hear about how scientific institutions in the stem cell field are seeking to address these matters

now. Some moving personal accounts of the struggles faced by Black scientists in a professional and societal context have been published lately (e.g., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cels.2020.06.007>; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2020.06.019>; <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-02203-w>), and we would be keen to publish similar statements by stem cell scientists from underrepresented groups.

3. **Promotion of diversity in the Editorial Board and in our academy of reviewers.** The Publications Committee of the ISSCR is updating our Editorial Board to enhance diversity, and we will continue to pursue this course. I am also very interested to hear from members of underrepresented communities who would like to serve as reviewers for the journal.
4. **Diversity in stem cell platforms for research and therapy.** Because of the growing importance of stem cell technology in cell therapy, as well as in functional genomics, disease modeling, and drug discovery, we have a special responsibility to ensure that our studies are inclusive. At *Stem Cell Reports* we will require that studies reporting datasets from large stem cell panels, derivation of new panels of cell lines or creation of large cell line panels for disease modeling, or clinical trials provide some statement regarding inclusion of racial or ethnic minorities. The intent is not to set quotas, but rather to promote transparency in reporting as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

While recent events in the United States have highlighted the legacy of racism directed against its Black population, we recognize that science knows no borders and that racism is a problem that plagues many communities internationally. We therefore take a broad view of the scope of efforts to improve diversity and inclusion.

There are many dimensions to this problem, and we recognize that these are but small steps in what will be our ongoing effort to address discrimination in all of its forms. The time has come to act. I hope that all of you will help the journal to do its part to achieve this mission.

Martin Pera

Editor-in-Chief, *Stem Cell Reports*

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Author/s:

Pera, M

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