



Report from Friedrich's ataxia cellular models and cell therapy meeting

On 12 May 2010, following on from the National Ataxia Foundation (NAF) scientific conference which took place in Chicago, a meeting was held for researchers working on stem cell and gene therapy approaches for Friedreich's ataxia. The aim was to facilitate communication and collaboration between researchers in order to progress towards treatments for Friedreich's ataxia.

The meeting was organised by the ataxia charities FARA, FARA-Australasia, FASI, NAF and Ataxia UK and was attended by approximately 20 researchers. A panel of three internationally renowned stem cell experts was also present for advice; Professors Ole Isacson, Jack Kessler and Bob Williamson.

The panel was impressed by the high standard of research and the collaboration between groups. They also highlighted that further work needs to be done to understand the properties of the iPS cells that are being developed. The group discussed how the characterisation work could be done and how the cells could be safely and securely stored in order to make them easily available to the FA research community. An online forum for researchers is also being established that will allow researchers to discuss results and technical questions with one another on a secure website.

The meeting was successful in establishing new working relationships and it is hoped that the group will continue to meet on a regular basis.

For more support or information please contact: Ataxia UK, Lincoln House, Kennington Park, 1 – 3 Brixton Road. London SW9 6DE

Website: www.ataxia.org.uk.

Helpline: 0845 644 0606 **Tel:** +44 (0)20 7582 1444 **Fax:** +44 (0)20 7582 9444

Email: helpline@ataxia.org.uk.