Ingenious Brain

InnoMarch 2024

Monthly top innovations in Life Sciences & Healthcare

4th March 2024

Innovative 3D-printed Skin Accelerates Wound Healing & Encourages Hair Follicle Regeneration

Researchers have developed a groundbreaking method utilizing fat tissue to 3D print layered living skin, potentially including hair follicles. By leveraging fat cells and their supporting structures from human tissue, they successfully corrected injuries in rats, paving the way for improved reconstructive facial surgery and hair growth treatments. Published in Bioactive Materials and granted a patent in the US, the technology allows for intraoperative printing of full-thickness skin layers, with promising implications for more natural and aesthetically pleasing reconstructions in humans. This advancement offers hope for enhanced dermatological procedures, hair transplants, and plastic surgeries, potentially revolutionizing clinical skin reconstruction.

MRI Reveals Progression of Crown Rot Infection in Strawberries

Researchers at the University of Eastern Finland utilized magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to study the impact of the pathogen Phytophthora cactorum on strawberry plants, causing crown rot and significant crop losses. Published in Scientific Reports, the study revealed distinct differences between healthy and infected plants over three weeks, with infected plants showing elevated relaxation times in their crowns. MRI allowed for non-destructive visualization of infection progression, confirmed by anatomical analysis post-experiment. This novel application of MRI in plant research opens avenues for disease monitoring, understanding plant-pathogen interactions, and developing preventive strategies.

5th March 2024

Scientists Showcase Electronic Control of Living Cells

University of Maryland researchers have pioneered a groundbreaking experiment linking E. coli bacteria with electronic devices, establishing the first closed-loop system bridging the gap between technology and biology. Published in Nature Communications, the study showcased how electronic signals can control biological processes in real-time through chemical reactions and genetic engineering. Led by bioengineering Professor William E. Bentley and Research Professor Gregory F. Payne, this advancement could lead to the development of innovative healthcare devices and environmental conservation solutions. The team's work on "electrogenetics" demonstrated how E. coli cells could be engineered to respond to electricity, offering opportunities for diverse applications in healthcare, agriculture, and beyond.

6th March 2024

Accessing Thousands of Natural History Specimens through Free CT Scans

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7th March 2024

Bioengineering Firm Develops Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells from Elephant Dermal Cells

Colossal Biosciences, a pioneering bioengineering company, has successfully generated induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) from elephant skin cells, a crucial step in their mission to revive extinct species like the wooly mammoth. Despite encountering challenges due to the unique biology of elephants, the researchers devised a novel approach involving chemical treatments and genetic modifications. This resulted in the creation of four lines of elephant iPSCs, exhibiting characteristics similar to those of other species. The ultimate aim is not to resurrect wooly mammoths but to engineer mutant elephants with mammoth-like traits, offering potential ecological benefits when reintroduced into habitats like Siberia.

Novel Method CRISPRlnc Introduces lncRNA-Specific SgRNA Design Approach

Researchers at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) have developed CRISPRlnc, a novel machine learning algorithm tailored for designing sgRNAs specifically targeting long noncoding RNAs (lncRNAs) using CRISPR/Cas9 technology. Their study, published in Briefings in Bioinformatics, assessed various sgRNA design tools' performance on coding and noncoding datasets. CRISPRlnc outperformed existing methods in both CRISPR knockout (CRISPRko) and CRISPR inhibition (CRISPRi) mechanisms. The tool combines paired sgRNA design and off-target analysis, facilitating one-stop design for CRISPR/Cas9 sgRNAs targeting noncoding genes. To support accessibility, the team has provided a web server and GitHub download option, integrating features like paired sgRNA design and off-target risk analysis.

