

Media Release

## Key Medela Symposium Speaker takes Stem Cell Research Further

**Foteini Hassiotou from the University of Western Australia shows in her latest research preliminary evidence that stem cells that come from mothers' breastmilk can go on to transform into parts of the baby's body. Nearly 3 years to the day since Foteini Hassiotou was first quoted in the New Scientist in advance of Medela's International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium in Vienna, and she will be a speaker at Medela's 10 year Anniversary Symposium in Warsaw, April 17-18, 2015 again.**

Stem Cells in breastmilk continue to fascinate, and rightly so: Dr. Foteini Hassiotou's most recent research, which she will present at Medela's 10<sup>th</sup> International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium 2015 (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> April 2015, Warsaw, Poland), shows preliminary evidence from experiments with mice that stem cells that come from mothers' breastmilk can go on to transform into parts of the baby's body.

It was not so long ago, in 2007, that Dr Hassiotou's colleagues in the University of Western Australia (UWA) first developed the theory that breastmilk contained stem cells. Since then, the theory has become reality with intensive research into their therapeutic potential. Dr Hassiotou has been central to this research along with her UWA colleagues in the Hartmann Human Lactation Research Group (HLRG)

Medela has been working with the HLRG since the mid-1990's resulting in numerous scientific breakthroughs including overturning a 160-year old anatomical model of the lactating human breast, and a unique insight into the sucking, swallowing and breathing mechanism that babies must master to feed properly. Medela is committed to supporting research into the unique composition and value of human milk, hence the continued support into breastmilk stem cell research.

Peter Aggersbjerg, President of Medela's Business Unit Breastfeeding: said, *"We are proud that Medela can support scientists in their work to uncover the power and promise of human milk. The serious property of stem cells in terms of their potential to transform into different cell types is incredibly exciting and will stimulate research in their therapeutic applications. Equally, Foteini's latest discovery that stem cells from mother's milk might transfer to the baby's organs and body tissues are a tremendous motivation to us. It encourages us to continue our quest to support mothers globally to breastfeed and feed expressed breastmilk for as long as possible. We feel very privileged to be able to support Dr Hassiotou in her research and to welcome her once again to our International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium."*

### **New Scientist References:**

"Ethical and plentiful stem cells from milk," Linda Geddes, 19 November 2011

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn21160-breastmilk-stem-cells-may-bypass-ethical-dilemmas.html#.VHbzeaNbCos>

"Are breast milk stem cells the real deal for medicine?", Douglas Heaven, 14 March 2013

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21729084.800-are-breast-milk-stem-cells-the-real-deal-for-medicine.html>

"Breast milk stem cells may be incorporated into baby", Clare Wilson, 3 November 2014

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26492-breast-milk-stem-cells-may-be-incorporated-into-baby.html#.VF0lgWOO5yM!>

Baar, Switzerland, 3 December 2014

### **Contact**

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### **About Dr Foteini Hassiotou**

Foteini Hassiotou completed a B.Sc. in Biology at the Aristotle University of Greece, with First Class Honours in Microbiology. She then migrated to Perth completing two PhD degrees at the University of Western Australia (UWA). Her second PhD focused on breastmilk stem cells, breast development and cancer. Foteini is now a Research Fellow at the Hartmann Human Lactation Research Group (UWA) leading the Cell Biology Team of the Group. She collaborates with key research groups around the world, with focus on advancing the current knowledge on stem cells, lactation and cancer. After a personal family experience with brain cancer, she has recently commenced a new research program in collaboration with Prof. Anna Nowak on aggressive brain cancers. Her research has been widely recognized, with awards and articles highlighting the findings of pluripotent stem cells in breastmilk as well as the development of tests to assess the health status of the lactating breast and the breastfeeding mother and infant. She was the 2014 recipient of the Ehrlich-Koldovsky Award of the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation, and she serves as Editor for the Journal of Human Lactation.

### **About Medela's 10<sup>th</sup> International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium, Warsaw**

Medela's 10<sup>th</sup> International Breastfeeding and Lactation Symposium will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015 in Warsaw, Poland. Renowned speakers from all over the world, including Dr Foteini Hassiotou will present their work in relation to NICU, the value of human milk and the latest recommendations for based practice.

Further programme, registration and venue details on [www.medela-symposium.com](http://www.medela-symposium.com).

### **Media Programme**

A specific media programme is being developed in parallel to the Symposium giving media the opportunity to meet and exchange views and information with international researchers.

On Friday April 17, 2015, from 10.30-11.30am, we invite media to the **International media conference**, with all speakers present, with full access via Webcast. Please register under <http://www.medela.com/IW/en/breastfeeding/for-professionals/congress2015/media.html>.

We will also broadcast via Internet the three presentations of Friday afternoon, April 17, 2015.

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### **About Medela:**

Founded in 1961 by Olle Larsson and headquartered in Switzerland, Medela today is led by his son Michael Larsson. Medela concentrates on two business units: "Breastfeeding", which is leading in the development and production of breastfeeding products, and "Healthcare", which engineers and manufactures highly innovative medical vacuum technology solutions. Medela conducts basic research in partnership with leading scientists, medical professionals and universities, and uses the research results in the development of its products. Medela has 18 subsidiaries in Europe, North America and Asia, and together with independent partners distributes its products in more than 90 countries. The company employs over 1,500 staff worldwide, 330 of whom are located in the Canton of Zug, Switzerland. [www.medela.com](http://www.medela.com)