Newsletter

11 2006

NEWS

First annual meeting of Sens-it-iv project held in Hannover.

Sens-it-iv is a European 6th Framework project whose overall aim is to develop strategies to replace animal experimentation by in vitro assays identifying skin and respiratory sensitizers in relation with the use of safe ingredients by the chemical, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry.

The ultimate deliverables of the project are in vitro tests and test strategies allowing the testing of the sensitizing potency of existing and new chemical entities produced by European industries, for classification and labeling as required by the new EU legislation on chemicals, and for the purpose of risk assessment as required by the 7th amendment to the Cosmetic Directive.
The scientific objectives of Sens-it-iv are to acquire a solid understanding of the processes occurring in vivo when tissue is challenged by a potential sensitizer.

Federica Sallusto

Sens-it-iv aims to develop assay systems that model sensitization, rather than irritation and toxicity of chemicals and proteins.
In October, all participants met in Hannover to present the progress obtained during the first year.

When developing cell-based test systems, a good understanding of what is happening in the entire body (in vivo studies) and the mechanisms that are responsible (in vivo mechanisms) is a prerequisite for success.
In order to obtain this understanding a technology, called precision cut lung slices (PCLS), was implemented. This technique makes it possible to address cellular and functional responses to hazardous compounds for example.

To date we can announce that the technology is being prepared for transfer to human lung slices and that this transfer will be completed by June 2007.

While waiting for the in vivo data Sens-it-iv has embarked on the establishment of catalogues for available epithelial cell lines, primary dendritic cells and cell lines and primary T-cells, which are the main players in sensitisation and allergy development. Simultaneously, catalogues for cell culture conditions affecting these cells in vitro are being established. This information is stored in a central repository for Sens-it-iv data.

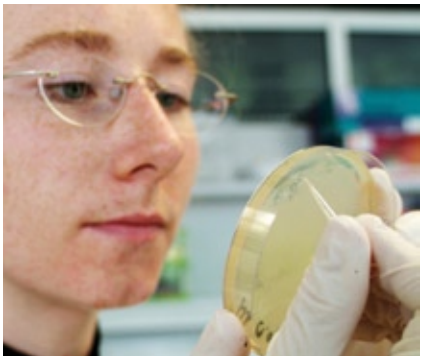
According to the time plan (September 2008), these catalogues should be substantial enough to allow selection and evaluation of the most in vivo like cell types, as well as the cell culture conditions sustaining these cells in vitro, by comparison with the in vivo human counterparts as identified by PCLS.

Among the promising outcomes of the first 12 months of Sens-it-iv was a set of tests performing well on a learning panel of compounds including skin and respiratory sensitizers. Three of these tests were selected for inclusion into an ongoing COLIPA ring trial study for further evaluation.

For more info: http://www.sens-it-iv.eu

Christina Helbig receives a prestigious Boehringer Ingelheim scholarship.

Christina Helbig, student in Jeremy Luban's group, has been awarded a 2 year scholarship to complete her PhD project called "Understanding the mechanism of HIV-1 restriction by TRIM-5".



Christina Helbig

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation (BIF) pays particular attention to the promotion of junior scientists. Three times a year, the Foundation awards approximately 15 long-term PhD scholarships focusing on basic research. The BIF PhD scholarships are granted for at least two years and can be extended for an additional twelve months. The BIF has gained an excellent reputation for spotting gifted young scientists. The purpose of the Foundation is the exclusive and direct promotion of basic research in biomedicine. Projects aim to experimentally elucidate the basic phenomena of human life.

The BIF approach to funding young scientists is intended to favor social interaction between awardees. In fact the BIF has for years omitted the interim report in favor of interactive discussions during regularly scheduled meetings. At these meetings they also provide the awardees with training in science communication and encourage intense, open interaction throughout the scholarship period.

Other recent recipients of BIF scholarships at the IRB include Dirk Baumjohann from the group of Federica Sallusto.

The second Musica e Molecole: A Cosmic Event.

It took nearly 4 hours to set up the complex percussion set needed to perform Stockhausen's Komet at the second Musica e Molecole, and, strangely, at least as much time to take it down. Prof. Jeremy Luban presented a talk "Ascoltare l'HIV: riflessioni di un ricercatore

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The Hall of the IRB Institute

sull'AIDS" and Fabrizio Rosso and Luca Congedo explained the complex construction of the music of Stockhausen. The musicians created a three dimensional sound using the unique architecture of Palazzo Fabrizia and multiple channel audio.

The Hall of the IRB Institute

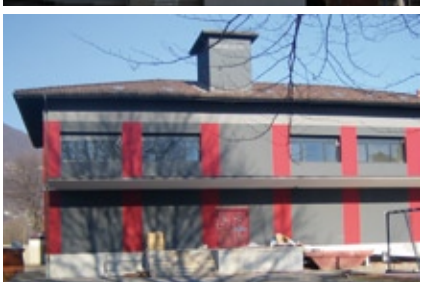
Clearly a challenging agenda for a cold and rainy Friday night, but the performance was generally viewed as a success by the 60 guests who carried on a lively conversation during the cocktail which followed the event.

The next Musica e Molecole is scheduled for Spring 07' with a lecture by Antonio Lanzavecchia.

For more info: http://www.ticinoscienza.com/musicaemolecole/index.php

IRBIS Makeover On Schedule.

Work on the transformation of the DIY store into a state of the art research facility is proceeding on schedule.



Massive diamond edged saws were used to perforate the armored cement floors to allow the autoclaves to be installed. Internal walls are up and electrical and plumbing are already at an advanced state. The exterior has been painted and "tagged" with the IRB logo.

Exterior view with the IRB logo

EVENT CALENDAR

Wednesday, November 8th, 2006
Bernard Malissen: "Lymphoproliferative disorders proper to defective LAT signalosomes"
Centre d'Immunologie Inserm-CNRS, Marseille, France

Monday, November 13th, 2006
Anjana Rao: "Signalling to transcription: the calcium / calcineuring / NFAT signaling pathway"
The CBR Institute for Biomedical Research, Boston, USA

Wednesday, November 15th, 2006
Paul O'Shea: "Raft-dependent modulation of receptro-mediated signaling reactions in cell membranes"
Cell Biophysics Groups, School of Biology, University of Nottingham, UK

Thursday, November 16th, 2006
Luca Varani: "A solution method for rapid footprint mapping of pMHC/TCR interactions"
Standford University School of Medicine, Dept. of Structural Biology, Standford, USA

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