

## Institutions join forces to find cause and cure for arthritis

Top researchers from the University of Maryland School of Medicine (Baltimore, MD, USA), The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine (Baltimore, MD, USA) and the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, MD, USA) will be brought under the same roof for the first time in the new Maryland Arthritis Research Center (MARRC; Baltimore, MD, USA), launched by the Arthritis Foundation (Maryland Chapter, MD, USA).

The MARRC will focus on looking into how abnormalities in the immune system cause arthritis and related disorders such as

rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus, erythematosus, scleroderma and polymyositis and, ultimately, find a cure. This initiative is being initially funded by the Arthritis Foundation, but will also receive a US\$3 million start-up grant to ensure its financial viability for its first three years. Arthritis is the top cause of disability in the US and affects one in every six Americans.

## First Virtual Research Institute established

A Virtual Research Institute has been set up by Boehringer Ingelheim (Ingelheim, Germany), which they say is the first of its

kind. The Institute will focus on aging and is designed to create a virtual network of scientists in the Pan-Pacific area.

Haruo Sugano, the Honorary Director of the Cancer Institute in Japan will be heading the Institute, which is hoped to increase the knowledge base of biology and to obtain access to innovative research programmes.

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# People

## Four new Directors for Exelixis

Four senior scientists join the drug discovery team at Exelixis (San Francisco, CA, USA). Peter Lamb joins as Senior Director of Molecular Pharmacology and Structural Biology, Kirk McMillan joins as Director of New Lead Discovery, John Nuss joins as Senior Director of Chemistry and Yifan Zhai joins as Director of Pharmacology. George Scangos, President and CEO of Exelixis, hopes that these appointments will help accelerate the pace of the company's drug discovery pipeline.

Lamb comes to the position from being Director of Transcription Research at Ligand Pharmaceuticals. He also has a background in cell-based assays for lead discovery and characterization, as well as in signal transduction and oncology. McMillan joins the company from Pharmacopeia, where he was Assistant Director of Drug Discovery. His research background specifically covers human nitric oxide synthase, as well as the general fields of biochemistry and combinatorial chemistry. Nuss leaves the job of Director of Organic and Medicinal Chemistry at Chiron Corporation to provide Exelixis with expertise in small-molecule drug discovery and combinatorial chemistry. He also has a background in oncology and diabetes. Zhai comes from the position of Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Cancer Research at Bayer where he worked as part of the Bayer-Millennium Pharmaceutical Joint Cancer Team.

## Long joins KuDOS Board

Ronald Long, Deputy Chairman of Amersham Pharmacia Biotech (APBiotech) and Vice-Chairman of Nycomed Amersham, has joined the Board of Directors of KuDOS Pharmaceuticals Ltd (Cambridge, UK) as Chairman. Previous positions held by Long include CEO of APBiotech since the merger of Amersham International's Life Science with Pharmacia Biotech, before which he was Commercial Director and then Managing Director of the Life Science business.

## US Director for Singapore genomics program

Edison Liu, Director of the Division of Clinical Sciences of the National Cancer Institute (Bethesda, MD, USA) has been appointed as Executive Director of the Genomics Program for the Republic of Singapore. This appointment comes at a time when the republic plans to spend ~US\$4 billion on their biomedical research infrastructure over the next 4–5 years. On the appointment, Liu said: 'The dream of genomic research requires significant partnerships between academia, industry and government. The Government of Singapore is unified, organized and strategic and, together with the academic establishment, pro-industry. Singapore is a country that understands and is committed to scientific development.'

Other advantages of Singapore cited by Liu were the highest educational standards in mathematics and science in the world and English as the spoken language. He also suggested that there could be specific significant advantages for genetic research in Singapore, saying that, 'The relevant resources for human genomics research are the ethnic diversity and the well-kept clinical databases. Such untapped resources might help speed up genetic research.' The main goal of the program is the creation of a database of Asian genomic information.

## New CEO for EPLcyte

Christopher Clement, recently Senior Vice-President and Chief Marketing Officer of Ares-Serono Group, has just been appointed to the post of CEO of EPLcyte Pharmaceuticals (San Diego, CA, USA). Clement is hoped to bring significant expertise in operation and product development in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. Clement has previously also been responsible for the US women's health business in the Ares-Serono Group, together with a variety of management positions at Searle Pharmaceuticals, Ciba-Geigy and Merck and Co.

Mich Hein, President of EPLcyte said: 'Chris has a proven track record in the planning and introduction of pharmaceutical and biotechnology products. This will be key as EPLcyte further develops its internal pipeline in the initial areas of infectious disease and sexual health and in broader corporate licensing arrangements of the Plantibody™ technology.'