



THE VICTOR CHANG  
CARDIAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **New found pathway to fertility**

Scientists have for the first time discovered the early pathway to fertility. By identifying how immature reproductive cells migrate to gonad tissue in a developing embryo, they hope to shed light on reproduction and fertility.

By understanding this process, scientists hope to gain a better insight into the general mechanisms controlling other cell migration processes that are critical in normal development and are disrupted in diseases, such as cancer.

Until recently, scientists were at a loss to explain how the immature sex cells; known as primordial germ cells, travel from their point of origin in a developing embryo to the place of gonad development, where they mature into sperm and egg.

Dr Erez Raz, from the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Germany, found that to guide their path the germ cells in the zebrafish use a substance called *stromal cell derived factor* (SDF). SDF has been known for many years and has been identified as an important factor in diseases in later life, including cancer and inflammation. But little was known of its normal function in developmental biology.

Dr Erez will be presenting his findings about SDF as a guide in germ cell migration to gonad tissue during the 15th International Society of Developmental Biologists Conference in Sydney in September, organized by scientist from the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute (VCCRI). His findings may shed light on fertility and reproduction, not only in zebra fish, but also in mammals and humans.

For more information and to arrange access to Dr Raz's talk and interview with him at the Congress, please call Samantha Lucia - Communications and Marketing Manager-VCCRI on 02 8382 8415 or 0415 140 595.