

STEM CELL AWARENESS DAY 2026

STEM CELLS AND THE CENTURY'S MAJOR MEDICAL CHALLENGES:

Cancer • Diabetes • Neurodegenerative Diseases



October 22, 2026

Private Faculty of Medicine of Marrakesh
Private University of Marrakesh
Marrakesh-MOROCCO

WELCOME NOTE



It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we welcome you to the second edition of Stem Cell Awareness Day at the Private University of Marrakesh. Organized in partnership with the Moroccan Society for Regenerative Therapies (MSRT), this event reflects our deep commitment to fostering a culture of scientific excellence, innovation, and interdisciplinary dialogue around the most urgent medical and research challenges of our time.

This year's theme, "Stem Cells and the Century's Major Medical Challenges: Cancer, Diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases," invites us not only to celebrate technological progress but also to explore how cutting-edge stem cell research can bring hope and new therapeutic solutions to patients and families affected by these devastating diseases.

Advances in stem cell science have revolutionized biomedical research, enabling us to replicate critical aspects of human pathology, develop novel therapeutic strategies, and accelerate the translation of basic research into clinical applications.

The true strength of this symposium also lies in its diverse assembly of leading researchers, clinicians, academics, students, and healthcare professionals, all united by a shared passion for improving health and saving lives. Through these exchanges, they form a dynamic platform for groundbreaking ideas, innovative collaborations, and the cross-pollination of expertise across disciplines.

At the Private University of Marrakesh, we see supporting these initiatives as a moral and scientific imperative. Investing in research, nurturing talent, and encouraging open dialogue are ways we contribute to building a healthier future for Morocco and the world.

My hope is that today sparks not only inspiring discussions but also lasting connections, fueling innovation and reinforcing the vital links between research, clinical practice, and the human stories behind every discovery.

On behalf of the university, I warmly welcome each of you. Thank you for being part of this important journey. May this second edition of Stem Cell Awareness Day be a source of inspiration, hope, and collective progress.



Prof. Mohamed KNIDIRI

President, Private University of Marrakesh

RATIONALE

The twenty-first century confronts an escalating burden of chronic and degenerative diseases. Conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and neurodegenerative disorders have emerged as some of the most significant global health challenges, driven by their increasing prevalence, complex pathophysiology, and the limitations of existing treatments.

Stem cell research provides invaluable tools elucidating human development and disease mechanisms. Its applications in disease modeling, drug discovery, precision medicine, and regenerative therapies are transforming our understanding of complex diseases and paving the way for innovative therapeutic strategies.

In oncology, stem cell research advances our knowledge of tumor heterogeneity, progression, metastasis, treatment resistance, and the elusive cancer stem cell populations. For diabetes, pluripotent stem cells can be differentiated into pancreatic endocrine cells, facilitating investigations into β -cell dysfunction and the development of cell replacement therapies. In neurodegenerative diseases, patient-derived induced pluripotent stem cells enable the generation of neurons, astrocytes, and microglia, along with three-dimensional neural models that closely mimic human pathology.

Despite these remarkable advances, translating stem cell science into clinical practice remains challenging. Issues related to cell safety, functional maturation, immune compatibility, large-scale manufacturing, long-term efficacy, ethical considerations, regulation, and accessibility necessitate meticulous and sustained efforts.

Following the inaugural Stem Cell Awareness Day in 2025, focused on induced pluripotent stem cells in Morocco, the second edition aims to expand the dialogue on how stem cells can contribute to addressing major human health challenges. On October 22, 2026, the Private University of Marrakesh (PUM), in partnership with the Moroccan Society for Regenerative Therapies (MSRT), will host the 2nd edition of the Stem Cell Awareness Day under the theme "Stem Cells and the Century's Major Medical Challenges: Cancer, Diabetes, Neurodegenerative Diseases."

The symposium will convene researchers, clinicians, academics, students, and professionals from biomedical research and regenerative medicine, fostering an environment for the exchange of groundbreaking ideas. Attendees will explore recent scientific advances, current clinical applications, existing limitations, and ethical and regulatory considerations. The event also seeks to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration, bridging oncology, endocrinology, neuroscience, stem cell biology, and regenerative medicine, to catalyze innovative solutions.

Through this initiative, PUM and MSRT reaffirm their commitment to strengthening national expertise, advancing specialized training, and fostering robust scientific collaboration. Our overarching goal is to support the growth of stem cell research in Morocco, integrating it with pressing clinical and biomedical challenges.