Aroma Compound Enhances Tomato Plant Drought Resistance & Boosts Yield

Researchers at the Research Institute for Plant Molecular and Cellular Biology (IBMCP), a collaboration between the Universitat Politècnica de Valencia (UPV) and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), have discovered that hexenyl butanoate (HB), a volatile compound emitted by tomato plants, can protect against drought and diseases independently of the classic hormone, abscisic acid. Published in Horticulture Research, their findings show that HB treatments enhance crop productivity, particularly in drought conditions, and provide resistance against pathogens like Pseudomonas syringae in tomatoes and Phytophthora infestans in potatoes. This breakthrough offers potential for more sustainable agriculture,

with HB's unique ability to induce stomatal closure, and ongoing research explores its broader applications in plant processes beyond stress response and disease resistance.

8th March 2024

Scientists Create Synthetic Foundations for Life

University of Cologne researchers have pioneered the creation of artificial nucleotides, essential DNA building blocks with enhanced properties suitable for therapeutic applications. These modified nucleotides, termed threofuranosyl nucleic acid (TNA), mark a significant advancement in developing synthetic nucleic acids. By altering the structure, including replacing the sugar backbone of DNA with a 4-carbon sugar and increasing the number of nucleobases, TNA demonstrates improved stability compared to natural DNA and RNA. This breakthrough opens avenues for prolonged therapeutic effects and novel targeting strategies within cells, holding promise for applications in aptamer development, targeted drug delivery, diagnostics, and disease recognition.

11th March 2024

Researchers Utilize Deep Learning to Engineer Bilin-Binding Proteins

Researchers led by David Baker at the University of Washington, Seattle, have devised a groundbreaking deep learning approach called RoseTTAFold All-Atom (RFAA) for predicting and designing protein complexes involving small molecules and nucleic acids. Building upon this, they introduced RFdiffusionAA, enabling the construction of protein structures around small molecules. This innovation not only allows the creation of proteins from scratch but also facilitates the design of proteins capable of binding various cofactors and substrates, marking a significant advancement in protein engineering. The group's work, published in Science, utilized bilins as a test case due to their optical properties and the availability of bilin-synthesizing E. coli strains. By employing a multiwell assay, they screened numerous RFdiffusionAA-generated genes, identifying nine novel proteins capable of binding bilins. This methodology promises broad applications in modeling protein-small molecule complexes and designing biomolecular assemblies, potentially revolutionizing areas like photosynthesis and biochemical sensing.

Domain-Adaptive Fruit Detection Model (DomAda-FruitDet): An Anchor-Free Approach for Automated Labeling

Deep learning-based fruit detection systems play a vital role in yield prediction and automated harvesting tasks in the modern fruit industry. However, the labor-intensive process of data labeling remains a bottleneck. To address this, researchers introduced DomAda-FruitDet, a domain-adaptive anchor-free fruit detection model. Published in Plant Phenomics, the study focuses on refining detection models to bridge domain gaps, enhancing their generalization capability. DomAda-FruitDet integrates innovative foreground and background domain-adaptive strategies, achieving impressive average precision scores across various fruit datasets. Its efficacy in auto-labeling was validated through experiments, showcasing significant improvements in labeling precision. This breakthrough not only streamlines data

labeling in the fruit industry but also advances smart orchard technologies, promising more accurate and efficient agricultural practices.

Cold Plasma Shows Promise for Enhancing Grain Growth

University of Alberta researchers have discovered a promising method for decontaminating mold-tainted grain and enhancing seed germination using cold plasma technology. Published in the Journal of Food Engineering, their study showcases the effectiveness of atmospheric cold plasma in reducing harmful mycotoxins on grains. By treating wheat and barley with cold plasma, the researchers significantly lowered levels of mycotoxins, addressing a common challenge in grain processing. Moreover, the plasma treatment improved seed germination rates and decontaminated water used in the steeping process, offering potential benefits for the barley malting industry. This environmentally sustainable approach holds promise for enhancing food safety and reducing agricultural product loss.

