

A New Partner for the International Knockout Mouse Consortium

A recent Commentary in *Cell* (The International Knockout Mouse Consortium, 2007) outlined the plans of three major programs in the US, Canada, and Europe to mutate all protein-encoding genes in the mouse using a combination of gene targeting and gene trapping in mouse embryonic stem (ES) cells. Clearly, the complexity and cost of such an undertaking requires the deployment of resources on a global level, and close coordination of the programs is essential to achieve the desired efficiency of scale. To that end, the International Knockout Mouse Consortium (IKMC) has been officially launched. A Letter of Intent, signed by the European Commission, the National Institutes of Health, and Genome Canada, details the principles and procedures of the Consortium. The first meeting of the IKMC was held on March 15–16, 2007 in Brussels, Belgium and provided an opportunity to delineate key program goals as well as to reach out to other groups from the US, Japan, and China that are also engaged in knockout mouse production. As a direct result of those discussions we are pleased to announce that a fourth group, the Texas Institute for Genomic Medicine (TIGM), has joined the IKMC.

TIGM is a nonprofit research institute founded in 2005 with a \$50 million award from the Texas Enterprise Fund to generate and study mouse models of human disease. As part of its mission, TIGM is developing a mouse ES cell gene trap library in the C57BL/6 genetic background. Currently this library contains in excess of 200,000 clones corresponding to more than 8,600 genes (www.tigm.org). When completed this year, it will contain more than 350,000 clones, and it is expected that this library will contain mutations in approximately 13,000 genes. In addition to creating knockout mice from this resource, TIGM will also make mutant C57BL/6 ES cell clones available to researchers from academia and the private sector. TIGM's ES cells and mice are available to researchers under a simple Material Transfer Agreement with terms and conditions similar to those established by the NIH-funded Mutant Mouse Regional Resource Centers. TIGM supports the free and open release of data and as such will deposit its gene trap tag sequence data in GenBank.

The Steering Committee of the IKMC encourages other organizations and groups like TIGM that are developing significant mouse knockout resources to join the Consortium.

The IKMC subscribes to the principles of free and open release of data, the sharing of new mouse knockout technologies, the coordination of production plans, the coordination of public communications regarding the international effort, and the coordination of issues related to the efficient archiving and distribution of resources to the scientific community. Increased international cooperation among mouse mutagenesis programs will significantly enhance the mouse genetic resources available to the scientific community and will further our understanding of human biology and disease.

Francis S. Collins,^{1,5,*} Richard H. Finnell,^{2,5} Janet Rossant,^{3,5} and Wolfgang Wurst^{4,5}

¹National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD 20892, USA

²The Texas Institute for Genomic Medicine, 2121 W. Holcombe Boulevard, Houston, TX 77030, USA

³Program in Developmental Biology, Hospital for Sick Children, 555 University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 1X8

⁴Institute of Developmental Genetics, GSF National Research Center for Environment and Health, Ingolstaedter Landstrasse 1, 85764 Neuherberg, Germany

⁵Authors represent the International Knockout Mouse Consortium

*Correspondence: francisc@mail.nih.gov
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