SYMPOSIUM LEADS



Prof. Mustapha NAJIMI

Symposium Chair

Vice-president for Research and Innovation
Private University of Marrakesh
Marrakesh, Morocco



Prof. Mohamed MERZOUKI

Scientific Coordinator

Faculty of Science and Technology
Sultan Moulay Slimane University
Beni Mellal, Morocco

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Marrakesh, Morocco



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Virgen de la Arrixaca University Hospital,
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Prof. Asmaa AZIZI



Prof. Manal SOUALI



Prof. M. Rabié SIKEL

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Prof. Zakaria OUHAZ
ISPITS, Marrakesh



Prof. Makram MERIMI
FSO, Oujda



Dr. Issam JANDOU
RHCB, Beni Mellal

SPEAKERS

Prof. Massimo DOMINICI

University Hospital of Modena and Reggio Emilia
Oncology Division
Modena, Italy



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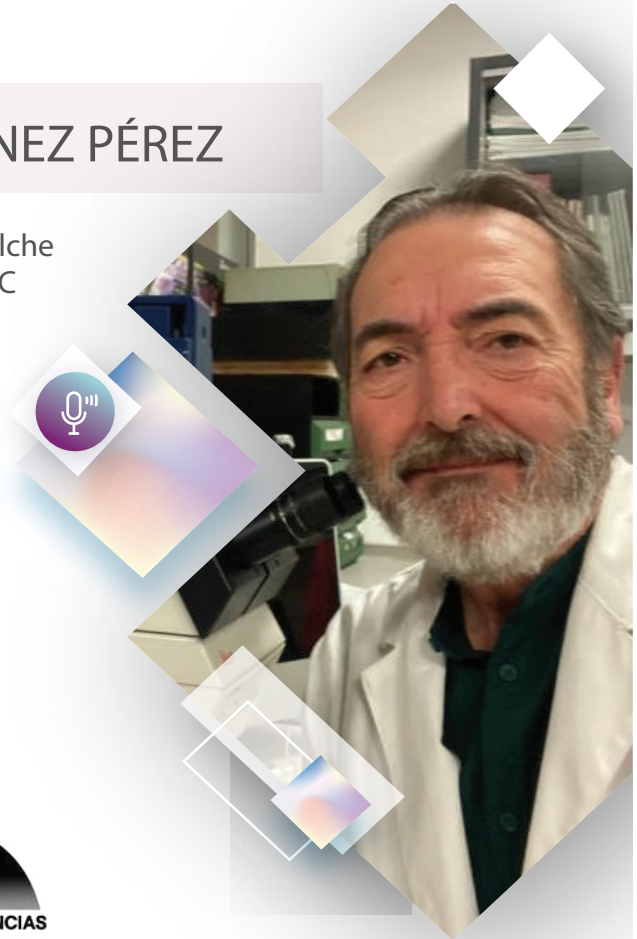
Massimo DOMINICI is a hematologist and oncologist and full Professor of Medical Oncology at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE), Italy. He directs the Oncology Division at the University Hospital of Modena and Reggio Emilia and, since November 2024, has served as Director of the Department of Surgical and Medical Sciences at UNIMORE. Since 2005, he has led the Laboratory of Cellular Therapies, securing more than €25 million in research funding. His scholarly contributions include approximately 350 publications, more than 63,000 citations, an H-index of 71, and 14 patents. He has delivered more than 330 invited lectures.

He founded the university spin-off Rigenerand and, more recently, EIR Biotherapies, a cell and gene therapy start-up. He advises several biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies and co-founded the Forum of Italian Researchers on MSC (FIRST). He is a former board member of JACIE and WBMT and a former scientific adviser to the Italian Minister of Health. He is a member of ISCT, ESMO, AIOM, AACR, and ASCO. He served as President of ISCT from 2014 to 2016 and is now an Emeritus Member. Since October 2019, he has served on the expert advisory panel for the INN, chairing its cell and gene therapy activities at the World Health Organization in Geneva.

SPEAKERS

Prof. Salvador MARTÍNEZ PÉREZ

Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche
Instituto de Neurociencias UMH-CSIC
Elche, Spain

