

Comparative gene expression profiling indicated that genes in the *phnAB* operon, including *pqsA–E*, were controlled by the *mvfR* and subsequent genetic inactivation established catalytic roles for proteins in the HHQ pathway, in which 4-hydroxy-2-heptylquinoline (HHQ) produced as a major congener is the direct precursor of PQS.

Finally, the authors demonstrated that in the bacterial community PQS production also relies on the HHQ available in the extracellular milieu. As another N-oxide

HHQ derivative has the major antimicrobial activity of all HAQs, whereas PQS does not, they probably reflect two different messages conveyed among the cells.

This work identifies and characterizes a second signaling molecule and its link to the primary QS system of *P. aeruginosa* that commonly causes nosocomial chronic infections of immunocompromized patients. Particularly, HHQ and PQS were found to be significant in the lungs of cystic fibrosis

patients. The HHQ biosynthetic pathway and its regulation should represent an array of potential drug targets for treating this disease.

- 8 Déziel, E. *et al.* (2004) Analysis of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 4-hydroxy-2-alkylquinolines (HAQs) reveals a role for 4-hydroxy-2-heptylquinoline in cell-to-cell communication. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 101, 1339–1344

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Business

Collaborations

BioXell and ProSkelia collaborate in osteoporosis

BioXell SpA (<http://www.bioxell.com>) and ProSkelia SAS (<http://www.proskelia.com>) have announced an R&D collaboration for drug candidates based on vitamin D3 analogues for the treatment of osteoporosis and secondary hyperparathyroidism (HPT).

BioXell's broad vitamin D3 platform has enabled them to discover several novel compounds, some of which fall outside the company's key focus areas of urology and inflammatory diseases. ProSkelia have concentrated its research efforts on the development of novel treatments for osteoporosis and other bone diseases.

Roland Baron, Founder and CSO of ProSkelia, said: 'The compounds involved in this collaboration are core to our business and will augment our existing pipeline of products aimed at this therapeutic field.' Founder and CEO of BioXell, Francesco Sinigaglia, commented: 'The coupling of BioXell's expertise in vitamin D3 with ProSkelia's discovery and

development capabilities... is a powerful combination designed to result in the expedited discovery of patentable clinical drug candidates.'

Archemix and JnJ: GPCR targets and aptamers

Archemix (<http://www.archemix.com>) have announced a target validation collaboration with Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical R&D (<http://www.jnj.com>), which will focus on validating G protein-coupled receptor (GPCR) targets.

Errol De Souza, President and CEO of Archemix, said: 'Archemix is enthusiastic about the opportunities for using aptamers for target validation. ... Archemix will be able to leverage the aptamer technology generated in these collaborations for use within its aptamer therapeutic programs.'

Archemix is a biopharmaceutical company focused on discovering and developing aptamers as a new class of directed therapies for a wide range of disease areas.

Chemogenomics collaboration: Iconix and Abbott

Iconix Pharmaceuticals (<http://www.iconixpharm.com>) have entered a research collaboration with Abbott Laboratories (<http://www.abott.com>) to apply Iconix's chemogenomics technology in Abbott's drug discovery and development efforts.

Iconix's DrugMatrix® system – the world's largest source of information on the genomic effects of drug and chemical treatments – and library of Drug Signatures™ will be used, as well as technology to identify biomarkers for the clinical development and commercialization of Abbott's therapeutic products.

James B. Summer, divisional VP, Advanced Technology, Drug Discovery at Abbott, said: 'Iconix's technology will enhance our understanding of potential drug candidates and can be applied throughout Abbott's R&D process.' Jim Neal, CEO of Iconix, commented: 'We are confident that in the near future chemogenomics will become a key tool in drug discovery and development and an integral part of regulatory submissions.'

Business was written by Joanne Clough

People

Appointments

Affibody appoints new Chief Scientific Officer

Affibody (<http://www.affibody.com>), a Swedish company focused on the areas of

bioseparation, proteomics and bioinformatics, has announced the appointment of Lars Abrahmsén as CSO, replacing one of the company's founders, Stefan Ståhl, who has returned to his academic professorship. Ståhl will remain as a scientific advisor to the company.

Abrahmsén joins Affibody from Biovitrum, where he was senior project team leader.