12th March 2024

Researchers Utilize Brewer's Yeast Waste to Remove Metals from Industrial Waste Streams

Researchers have developed a novel method for selectively capturing metals from electronic waste using spent brewer's yeast, a common beer brewing byproduct. Published in Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology, the study highlights the effectiveness of biosorption using yeast biomass in recovering metals such as zinc, aluminum, copper, and nickel from waste streams. This eco-friendly approach offers advantages over traditional methods like chemical precipitation, producing less contamination and being cost-effective. The yeast biomass can be reused multiple times, making the process sustainable and economically feasible. While promising, further research is needed to validate its industrial application and scalability.

Scientists Engineer Saccharomyces cerevisiae Yeast Strain for Enhanced Carotenoid Production

Researchers at Xiamen University, China, have developed an engineered S. cerevisiae yeast strain to efficiently produce carotenoids, addressing the growing demand for natural compounds. Published in the BioDesign Research journal, their work involves redesigning genomic sequences and critical pathways to optimize carotenoid synthesis. By enhancing acetyl-CoA production and suppressing competing pathways, the team achieved significant improvements in carotenoid yield. Additionally, they improved carotenoid storage within yeast cells using a human lipid binding/transfer protein. These advancements pave the way for scalable, cost-effective production of carotenoids, offering potential solutions for addressing nutrient deficiencies and malnutrition worldwide.

Virtual gene function study tool aims to minimize animal usage in genetic testing

Texas A&M University School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (VMBS) researchers have developed a virtual tool called GenKI to enhance the study of gene function, aiming to minimize the use of animal models in genetic research. GenKI enables

scientists to simulate gene interactions within individual cells, providing insights into their roles in cellular functions. This tool offers a cost-effective and efficient alternative to traditional knockout models, potentially reducing the need for animal testing in genetic studies. As GenKI evolves, it holds promise for broader applications across different cell types and organisms, fostering a shift towards more sustainable and ethical research practices.

15th March 2024

Researchers Develop Novel Targeted Protein Degradation System for Modulating Cell Proteins

Researchers at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard have developed a novel protein degradation system using a continuous evolution platform called PACE. This system generates smaller protein degradation tags, or degrons, capable of precisely triggering the depletion of a cell's proteins. By using gene-editing technology, also known as prime editing, the researchers inserted the compact degron into the genome of human cells, recruiting cereblon, a key component of the cell's protein destruction pathway, to induce rapid degradation of the targeted protein. The study, published in Science, offers insights into the three-component complex's structure and activity, paving the way for potential therapeutic applications and exploration of protein function.

17th March 2024

Exploring the Diverse Culinary Profiles of Edible Ants

Insects, including ants, offer a flavorful, nutritious, and sustainable culinary option, although they are often unwelcome at picnics. Researchers at San Diego State University have investigated the distinct aroma profiles of four species of edible ants. Their findings, presented at the American Chemical Society's spring meeting, highlight differences in odor profiles among species. For instance, common black ants emit a vinegary odor due to their high formic acid content, while chicatana ants have a nutty and woody aroma. Weaver ants exhibit a sweet and caramel-like scent, albeit with hay and urine-like off-flavors. The researchers aim to explore more ant species and developmental stages to expand culinary possibilities and promote acceptance of insects as food. While insects offer nutritional and environmental benefits, caution is advised for individuals with food allergies. Overall, researchers believe insects could offer diverse and delicious culinary options, emphasizing their nutritional and environmental advantages to encourage broader acceptance.

18th March 2024

Innovative Treatment Strategy for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Frontotemporal Dementia

A team led by Dr. Yun-Ru (Ruby) Chen at the Genomics Research Center (GRC), Academia Sinica, uncovered a novel pathological mechanism for neurodegeneration in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and frontotemporal dementia (FTD) using synthetic peptides. They identified that poly-GR/-PR peptides, derived from G4C2 repeat expansions in the C9ORF72 gene, led to neuron degeneration by interacting with nucleic acids and disrupting cellular functions. Additionally, they discovered that a sulfated disaccharide, sucrose octasulfate (SOS), could counteract poly-GR/PR-induced toxicity, suggesting a potential therapeutic strategy for ALS and FTD. This study, published in Science Advances, provides insight into the treatment of these neurodegenerative diseases

