**Dublin City University Licensing Opportunity**

**LIFE SCIENCES**

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**microRNAs in Cell Lines for Biopharmaceutical Production**

**INTRODUCTION**

The majority of biopharmaceuticals are manufactured using Chinese Hamster Ovary (CHO) cells which are grown in large bioreactors. Although the efficiency of CHO-based processes has improved in the last two decades, they are considerably less productive than bacterial or yeast systems. With a market value >$50bn per annum (70% made in CHO) in the US alone there is significant commercial opportunity for any technology that can deliver enhanced process efficiencies.

**BACKGROUND**

The Mammalian Cell Engineering Group at the National Institute of Cellular Biotechnology (NICB) DCU has focused its research on improving the performance of the CHO production platform by employing genetic engineering approaches in order to achieve these improvements. A major research focus has been on the use of microRNAs (miRNAs or miRs). These short RNA molecules bind to multiple mRNA targets within a cell to down-regulate their expression and are now recognised as a fundamental class of regulatory molecules, rivalling even transcription factors.

As potential engineering tools in the production of biopharmaceuticals they have two extremely attractive properties:

1) manipulating their levels within a cell - up or down - does not exert an extra translational burden on the host cell hence avoiding competition with the translation of the ‘product’;

2) modifying the levels of a single miRNA can influence the expression of hundreds of target genes, opening up the possibility of engineering entire cellular pathways and processes via a single intervention.

**TECHNOLOGY**

Dr. Niall Barron and his colleagues were the first in the world to report on differential miRNA expression in CHO cells and to identify a miRNA involved in regulating bioprocessing-relevant phenotypes in CHO cells. The team discovered that miR-7 could be used as a potential genetic tool to improve CHO cell growth in the bioreactor (high cell density in the bioreactor is desirable for an efficient/productive process).

**RESEARCH AND IP STATUS**

Research is on-going at DCU.

US Pat No: US8476244; was granted to DCU in August 2013 and describes the use of miR-7 engineering to modify CHO cell growth to improve recombinant protein production.

EU Pat No: EP2046970 is pending and includes the use of 20 other miRNAs for engineering CHO behaviour in the bioreactor.
TYPE OF BUSINESS SOUGHT

Available for licensing. We are also interested to talk to companies interested in collaborations and strategic partnerships.

CONTACTS

For more information please contact:
Emma O’Neill
Business Development Manager, Life Sciences
Invent DCU
Glasnevin
Dublin 9
email: emma.oneill@invent.dcu.ie
tel: +353 1 7007741

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS


Barron, N; Piskareva, O; Muniyappa, M; Piskareva, O; Clynes, M; Barron, N* Targeted genetic modification of cell lines for recombinant protein production. CYTOTECNOLOGY,2007, Apr. 53 (1-3): 65-73