NCATS Improving Health Through Smarter Science

# **NCATS-NTP collaboration**

# Christopher P. Austin, M.D. Director, NCATS

National Toxicology Program Board of Scientific Counselors

June 17, 2019



# The Toxicology in the 21st Century (Tox21) Program





National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences





- Initiated 2005 with NTP; made official 2008 w NTP, EPA; FDA added 2010
- Identify patterns of compound-induced biological response in order to:
  - » characterize toxicity/disease pathways
  - » facilitate cross-species extrapolation
  - » model low-dose extrapolation
- Prioritize compounds for more extensive toxicological evaluation
- Develop predictive models for biological response in humans







# **Tox21 Screening Process**



Attene Ramos et al., 2013, Drug Discovery Today 18:716 723



# Tox21 Robot System: "Linda"





## Assays Screened in first epoch of the Tox21 Program

- Endocrine disruption (e.g., AR, AhR, aromatase, ER, ERR, CAR, FXR, RORr, PPARr, PPARd, PR, RXR, VDR)
- Stress response pathways (e.g., AP-1, HSE, NFkB, Nrf2/ARE, pH2AX, Hif-1/hypoxia, ER stress, real time cytotoxicity/viability, mitochondrial membrane potential, acetylcholinesterase)
- **Developmental pathway** (e.g., retinol signaling, hedgehog/Gli, SBE/Smad)
- **GPCR** (e.g., thyroid stimulating hormone receptor, TSHR and thyrotropin-releasing hormone receptor, TRHR)
- **Epigenetics** (e.g., HDAC) and **others** (e.g., luciferase assay)



85 Tox21 related scientific articles in 40 journals37/85 First- or corresponding-author manuscripts



# New Tox21 Strategic and Operational Plan

- 1. Develop innovative test systems that better predict human toxicity
  - Use of primary/iPSC-derived 2D cells, 3D cellular organoids, and in vivo models (e.g., zebrafish)
  - Expanding technological capabilities
    - High-content imaging assays
    - 3D cellular models
  - Assays for molecular events in high priority adverse outcome pathways (AOPs)
  - Chemical-induced changes in the global transcriptome
- 2. Address key technical limitations of current in vitro test systems
  - Retrofitting existing Tox21 HTS assays with metabolic capability
- 3. Curate and characterize legacy in vivo toxicity studies to serve as a resource for interpreting Tox21 data
- 4. Develop framework for efficient validation of Tox21 approaches
- 5. Refine and deploy in vitro methods for characterizing pharmacokinetics to increase predictivity and reduce uncertainty









## **New Tox21 Organizational Structure**









# **NCATS Mission**



To catalyze the generation of innovative methods and technologies that will enhance the development, testing and implementation of diagnostics and therapeutics across a wide range of human diseases and conditions.







# **NCATS Preclinical Programs to Accelerate Translation**

Identify disease mechanism



Test chemicals in

system

Modify (chemistry) for human use

Test in animals Test in humans







**Basic** Research





Screening

Medicinal Chemistry





Preclinical Development

Clinical Development

## **Division of Preclinical Innovation**

**Cures Acceleration Network (CAN)** 

**Bioprinting** 

**Translator** 





# **NCATS Clinical Programs to Accelerate Translation**



# **The Translational Science Spectrum**







## The Drug Discovery, Development and Deployment Map (4DM)



Nature Reviews Drug Discovery 15:150, 2018

https://ncats.nih.gov/translation/maps



# The NCATS Assay Guidance Manual

- AGM is a compendium of validated analytical methodologies to test drug-like molecules
- 46 Chapters and 1,338 Printed Pages
- AGM is an eBOOK, dynamically updated regularly
- Provides detailed rationales and protocols for translational methodologies that are
  - o Robust
  - $\circ$  Reproducible
  - o Consistent
  - High throughput +/- automatable
  - Biologically and translationally relevant