19th March 2024

Scientists Utilize Consumable Blue-Green Algae to Shield Honey Bees from Viral Infections

USDA scientists have devised an edible antiviral treatment to safeguard honey bees against deformed wing virus (DWV) and other viral infections. Utilizing engineered algae diets, researchers at the ARS Honey Bee Laboratory observed suppressed DWV infection and improved survival rates in bees. Blue-green algae, hailed for its nutritional benefits and immune-boosting effects, emerges as a promising additive to bee food. The scalable and environmentally friendly technology presents a sustainable approach to bee health management. Regulatory considerations remain, but the researchers are optimistic about its potential as a new class of treatments for honey bees, with plans to target additional bee viruses and pathogens in future studies.

Nanoparticles Address Multiple COVID Variants via Spike Protein's Structural Variation

Teardrop-shaped nanoparticles, designed to neutralize multiple strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, offer a potential complement to existing COVID-19 treatments, as per a study led by researchers at the University of Michigan and Jiangnan University. Published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the research highlights the nanoparticles' ability to target structural variations in the spike protein, aiding in the neutralization of common cold viruses and different SARS-CoV-2 variants. In animal trials, inhalation of these nanoparticles led to significant virus clearance and resistance to infection for up to three days. Further research is needed to ascertain safety and expulsion rates in humans.

Researchers Create Adjustable Colored Films for Displays and Sensors

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have developed flexible films that display vibrant colors based solely on their physical structure, without the need for pigments. These films change color when stretched, owing to a unique technique involving the deposition of gallium metal nanoparticles on a flexible substrate. The team’s innovative approach enables the simultaneous fabrication of multiple structural colors responsive to mechanical stimuli. Applications range from smart bandages to reflective displays and movement sensors. This novel method bypasses traditional costly techniques, offering a scalable and cost-effective solution for producing flexible, structurally colored films with adverse functionalities.

20th March 2024

Artificial Intelligence Enables Detection of COVID-19 in Lung Ultrasound Images

New research demonstrates the capability of artificial intelligence to detect COVID-19 in lung ultrasound images, akin to facial recognition software identifying faces in crowds. This advancement in AI-driven medical diagnostics offers the potential for quick and accurate diagnosis of COVID-19 and other pulmonary diseases. Led by Muyinatu Bell at Johns Hopkins University, the study emphasizes the development of automated detection tools to aid doctors, particularly in overwhelmed emergency settings during the pandemic. The AI analyzes ultrasound images to identify inflammation indicators known as B-lines, paving the way for future wearable devices for monitoring diseases like congestive heart failure. This technology, leveraging deep neural networks, has shown promising accuracy in evaluating COVID-19 features using a combination of real and simulated data, even during the early stages of the pandemic when patient data was limited.

21st March 2024

Researchers Create Therapeutic Contact Lenses Activated by Eye Enzymes

University of Waterloo researchers develop innovative contact lens material that acts as a therapeutic bandage for corneal wounds and delivers drugs in a controlled manner for accelerated healing. Published in Pharmaceutics, their study introduces a novel drug-delivery system that responds to the body's needs, releasing more medication as the injury severity increases. Led by Dr. Lyndon Jones, the interdisciplinary team collaborated to create a collagen-based material that degrades in response to eye enzymes, enabling targeted drug release. The material, ten times stronger than collagen, holds promise for treating various wounds and ulcers beyond ocular applications.

