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## THE PROBLEM OF STEM CELL DEFINITION

E. A. Vorotelyak<sup>a, \*</sup>, A. V. Vasiliev<sup>a</sup>, V. V. Terskikh<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Koltzov Institute of Developmental Biology, RAS, Moscow, 119334 Russia*

*\*e-mail: vorotelyak@yandex.ru*

Stem cells play a key role in development and homeostasis, regeneration and evolution. Over the past 150 years, the stem cell concept has undergone significant changes, but the exact definition of stem cells is lacking. The review discusses significant properties of stem cells such as self-maintenance, regenerative reserve, aging, plasticity and heterogeneity. The stem cell concept develops as new methods and techniques are developed to study the fundamental aspects of cell biology. The problem of definition and prospects for further research are discussed.

**Keywords:** stem cells, self-maintenance, microenvironment, plasticity, proliferation, hemopoiesis, epithelium, regeneration