Molecolor

ambrook Fritsch Manlati





# **NCATS Division of Preclinical Innovation**



### Chemical Probe/Lead Development: First-in-class GALK Inhibitors for Classic Galactosemia



Galactosemias: Rare autosomal recessive disorders in which the body cannot properly metabolize galactose



**Classic Galactosemia** - most common & severe of the galactosemias (~1 in 30,000-60,000 births)

- Results from GALT deficiency
- Lethal without dietary galactose restriction
- Leads to mental deficits, ovarian dysfunction
- No current therapy



Type II galactosemics (GALK deficient) do not suffer from same clinical manifestations and long term problems associated with Classic Galactosemia

**Hypothesis**: GALK inhibition will phenocopy Type II Galactosemia in Classic Galactosemics, leading to milder, more easily manageable disease





Patient cell activity and upcoming in vivo models



Compounds very effectively lower gal-1-p levels in Classic Galactosemia primary patient fibroblasts with no galactose challenge (clinically relevant assay)



5



#### GalT-gene trapped mice



Ratio of non-galactosylated IgG (G0) to monogalactosylated IgG (G1) in wild type (red boxes) vs GalT-gene trapped (GalT-"knockout") (GK, blue boxes) mice

## WT vs mutant mouse ovary histopathology



- Medicinal chemistry lead optimization
- Evaluation of functional activity, potency, pharmacokinetics (PK), pharmacodynamics (PD), and efficacy
- Biomarker development
- Definition and optimization of dose and schedule for *in vivo* activity
- Development and implementation of pharmacological assays
- Chemical and biologics process research and development
- Manufacturing of bulk substance (GMP and non-GMP)
- Development of suitable formulations
- Development of analytical methods
- Production and stability studies of dosage forms
- Range-finding initial toxicity
- Investigational New Drug (IND)-directed toxicology, with correlative pharmacology and histopathology
- Planning of clinical trials (Phase 1 and/or Phase 2)
- Regulatory and IND filing support
- Natural history and patient-finding studies

## Therapeutics for Rare and Neglected Diseases Program

## **Collaborations to cross the Valley of Death**



# Innovation in assay models

2D Spheroids Organoids Printed Tissues Organ-on-a-chip



Physiological complexity

**HTS compatibility** 







# How to generate specific cell types from iPSCs?



# **Goals of the NCATS Stem Cell Translation Laboratory**

- 1. Establish QC standards to define pluripotency and differentiated cell types
- 2. Develop methods to assess heterogeneity in iPSC-derived cells using multi-omics technologies (bulk culture & single cell level)
- 3. Develop standardized methods to produce mature cells meeting the QC standards above
- 4. Discover, validate, and disseminate small molecule reagents to replace expensive recombinant proteins, xenogeneic material, and undefined media components in cell differentiation protocols



# Human Sensory Neurons Derived From iPSCs Under Defined Conditions





# **3D Bio-Printing Projects**





Skin (Angela Christiano, Columbia University)



## Microphysiological Systems Program 1.0 *"Tissue Chips for Drug Screening"*



\$75 M over 5 years – cell source, platform development, validation and integration (NCATS, CF, NIBIB, NIEHS, NICHD, ORWH, NCI)





\$75 M over 5 years - development of 10-organ platforms



INNOVATION & OUALITY

PHARMACEUTICAL DEVELOPMENT

\*\*FDA provides insight and expertise throughout the program

Publications: over 600 original and review articles published in top tier journals, including *Nature Medicine, Nature Communications, Nature Materials, PNAS, Science, Science Translational Medicine, etc.* 

Phased award and milestone-driven



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# **Tissues-on-Chips**





#### Scaffold

Cells

**Structure** 

**Spatial and** Temporal Patterning perfused chambers

Perfusion

**Bioreactor** 

Innervation

Host Response

Functional Readout in vitro analysis of

Computational Design

- Microfluidic cell culture devices
- Created with microchip manufacturing methods
- Contains continuously
- Seeded by human derived cells
- Cytoarchitecture mimics tissue and organ level physiology
- High resolution, real time imaging and biochemical, genetic and metabolic activities