An Innovative Method for Generating Human Artificial Chromosomes

Researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania have developed a groundbreaking technique for creating human artificial chromosomes (HACs). This innovative method overcomes previous challenges by efficiently constructing HACs from single, long DNA constructs, avoiding the unpredictable multimerization that hindered earlier approaches. Published in Science, the study introduces larger DNA constructs with more complex centromeres, allowing for the formation of HACs from single copies of these constructs. Additionally, a yeast-cell-based delivery system was employed for effective cargo delivery into cells. This advancement offers promising applications in gene therapies, potentially revolutionizing treatments for diseases like cancer, and could also have implications in agriculture for developing high-yield crops. Collaborators from various institutions contributed to the research efforts.

Lungs and the Brain Seem to be Directly Linked

Researchers at the University of Calgary have uncovered a direct communication pathway between the lungs and the brain during infection, revealing that the brain plays a crucial role in triggering sickness symptoms. Prior to this study on mice published in the journal Cell, it was believed that sickness results solely from immune system responses. However, these findings unveil that the nervous system activation in the lungs prompts symptoms associated with sickness, such as fatigue and loss of appetite. Understanding this lung-brain dialogue could lead to new treatment approaches for respiratory infections and chronic conditions like cystic fibrosis. The interdisciplinary research team also found that male mice experienced more severe sickness symptoms than females, highlighting potential sex differences in neurological responses to infection.

A Bioelectronic Mesh Developed for Adaptive Integration with Cardiac Tissues, Enabling Comprehensive Heart Monitoring

In a groundbreaking study published in Nature Communications, a team led by engineers from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has developed a tissue-like bioelectronic mesh system integrated with atom-thin graphene sensors. This innovative technology allows simultaneous measurement of both the electrical signals and physical movements of cells in lab-grown human cardiac tissue. Unlike previous methods, this new device can grow alongside cardiac cells, enabling researchers to observe changes in the heart's mechanical and electrical functions during development. The bioelectronic mesh has significant implications for studying cardiac disease and evaluating the side effects of various drug therapies.

World's First Gene-edited Pig Kidney Transplanted in a Patient

Boston doctors perform a successful pig kidney transplant into a 62-year-old patient, marking a significant advancement in xenotransplantation. The patient, Richard Slayman, is recovering well, with hopes that the genetically modified pig kidney will function for at least two years. This groundbreaking procedure offers promise for addressing the shortage of donated organs and provides hope for those in need of transplants.

Scientists Generate Live Imaging of Placental Growth in Mice

Researchers at Duke University have devised a novel method for visualizing placental growth in mice during pregnancy, offering insights into its functioning and potential impacts of factors like alcohol consumption and inflammation. This technique involves implanting a window for direct access to the placenta and utilizing ultrafast imaging tools like ultrafast functional photoacoustic microscopy (UFF-PAM) to capture detailed images of blood flow and oxygen metabolism. The approach provides valuable data on placental development and its response to varying oxygen levels, offering opportunities for both understanding pregnancy complications and drug screening.

Innovative AI System Enables Early Detection of Cardiac Amyloidosis

A new AI system developed by an international team led by MedUni Vienna can accurately detect cardiac amyloidosis, a serious condition where abnormal proteins accumulate in the heart muscle, improving its function. Utilizing data from 16,000 patients who underwent scintigraphy imaging exams, the AI tool demonstrated comparable accuracy to medical experts in diagnosing the condition. Patients identified by the AI system to have cardiac amyloidosis showed significantly higher risks of heart failure and mortality. This technology could facilitate early and precise diagnosis, crucial for initiating timely treatment.

22nd March 2024

Researchers Leveraging a Chemical Generated by Aggressive Breast Cancer to Combat its Deadly Variant

Researchers explore a promising approach to treat triple-negative breast cancer, the most aggressive subtype, by leveraging a metabolite produced by cancer itself. This innovative method, developed by scientists at Fudan University in Shanghai, focuses on a compound called guanosine diphosphate-mannose (GDP-M), which inhibits DNA repair in tumor cells. By impeding this repair process, GDP-M enhances the effectiveness of existing cancer therapies, potentially transforming treatment outcomes for patients with this challenging form of breast cancer. The research, published in Science Translational Medicine, offers hope for improved therapies for triple-negative breast cancer, which currently lacks effective treatment options.