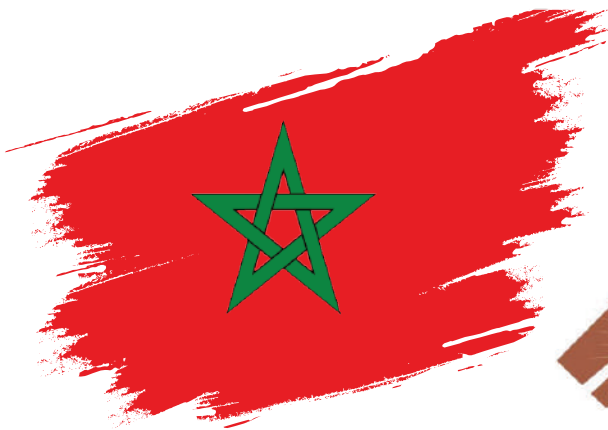


Salvador Martínez Pérez is a neuroscientist and full Professor of Anatomy at Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche (UMH), Spain, and Group Leader at the Instituto de Neurociencias UMH-CSIC. He served as Director of the Instituto de Neurociencias from 2016 to 2020 and previously as Deputy Director from 2007 to 2013. His research focuses on developmental neurobiology, cortical development, neuronal migration, brain regionalization, and the mechanisms underlying neurodevelopmental, neurodegenerative and neuro-oncological diseases. His work has generated over 31,700 citations, with an H-index of 92 and an i10-index of 327. He has made major contributions to FGF, Wnt and Shh signaling in brain development, LIS1-associated cortical dysplasia, neurovascular interactions and pericyte biology. His group has also developed cell-based neuroprotective strategies for ALS, ataxia and multiple sclerosis, contributing to several phase I/II and phase II clinical trials. He currently leads research on cerebral cortex disorders and advanced cell therapies within the Spanish TERA+ network.

SPEAKERS

Prof. Makram MERIMI

Mohamed first university
Faculty of Science
Oujda, Morocco



Makram Merimi earned a master's degree in molecular biology and biotechnology from the Université Libre de Bruxelles in 1999 and joined Professor P. De Baetselier's team at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, studying immune mechanisms in *Trypanosoma brucei brucei* infection.

In 2001, he received a Télévie–FNRS grant and developed an immuno-oncovirology programme at Institut Jules Bordet. He obtained his PhD in biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences from Université Libre de Bruxelles in 2007 and then investigated epigenetic mechanisms in B-cell tumour transformation.

From 2010 onward, his research focused on prognostic factors in acute leukaemia, the immune tumour microenvironment, genomics, epigenomics, bioactive molecules and mesenchymal stromal cells.

Since 2017, he has been Professor of Molecular Biology, Oncogenetics and Immunotherapy at the Faculty of Science-Mohamed first university, Oujda, where he leads the Genetics, Epigenetics and Immune Cell Therapy team. He is also a scientific collaborator at UCLouvain and supervises doctoral researchers at both institutions.

SPEAKERS

Dr. Elhem SBAA

InovReg
Senior Global Regulatory Affairs Consultant
Brussels, Belgium



Dr.Elhem SbAA is a scientist and regulatory affairs expert with more than 17 years of experience in clinical and CMC regulatory affairs. She is currently a Senior Global Regulatory Affairs Consultant in Belgium, she holds a PhD in Biology from the University of Rouen.

Her expertise spans stem cell therapies, tissue engineering, and medical devices across CROs and biotechnology companies including StemMedical and CelltoCure.

Dr.SbAA has a strong track record of establishing regulatory departments and advising major industry players including GSK and UCB, on navigating complex global requirements for biological products and cell therapies.

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM



09:30 am - 10:00 am **Registration and Welcome**

10:00 am - 10:30 am **Opening Remarks**

- President of the Private University of Marrakesh
- Dean of the Private Faculty of Medicine of Marrakesh
- President of the MSRT
- Symposium Chair

10:30 am - 1:00 pm **Scientific Session**

10:30 am - 11:00 am **Stem cells reimagined: from regeneration to precision therapeutics**

Speaker | **Prof. Massimo DOMINICI**

Professor of Medical Oncology
University Hospital of Modena and Reggio Emilia - Italy

11:00 am - 11:30 am **Bone marrow–derived mesenchymal stem cells exert neurotrophic effects in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis**

Speaker | **Prof. Salvador MARTÍNEZ PÉREZ**

Professor of Human Anatomy and Embryology
Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche / Instituto de Neurociencias, Elche - Spain

11:30 am - 12:00 pm **Mesenchymal stromal cells in cancer: from biological ambivalence to therapeutic engineering**

Speaker | **Prof. Makram MERIMI**

Professor of Molecular Biology, Oncogenetics and Immunotherapy
Faculty of Science - Mohamed first university, Oujda - Morocco

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm **EU regulatory requirements to successfully guide a cell therapy product to the market**

Speaker | **Dr. Elhem SBAA**

Senior Global Regulatory Affairs Consultant
Brussels, Belgium

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm **Discussion and Recommendations**

1:00 pm **Closing of the Symposium**

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Symposium– Stem Cells and the Century's Major Medical Challenges:
Cancer • Diabetes • Neurodegenerative Diseases
October 22, 2026 – Marrakesh, Morocco

STEM CELL AWARENESS DAY 2026

2nd edition



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جامعة معترف بها من طرف الدولة



Brochure concept and execution
Pr Mohamed MERZOUKI & Pr Mustapha NAJIMI
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