## Microphysiological Systems: *In Vitro* Mimics of Human Organ Function





















#### **Diversity of Bioengineered Platforms**





National Center for Advancing Translational Science:



MIT Murat Cirit, PI



TEX-VAL Ivan Rusyn, PI





National Center for Advancing ranslational Sciences



MPS Database Mark Schurdak, PI

# Tissue Chip Program 2.0 Validation Centers

#### 3) Industrial

- Use by industry and regulatory agencies
- Proprietary set of compounds
- CRO-type environment

### 2) Analytical

- Independent:
  robustness,
  reproducibility, rigor
- Validation set of compounds
- TC Testing Centers

#### 1) Physiological

- Organ function and structure
- Training set of compounds
- TC developers



Comput Struct Biotechnol J.( 2016) 14: 207-210.

#### **NIH Tissue Chips 2.0: Disease Modeling and Efficacy Testing**

Kam Leong, Columbia U Proteus Syndrome and DiGeorge Syndrome

Danielle Benoit, Lisa Delouise, Catherine Ovitt, U Rochester Radiation-induced xerostomia

> Kevin Kit Parker, William Pu, Harvard U Barth syndrome, catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia, arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy

Steven George, David Curiel, Stacey Rentschler, UC Davis and WashU atrial fibrillation

Joseph Vincent Bonventre, Luke Lee, Brigham and Women's autosomal dominant/recessive models of polycystic kidney disease, Focal segmental glomerulosclerosis

> Christopher Hughes, UC Irvine Hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia, Port Wine stain, Sturge-Weber syndrome

Rocky Tuan, U Pittsburgh Osteoarthritis, inflammatory arthritis, adipose-mediated diabetic joint complications Clive Svendsen, Cedars-Sinai ALS; Parkinson's Disease Aaron Bowman, Kevin Ess, John Wikswo, Vanderbilt U tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) epilepsy,

DEPDC5-associated epilepsy, & associated cardiac dysfunction

Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic, Columbia U Dox induced cardiomyopathy; multisystem pathologies involving heart, liver, skin, bone and vasculature

Donald Ingber, Harvard U influenza infection, COPD

> Jonathan Himmelfarb, U Washington apolipoprotein L1 mediated kidney disease, drug induced and hostpathogen interaction induced renal thrombotic microangiopathies

Teresa Woodruff, Northwestern U Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome

George Truskey, Duke U rheumatoid arthritis, atherosclerosis

#### **Type-2** Diabetes Mellitus

- Andreas Stahl, Kevin Healy, Matthias Hebrok, Edward Hsiao, Holger Willenbring, UC Berkeley Pancreatic islet, liver, adipose
- Lansing Taylor, U Pittsburgh Vascularized liver and pancreatic islets
- James Wells, Moo-Yeal Lee, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Liver, pancreatic islet and intestine



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NCATS, NHLBI, NIAMS, NIBIB, NICHD, NIDCR, NIDDK, NIEHS, NINDS, ORWH

# **Chips in Space**

### Launch dates to date: December 5, 2018 (SpaceX CRS-16) May 4, 2019 (SpaceX CRS-17)





- Biomedical research using tissue chips aboard the International Space Station
- Opportunities to study the effects of a microgravity environment on the human body re muscle deterioration osteoporosis, cardiopulmonary function, and immune deficiency.
- Studies under reduced gravity will contribute to our understanding of the process of aging and could reveal molecular targets that can slow that process.