Identification of 'Junk Proteins' Accumulation Linked to Aging and Potentially ALS

New findings suggest that the accumulation of non-functional ribosomal proteins in motor neurons may be a potential cause of familial ALS, shedding light on the disease's origin. In a paper published in Molecular Cell, a team led by Óscar Fernández-Capetillo, This study also highlights a link between ALS and ribosomopathies, conditions associated with dysfunctional ribosomal proteins. The research proposes reducing ribosome production as a potential treatment strategy for ALS. Additionally, the study identifies nucleolar stress as a previously overlooked factor in aging, with evidence indicating that it accelerates aging processes in mammals. These findings offer new insights into both ALS pathogenesis and the aging process.

Scientists Develop Innovative Method to Identify Proteins for Precise Disease Treatment

Researchers at the University of Toronto and Sinai Health have devised a new method to identify proteins that regulate protein stability, offering a promising avenue for disease treatment. Their study, published in Nature, uncovered over 600 new effector proteins within 14,000 genes, with some effectively degrading target proteins and others stabilizing them. Unlike traditional approaches, this research leverages E2 conjugating enzymes alongside E3 ubiquitin-ligases and deubiquitinases, expanding the scope of targeted protein degradation and stabilization. Their synthetic screening platform addresses the "protein pair problem," facilitating the efficient matching of effectors to target proteins and enhancing the therapeutic potential for various diseases.

Scientists Create Cost-effective & User-friendly Technique for Nanoliter-Scale Single-cell Reactions

Researchers at the Single-cell Center of the Qingdao Institute of Bioenergy and Bioprocess Technology have devised a centrifugally driven system called the CNPS for precise manipulation of nanoliter liquids in single-cell analysis. This system offers a cost-effective and user-friendly alternative to microfluidic technology, improving single-cell genome sequencing coverage and uniformity. It eliminates the need for specialized skills and expensive equipment, making it accessible to conventional biology labs. The CNPS ensures

minimal sample evaporation and contamination, facilitating a seamless transition between nanoliter and traditional microliter or milliliter volumes. This innovative platform holds promise for various single-cell analysis tasks, from isolation to comprehensive omic analysis.

Scientists Uncover the Fundamental Mechanisms of an Inherited Disorder Leading to Bone Marrow Failure

A recent international study led by the researchers at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) has uncovered a significant biological cause of Fanconi anemia, a rare inherited disorder often leading to bone marrow failure. Published in Nature Communications, the research identified an accumulation of misfolded proteins as a key factor in disrupting cell cycle progression and stem cell expansion, ultimately causing rapid bone marrow failure. The study also revealed that Tauroursodeoxycholic acid (TUDCA), a bile salt, could restore proper protein folding and improve stem cell function in animal models of Fanconi anemia. These findings offer potential insights into alternative treatment options for patients unable to undergo stem cell transplantation.

Investigating Age-Related Changes in the Proteome of Specific Brain Cells

To maintain brain function, the blood-brain barrier is crucial, regulating molecule exchange between the circulatory and nervous systems. However, aging leads to dysregulation in brain endothelial cells, contributing to conditions like strokes and dementia. While previous studies focused on RNA profiling, a recent Nature Aging study led by LMU researchers fills the gap by analyzing the proteome of these cells in mice. They identified dysregulated proteins involved in cellular uptake, receptor recycling, and lysosomal degradation, shedding light on endothelial aging mechanisms. The findings provide insights into brain endothelial function during aging and are publicly available for further research.

25th March 2024

Study Indicates Common Household Chemicals Pose Risk to Brain Health

Researchers from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine have highlighted the potential dangers of everyday household chemicals on brain health. They found that certain chemicals, such as those in furniture and personal-care products, could be linked to neurological diseases like multiple sclerosis and autism spectrum disorders. Specifically, these chemicals harm oligodendrocytes, cells crucial for nerve cell insulation. Quaternary ammonium compounds, common in disinfectants, cause oligodendrocyte death, while organophosphate flame retardants in electronics and furniture hinder their maturation. The study emphasizes the need for further research on the impact of these chemicals and suggests regulatory measures to minimize exposure and protect human health.

