
RNAi Global Initiative Members Meet to Establish Collaboration and Accelerate Biomedical Discovery Using Genome-Wide siRNA Library;

Team Begins to Define Standards for RNAi Experiments

LAFAYETTE, Colo., Dec. 7, 2005 — The Genome-Wide RNAi Global Initiative, an alliance of Dharmacon, Inc. and 10 leading international research centers pioneering the use of whole-genome RNAi screening, today reported results from its first meeting. The participating institutions are among the first laboratories in the world to have complete human genome-wide siRNA collections. The Genome-wide RNAi Global Initiative members are taking the rare approach of actively collaborating and sharing information to rapidly advance the collective productivity of genome-wide screening.

“The initial meeting of the Genome-wide RNAi Global Initiative was very productive,” said Dr. Gordon Mills of University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. “We were impressed by the open exchange and active collaboration. This is a promising first step in the pooling of our collective experiences and expertise to increase the utility and productivity of this powerful new tool.”

At the group’s first gathering, participants shared best practices and successes from preliminary human genome-wide siRNA screening and discussed how they might collaborate to accelerate biomedical discovery using the genome-wide library. The meeting focused on developing standardized procedures for data gathering intended to accelerate the group’s progress. The team will identify standards that will facilitate generation of reproducible intra-laboratory results. This effort, termed MIARE, for Minimal Information About RNAi Experiments, will propose standards for sharing results across the wider biomedical-research community. The team also agreed to solicit additional input from other external sources.

“We are delighted both with the spirit of scientific inquiry and collaboration that characterized our first session and with the goals and initial actions,” said William S. Marshall, Ph.D., vice president of technology and business development for Fisher Biosciences. “Since our founding, Dharmacon’s vision has been to help scientists realize the tremendous potential of RNA interference, and we believe that this innovative RNAi Global Initiative will play a critical role in making this vision a reality.”

The first human genome-wide siRNA library represents a fundamental breakthrough in discovery biology. Laboratories use siRNA to turn off or “silence” human genes in cell culture. By conducting screening experiments that sequentially turn off individual genes in the genome, researchers are able to determine the function of each gene. The genome-wide siRNA library also enables researchers for the first time ever to conduct unbiased screens, meaning that no prior knowledge of gene function is required to conduct experiments designed to elucidate complex biological pathways and networks. This capability will enable researchers to discover unanticipated biological functions and better understand the mechanisms of human disease.

By enabling scientists to take a systems approach to their research, the genome-wide library also facilitates screening for novel treatment approaches in cancer, inflammation, and infectious disease. Ultimately, the individual experiments conducted using the genome-wide siRNA library will contribute to the development of a functional map of the entire human genome.

The Genome-wide RNAi Global Initiative members plan to meet twice a year.

About the Genome-Wide RNAi Global Initiative

The Genome-Wide RNAi Global Initiative is an alliance of leading international biomedical researchers, established to increase and accelerate the utility of human genome-wide siRNA libraries. These libraries have the potential to fundamentally change biological research by dramatically increasing scientists' ability to understand disease mechanisms and facilitating faster new drug discovery and development. The Global Initiative is providing a forum for member institutions to share research protocols, establish experimental standards and develop mechanisms for exchanging and comparing screening data. Membership is open to not-for-profit biomedical research institutions across North America, Europe and Asia. The Global Initiative is being coordinated under the auspices of Dharmacon, Inc.

Founding members include The Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research at Princess Margaret Hospital and Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute at Mount Sinai Hospital, both with The University of Toronto; Cancer Research UK (CRUK) funded scientists at the London Research Institute and the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR); The German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ); UNMC Eppley Cancer Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center; Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI); The Scottish Centre for Genomic Technology and Informatics based at the University of Edinburgh Medical School (GTI); University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Yale University; The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and The University of Cambridge scientists at the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research and MRC Cancer Cell Unit.

About Dharmacon

Dharmacon is a business unit within the Fisher Biosciences group and the world's leading provider of reliable, high quality RNA oligonucleotides, small interfering RNA (siRNA) and related RNA-interference (RNAi) products and technologies. Using its core expertise in chemistry, biology, bioinformatics and production, Dharmacon has developed industry-leading siRNA design, chemical modification, and delivery technologies for maximizing the efficiency of gene silencing. Dharmacon's proprietary SMARTselection™ and SMARTpool® technologies result in potent and specific gene-silencing agents that can accelerate life-science research and drug discovery. Dharmacon's siGENOME™, a comprehensive and flexible siRNA collection, offers guaranteed silencing reagents for all unique human, mouse and rat genes. The company's advanced siRNA modification technologies further enhance silencing specificity, stability, and *in vivo* performance. For more information about Dharmacon products and services visit www.dharmacon.com or call 303-604-9499.

About Fisher Biosciences

Fisher Biosciences, a unit of Fisher Scientific International Inc. (NYSE: FSH), manufactures and supplies a wide range of products and services across the general-chemistry and life-sciences arenas. From fine and high-purity chemicals, clinical diagnostics, proprietary protein-research and cell-culture products, and sterile-liquid-handling systems, to innovative RNA-interference technology, Fisher Biosciences serves scientific-research, healthcare, drug-discovery, and general-industrial customers around the world.

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