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# A Specialized Platform for Innovative Research Exploration (ASPIRE)





## Defining biologically active chemical space: A key translational challenge

- 95% of human diseases have no regulatorily approved treatment
- 90% of biological space ("targets") is currently undrugged
- Vast chemical space: 10<sup>60</sup> potential "drug-like" small molecules
  - » Only 10<sup>7</sup> of these have been made in the entire history of synthetic chemistry
- Current approach to exploring chemical space is inefficient









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## **ASPIRE Work Flow**



Figure by Kyle Brimacombe, NIH/NCATS [Sittampalam, G. S. et al, *NRDD*, 2019]





National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences

## COMMENT

#### Mapping biologically active chemical space to accelerate drug discovery

G. Sitta Sittampalam\*, Dobrila D. Rudnicki, Danilo A. Tagle, Anton Simeonov and Christopher P. Austin

A specialized platform for innovative research exploration --- ASPIRE --- in preclinical drug discovery could help study unexplored biologically active chemical space through integrating automated synthetic chemistry, high-throughput biology and artificial intelligence technologies.

disease in the last 30 years, a major roadblock to timely ingly autonomous physiologically relevant biological translation into new therapies has been the inability to efficiently identify new areas of biologically active small-molecule chemical space'. Ideally, new chemical probes and drug leads that selectively modulate disease targets and pathways would be produced rapidly and inexpensively, but despite some progress in the past decade', the fundamental challenge of exploring chemical space to define new biology remains largely unsolved. Recently, however, advances in chemistry automation and machine learning/artificial intelligence (AI)? have raised the prospect of their integration with highthroughput biological screening, assay automation engineering and informatics to enable dramatically more effective, even unsupervised, exploration of biologically active chemical space.

#### Challenges in chemical space exploration

In its simplest terms, the goal seems straightforward: to define the set of small-molecule chemical structures needed to modulate all biological targets. However, the vast number of chemical structures in drug-like chemical space (-10<sup>se</sup>), and the smaller but still substantial number of biological targets in human and pathogen biological space (-10%), has made progress on this problem painfully slow. Currently, only -3% of biological space is dragged and a further ~7% is tractahle via small-molecule probes', while the percentage of drug-like chemical space that has been synthesized is miniscule'

The effort to define biologically active chemical space involves four main disciplines: biology, chemistry, informatics and engineering. In the last three decades, auto-National Center for Advancing mation and parallelization have radically improved the efficiency of biological testing, informatics analysis and engineering, High-throughput screening (HTS) technologies have dramatically increased the productivity of the bench biologist such that millions of data points can be acquired in a single day. Advances in the capabilities, precision and robustness of engineering technologies at cal synthesis technologies, high-throughput biological

With increasing understanding of the molecular basis of the micro- and macro-level have also enabled increasscreening systems. And remarkable advances in computing power and data analysis algorithms have increased the ability to analyse data by orders of magnitude in quantity and quality. These capacities have, in turn, allowed the development of data-driven principles of biological function.

> By contrast, the technologies, throughput and reach of synthetic chemistry have remained relatively unchanged over the last several decades, with combinatorial chemistry, microwave synthesis and other technologies having only limited overall impact on the efficiency of chemistry to explore new chemical space (Supplementary Fig. 1). Chemistry has only recently begun adopting automation and AI technologies to facilitate existing chemistries, reaction optimization and nanoscale synthesis and library generation", and the general practice of chemical synthesis remains largely artisanal, with synthetic throughput of novel bioactive chemicals improved at best by tenfold over the last century. This disparate evolution of the biology and chemistry fields now limits the ability to generate novel chemical probes', pharmacological tools and drugs to modulate undrugged biological space, and thus contributes to translational research inefficiency.

Machine learning and other AI technologies are increasing in use and sophistication, and they learn, interpret and predict outcomes based on vast amounts of data in applications such as facial recognition and driverless vehicles. Similar technologies applied to large genomic, proteomic and clinical data sets are making in-roads into biomedical sciences. Furthermore, the development of technologies to integrate machine learning with automated chemical synthesis is currently being funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency in the "Make-It" programme, which is using both batch and flow chemistry for synthesis of on-demand pharmaceuticals in military field operations. The convergence of nascent automated chemi-

"ASPIRE aims to address two challenges of the current era in biomedical research: to harness new technologies to accelerate understanding of living systems and to fulfill the promise of science to improve the lives of the many patients with untreatable or poorly treatable diseases.