Scientists Create DNA Nanotube Rings as a Key Component for Artificial Cells

Researchers, along with Professor Jan Kierfeld and Lukas Weise from TU Dortmund University, have successfully synthesized a contractile ring using DNA nanotechnology, mimicking the mechanism of cell division. Published in Nature Communications, the study reveals that this ring contraction doesn't rely on motor proteins powered by ATP hydrolysis, unlike natural cell division. Instead, the molecular attraction between ring segments triggers the contraction. This mechanism, using crosslinking molecules or depletion interaction, doesn't require chemical energy, making it promising for synthetic cell development. Kierfeld and Weise developed theoretical descriptions and molecular dynamics simulations that matched experimental results, aiding in understanding and controlling the diameter of DNA rings for future synthetic biology applications. Such advances in mimicking natural cell processes are crucial for constructing artificial cells and gaining insights into the fundamentals of life.

Research with Rodents Identifies Critical Genes Regulating Blood Pressure and Heart Rate

Brazilian and American researchers have collaborated to identify 87 genes associated with changes in blood pressure and 144 genes linked to variations in heart rate. Published in Science Advances, the study expands understanding cardiovascular disease, the leading global cause of death. Led by Professor José Eduardo Krieger from the University of São Paulo's Medical School and Professor Bruce Beutler from the University of Texas Southwestern, the research utilized a combination of mutagenesis in mice and exome sequencing to uncover these genes. The study underscores the potential for new therapeutic targets in conditions like high blood pressure and cardiac arrhythmia and highlights the efficacy of germline mutagenesis in understanding complex phenotypes. Further investigation into the roles of these genes will be crucial for developing novel treatments.

Potential Effectiveness of Cancer Treatments in Tuberculosis Treatment

Investigating the parallels between tuberculosis and cancer, researcher Meenal Datta discovered similarities in the abnormal structure and function of granulomas and tumors. Her recent study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, proposes a combination of medications to improve blood flow within granulomas, enhancing drug delivery for tuberculosis treatment. Leveraging insights from cancer research, the study suggests using losartan and bevacizumab to normalize granuloma blood vessels, resulting in improved antibiotic delivery and reduced bacterial burden. These host-directed therapies show promise for tuberculosis patients, offering a potential avenue for clinical trials. Datta's multidisciplinary approach, bridging engineering and life sciences, underscores the importance of collaborative research in tackling complex diseases.

Beneficial Mutation in Mitochondrial DNA Linked to Extended Lifespan in Alzheimer's Gene Carriers

USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology researchers have identified a genetic mutation in a mitochondrial microprotein that may enhance longevity and cognitive function while offering protection against Alzheimer's disease in carriers of the APOE4 gene, known for increasing Alzheimer's risk. The variant, termed P3S-human, was found to be prevalent among centenarians, particularly of Ashkenazi Jewish descent. Tests indicated that P3S-humanin improved cognitive function in APOE4 carriers and reduced amyloid-beta buildup in

Alzheimer's mouse models. This discovery opens new avenues for therapeutic interventions targeting age-related diseases like Alzheimer's.

Genomic Research Reveals Humans Transmit More Viruses to Animals Than Receive from Them

Research from UCL shows that humans pass on more viruses to animals than they catch from them. Published in Nature Ecology & Evolution, the study analyzed viral genomes to track transmission between vertebrate species. Despite the focus on zoonotic diseases, human-to-animal virus transmission is often overlooked. The study found human viruses frequently jump to animals, highlighting the interconnectedness of hosts in pathogen spread. Understanding viral transmission between humans and animals is crucial for outbreak preparedness and conservation. The research underscores the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to study viral evolution and mitigate disease risk.

