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Kompetenznetzwerk Stammzellforschung NRW UniStem Day 2016 - European Stem Cell Day

UniStem Day 2016 - European Stem Cell Day

A nation-wide day of action on stem cell research took place on 11 March, coordinated by the German Stem Cell Network (GSCN) in collaboration with the Stem Cell Network North Rhine-Westphalia. At eight locations in Germany, universities and institutes invited pupils from local schools to find out about stem cell research and take part in discussions with scientists.

The aim of UniStem Day is to provide a deeper understanding of the work taught in schools on stem cell research issues, to facilitate an insight into research practice and to arouse the curiosity of pupils and young undergraduates. The UniStem Day has taken place at universities and research institutes in Italy, Spain, the UK and Sweden since 2009. This year, eight German organisations took part in the day for the first time. The program at each of the sites was developed by the universities and institutes themselves. To form a common framework for the day, a short introductory film on UniStem Day was shown at all the sites and a live link was set up between the various locations at the start of the proceedings. All in all, 46 European universities and research institutes and up to 20,000 school pupils and students took part in UniStem Day this year.

The following institutes and institutions took part in North Rhine-Westphalia:

- the Department of Cell Morphology and Molecular Neurobiology at the Ruhr University of Bochum,
- the Alfried Krupp School Laboratory, Department of Theological and Sociological Issues (Bochum) in cooperation with the Institute for Church and Society, Evangelical Church of Westphalia (Schwerte)
- the Institute for Reconstructive Neurobiology at the University of Bonn in cooperation with Stem Cell Network North Rhine-Westphalia, and
- the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Biomedicine in Münster.

Following the day's Europe-wide launch, 60 pupils from the Lise-Meitner-Gesamtschule in Cologne, the Nicolaus-Cusanus-Gymnasium in Bad Godesberg and the Freie Waldorfschule in Sankt Augustin were given an insight into stem cell research during a number of lectures at the Bonn-based Institute for Reconstructive Neurobiology. Topics included the basics of stem cell research, ethical and legal aspects of research and typical applications from the fields of disease research, drug testing and the development of new treatments. Following the program of talks, the pupils were able to visit a number of different stations in the labs and talk to experts from various disciplines about their questions and views. The day ended with a quiz. Each of the participating schools nominated a champion to compete for a small prize in a stem cell research quiz based on the TV programme 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?'