Much like other types of space exploration, ASPIRE is an ambitious vision that we hope will spawn new technologies, excite a generation of aspiring scientists and produce solutions to heretofore intractable challenges in science and medicine."



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# The NCATS Biomedical Data Translator Program

Revealing new connections among existing data









for Advancing nelational Science Crossing the chasm of semantic despair



## **Initial Participating Institutions**







Volume 12, Issue 2 March 2019 Pages 85-85

CTS Clinical and Translational Science

Editorial Open Access

#### Deconstructing the Translational Tower of Babel

Christopher P. Austin, Christine M. Colvis, Noel T. Southall

First published: 09 November 2018 | https://doi.org/10.1111/cts.12595

#### EDITORIAL

#### Deconstructing the Translational Tower of Babel

#### Christopher P. Austin\*, Christine M. Colvis and Noel T. Southall

A principal stumbling block in translation is the compartmentalized nature of data—from biomedical research, disease classifications, health records, clinical trials, and adverse ovent reports—across diseases and disciplines. These silos impede discovery of commonalities across diseases, and the distinct languages that each discipline uses impede the cross-discipline understanding that is required for efficient translation from basic to clinical to public health science.

By contrast, imagine a world in which researchers had a way to easily access and interrelate these data and languages. Such a tool would accelerate hypotheses about. e.g., which drugs have the potential to treat diseases, the impact of environmental exposures on the onset or worsening of disease; what might be causing illness in patients for whom existing approaches have failed to identify the origin of their symptoms; and better understand the relationships between rare and common diseases. This is the vision of the Biomedical Data Translator: to bridge the current symptombased diagnosis of disease with research-based molecular and cellular characterizations through an informatics platform that enables interrogation of relationships across the full spectrum of data types, from disease names, clinical signs and symptoms, to organ and cell pathology, genomics, and drug effects.

When we committed to this vision in 2016, we were well aware of its ambitious scope. We, therefore, designed the program to be different in virtually every way from how National Institutes of Health (NIH) research projects are typically competed, supported, and managed, and have taken an explicitly flexible and staged approach to its construction. For the last 24 months, the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) has been funding a feasibility assessment phase of the Translator, focused on identifying data integration and inclusion harriers and exploring inferential or predictive models that would provide new insights into biology, health, and disease. It was assumed that we did not understand all requirements or needed capabilities when we started, and the platform is being built in an agile way with frequent modifications driven by data from pressure testing using research questions that have been difficult to address by other means. Operationally, the NCATS supports the Translator through a flexible research authority called

Other Transactions within the Center's Cures Acceleration Network. The flexibility of Other Transactions to expand. contract, add, discontinue, or modify activities based on data as the program is built has changed the usual ways that we, as funders, interact with research teams and they interact with each other. This too was an experiment: could we entice over a dozen high-performing research teams from diverse backgrounds to become fully miscible. with each other and with us to make the Translator vision possible? At the end of the feasibility phase, the NCATS will assess whether the scientific, operational, and cultural experiments have been successful enough to warrant ramping up to build a fully functional Translator that finds and connects existing data, provides previously unknown insights into diseases and possible treatments, and is able to make inferences and predictions even when data are missing. The early results are in, and they are encouraging, as you will read in the articles from the investigators.

Two hundred years ago, chemists created a comprebensive ensureration of the elements and systematic relationships among them. This Periodic Table transformed chemistry by placing it on firm scientific footing. We envision the Translator doing the same for translational science.

Funding. No fauding was received for this work.

Conflict of Interest. The authors declared no competing interests for this work.

- The Elements al Data Translator Concertizan. Toward a untraval biomedical data translator. Clim. Transl. Sci. 12, 18–99 (2013).
- The Biomedical Data Translator Consortion. The Biomedical Data Translator program. conception, culture, and community. Clin. Transl. Sci. 12, 91–94 (2013).

[Correction updated on November 23, 2018; after initial online publication: Reference section has been updated.]

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