Engineers Invent Innovative Technique for Producing CAR T Cells with Lipid Nanoparticles

Engineering at Penn devised a streamlined method for producing CAR T cells, crucial for cancer therapy. By employing lipid nanoparticles (LNPs), the process is condensed to just 24 hours, eliminating multiple steps. Lead researcher ANN Metzlooff optimized “activating lipid nanoparticles” (aLNPs), attaching activating antibodies directly to LNPs. This innovation reduces manufacturing time and eliminates the need for costly magnetic beads. While not yet tested in humans, CAR T cells created with aLNPs showed promise in reducing leukemia tumors in mouse models. Metzloff sees broader potential for aLNPs in T cell cancer therapy beyond mRNA CAR T call applications.

Predictive Significance of Mitochondrial DNA Fragment Loss for Parkinson's Disease Onset

Mitochondrial DNA deletions detected in cerebrospinal fluid may serve as an early indicator of severe brain disease, particularly in patients with REM sleep behavior disorder (iRBD), a precursor to conditions like Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia. Led by Álex Iranzo and Ramon Trullàs, researchers analyzed samples from 71 patients, finding higher levels of mitochondrial DNA deletions in iRBD patients compared to controls. Importantly, the amount of DNA deletions correlated with the time it took for iRBD patients to develop clinical symptoms of Parkinson's disease, suggesting a crucial role for mitochondrial DNA dysfunction in the progression of neurodegenerative disorders.

26th March 2024

Scientists Identify Protein Boosting Regeneration of Optic Nerve

Damage to the optic nerve often results in irreversible blindness. However, a recent breakthrough by UConn researchers, detailed in the May 2024 issue of Experimental Neurology, highlights the discovery of a regeneration factor called nuclear factor erythroid 3 (Nfe3). This protein, previously overlooked, has shown remarkable potential in stimulating nerve cell regrowth, particularly in the optic nerve. Unlike other regeneration factors, Nfe3

doesn't induce inflammation or pose a risk of tumor development. The research opens new avenues for treating conditions like glaucoma and other nerve damage-related visual impairments. Further studies are underway to ascertain if regenerated nerve cells can reconnect to the brain, potentially restoring sight. If successful, Nfe3 could revolutionize treatments for optic nerve damage and potentially extend to addressing paralysis and other neural injuries in the brain and spinal cord.

27th March 2024

Association Found Between Extended Use of Specific Hormone Drugs and Elevated Risk of Brain Tumors

Extended use of certain progestogen hormone drugs has been linked to an increased risk of developing intracranial meningiomas, according to a study published in the BMJ. This study, conducted in France, is the first to investigate the risk associated with progestogens commonly used for various gynecological conditions and hormone therapies. The researchers emphasize the need for further studies to better comprehend this risk. Meningiomas are typically non-cancerous tumors found in the layers covering the brain and spinal cord. Factors such as older age, female sex, and exposure to specific high-dose progestogens are already known to elevate the risk of meningioma. However, this study aims to fill the gap in understanding the risk associated with various progestogens individually. The study utilized data from the French national health data system and identified several progestogens associated with an increased risk of meningioma when used for a year or more, including medrogestone, medroxyprogesterone acetate injection, and promegestone. The study didn't find such a risk for shorter durations of usage. Further research is essential to comprehensively assess the risk associated with these progestogens and to better inform clinical decision-making.

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Visit Us: www.iebrain.com

Contact Us: contact@iebrain.com

INDIA (HQ)

Unit 207-208, 2nd Floor, Welldone Tech Park Sohna Road, Sector 48, Gurugram, Haryana 122018

Phone No. - **+91 124 429 4218**

USA

8 The Green, Suite B, Dover, DE 19901 United States

Phone No. - **+1-347-491-3868**

UK

13 Freeland Park, Poole, Dorset, United Kingdom, BH16 6FH

Phone - **+ 44 207 193 3548**