



California Cures!

How the California Stem Cell Program is Fighting Your Incurable Disease!

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Chapter One: the Absolute Minimum You Need to Know First

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1 THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM YOU NEED TO KNOW FIRST

Let me tell you a story.

During World War One, the great entertainer Al Jolson volunteered to sing at a war relief performance. Famous for his renditions of "Mammy," "Swanee," "California Here I Come," and many more, Jolson was a kind and generous man, always glad to help a good cause. All he asked, and this he insisted upon, was that he would sing last, in the star's position.

But this time, the organizers tried to talk him out of it, saying he might want to reconsider, when he knew who the other singer was. Jolson refused, saying it was out of the question, no matter who it was.

The great night came at last, and the first singer was Enrico Caruso, the greatest opera singer of all time.

At the peak of his form, Caruso sang and sang: Ave Maria, La Done I Mobile, Vesta La Giubbia, songs he personally had made classics. By the power of his voice, he blasted away all troubles and worries, and gave the audience joy. They wept, and clapped their hands sore, refusing to let him quit, bringing him back again and again, song after song after song. And finally, when exhaustion stopped him at last, he bowed and left the stage, exiting to a thunderous ovation.

How could anyone follow such a performance?

But when the room went silent at last, Al Jolson bounded out onto the stage, beaming like the sun.

And he spread his arms and said:

"Hang onto your hats, folks, you ain't seen nothin' yet!"¹

Hold that thought, please.

¹<http://www.jolson.org/nyt/nyt001022.html>



"You ain't seen nothin' yet!" Al Jolson (Wikipedia).



Bob Klein, founder of CIRM, ICOC member Claire Pomeroy, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, author Don C. Reed, advocate Roman Reed (CIRM photo).

In 2004, California worked a miracle. Bob Klein, father of a diabetic son, raised \$34 million for a citizens' initiative, Proposition 71, to build a state stem cell program. I had the good fortune to work beside Bob, first as a volunteer, and later as Vice President for Public Policy for Americans for Cures Foundation.

Proposition 71's goal? To challenge chronic disease and disability with \$3 billion (with a "b"!) dollars' worth of stem cell research.

When we began, one scientist suggested lowering our expectations: with the slow pace of testing for federal approval, and the sheer difficulty of chronic diseases, (one definition for chronic is "incurable"), we would be lucky to bring even one therapy all the way to human trials. Thankfully, he was mistaken.

Today, the California stem cell program has not one but 42 therapies which have been tested, are being tested, or will be tested in human trials within six months.

We have begun to win. In addition to the "bubble baby" cure (more on Evangelina later), California has made tremendous progress in:

Paralysis: an embryonic stem cell therapy has already returned hand and arm function to six paralyzed patients; each of the people in the most-recent trial.²

Diabetes: a stem cell "credit card" can be slipped under the skin, where it will develop and provide the insulin the body needs.³

Blindness: people who were profoundly blind have regained a measure of vision, and one woman saw her own children for the first time.⁴

Scientists are using regenerative medicine to lead the charge against cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, arthritis, ALS, heart disease, HIV-AIDS, Parkinson's Disease, and more.

With continued funding, California will save lives, ease suffering, and make the world a healthier place.

In the words of the immortal Al Jolson:

"Hang on to your hats, folks, you ain't seen nothin' yet!"

²<https://blog.cirm.ca.gov/2017/01/25/good-news-from-asterias-cirm-funded-spinal-cord-injury-trial/>

³<https://www.cirm.ca.gov/our-progress/disease-information/diabetes-fact-sheet>

⁴<https://blog.cirm.ca.gov/2017/03/21/a-stem-cell-clinical-trial-for-blindness-watch-rosies-story/>