Torben Jørgensen, CEO of Affibody, said: 'Having Lars Abrahmsén in our management team... is highly beneficial for us. This recruitment supports our progression of development of protein therapeutics using Affibody molecules.'

Abrahmsén, who is recognized for his work on protein pharmaceuticals, said: 'Affibody's technologies hold very

interesting opportunities in the fields of biotherapeutics, as well as general protein research technologies... I look forward to the exciting challenge of taking Affibody's strategic research and development efforts further.'

Andy Morffew named as Chief Executive Officer of the Automation Partnership

Andy Morffew has joined the Automation Partnership (TAP; <http://www.automationpartnership.com>) as CEO. TAP is a leading provider of advanced industrial automation solutions for the global life sciences industries.

Morffew is a physicist by training and received his PhD from Birkbeck College, London, working under Professor Sir Tom Blundell, and joins TAP from Parexel, where he was president of the Consulting Group. Prior to Parexel, he spent 18 years at IBM, eventually leading the European Pharmaceutical and Process Industries Practice.

Commenting on his appointment, Morffew said: 'I look forward to working with the superb team in place at TAP to build on their industry-leading reputation; helping take the company to the next level in designing and developing automation solutions for the life sciences industry.'

Chiltern International expands its regulatory team

The clinical research organisation Chiltern International (<http://www.chiltern.com>) has appointed Sharon Rouse to the position of Regulatory Affairs Officer. Rouse has a wide industry experience, gained over 25 years.

A pharmacist by trade, Rouse has held positions as a Quality Assurance Director and worked extensively in African countries. In these positions she was responsible for both Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs.

Commenting on her new role, based in Slough, UK, Rouse said: 'Working and

living in Africa certainly put my skills to the test and I hope this will be of value to Chiltern International. Clinical research is a new and exciting area for me and I hope to learn from it as well as be able to utilise the experience and skills I have gained over the years'.

Mercury Computer Systems appoint new VP of Organization Development

Mercury Computer Systems (<http://www.mc.com>) has appointed Craig A. Saline as Vice President, Organization Development, reporting to President and Chief Executive Officer Jay Bertelli. Saline has extensive experience working in large corporations and small entrepreneurial settings and has been involved in technology, consumer products and healthcare industries. He has specific expertise in change management, team development and business process improvements.

Commenting upon the appointment, Bertelli said: 'Craig has the knowledge and the ability to create and execute strategic human resources initiatives that will develop our most valuable assets – our associates, further expand the skills of our associates and continue to draw and maintain the very best and brightest talent.'

Mercury Computer Systems is the leading supplier of high-performance embedded, real-time digital signal and image processing computer systems. Their systems are used in state-of-the-art medical diagnostic imaging devices including MRI, PET and digital X-ray.

Appligent names new Product Manager

Bruce Salkovitz has been appointed to the position of Product Manager at Appligent (<http://www.appligent.com>), a leading provider of server-based tools and plug-ins for electronic document customization, manipulation and delivery. Salkovitz has over 16 years' experience in the information technology field and has spent

the last six years in the pharmaceutical industry, working for Liquent. In his new role, Salkovitz will manage the direction of all of Appligent's server-based products and will be instrumental in the development and launch of new applications.

Virginia Gavin, President of Appligent, commented: 'With his strong background in PDF-related document management, and his many years of experience in a customer facing position for a development organization, Bruce was the ideal choice for us.'

Awards

Paul Clarke wins prestigious award for cancer research

Paul Clarke of the Biomedical Research Centre at the University of Dundee (<http://www.dundee.ac.uk>) has been awarded the prestigious Wolfson Research Merit Award from the Royal Society for his work on cancer cell biology. The purpose of this award is to give institutions additional support to attract to this country, or to keep here, researchers of outstanding achievement and potential.

Clarke's research has focused on the ways that cancer cells divide and evade apoptosis and his team has made numerous important discoveries since moving to Dundee five years ago. Commenting on his award, Clarke said: 'This award acknowledges the importance of the work carried out by the dedicated scientists and students in my research team... together with our colleagues, we hope to make further discoveries about cancer cells that will help the development of more effective therapies in the future.'

People was written by
Steve Carney and Chris Watson