



TKT infringes again

The High Court of Justice in London has ruled that gene-activated erythropoietin (GA-EPO; Dynepo) produced by Transkaryotic Therapies (TKT; Cambridge, MA) and partner Aventis Pharmaceuticals (Bridgewater, NJ) infringes on Amgen's (Thousand Oaks, CA) multi-billion dollar red blood cell-stimulating drug erythropoietin (EPO; Epogen). The court found that GA-EPO infringes one of four claims of Amgen's European Patent (0148605B2) covering EPO and processes for making EPO, under the UK version of the US's doctrine of equivalents. The announcement, which was released on April 11 and prompted an initial 18% drop in TKT share price to \$15.10, is more bad news for TKT, which was found to infringe claims in three of Amgen's US patents in January (*Nat. Biotechnol.* 19, 188, 2001). TKT, which has filed for marketing authorization of Dynepo with the European Medicines Evaluation Agency, is expected to appeal this latest decision. *ED*

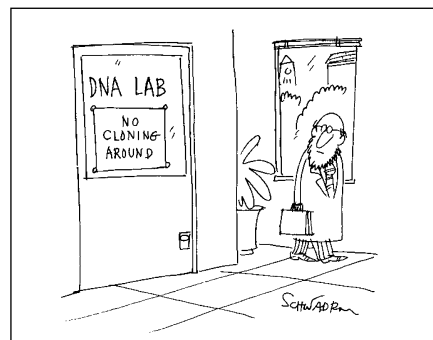
Call for regulation of UK Human Genetics Databases

In a report entitled *Human Genetics Databases: Challenges and Opportunities*, published on March 29, the UK House of Lords Science and Technology committee calls for a new Medical Data Panel to be formed to oversee regulation of personal genetics and health data. Currently, under the Data Protection Act (1998), genetic data can be used only for research specified in the donors' initial consent, and such data is often deleted before additional consent can be obtained for different studies involving the data. The new panel would devise a regulato-

ry framework whereby initial consent would be broadened to allow secondary uses of genetic data while also protecting the rights and interests of participating individuals. Although researchers have welcomed the new recommendations, GlaxoSmithKline's (London) senior vice president of genetic research Allen Roses suggests that genetic databases resulting from this "opt-in" approach to informed consent may be less comprehensive than those that follow the Icelandic "opt-out" model (*Nat. Biotechnol.* 17, 620, 1999), ultimately dissuading large multi-national companies from conducting genetic research in the UK. *SL*

Big gift for RPI biotech

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI; Troy, NY) received an anonymous \$360 million donation in early March, the largest ever single donation to a US university. According to Director of Media Relations Bruce Adams, "a large portion" of the gift will go toward biotechnology and information technology programs, specifically in the areas of functional tissue engineering, integrative systems biology, biocomputation and bioinformatics, and biocatalysis and metabolic engineering. The donation was given in order to implement the "Rensselaer Plan", an initiative created in 2000 by RPI President Shirley Jackson to increase the overall research budget from \$40 million to \$100 million, double graduate enrollment by 2005, and expand its Business Incubator Program in which faculty and students receive university support to start their own company based on individual research. The expansions include new programs and classes in entrepreneurship, business management, and intellectual property strategies. *JB*



California needs more power

At least two California biotech firms have warned investors that the state's power problems could hamper production and affect their bottom line. The bankruptcy of California's largest electrical utility company on April 5 underscored the state's ongoing energy crisis (*Nat. Biotechnol.* 18, 1127, 2000), which is expected to only worsen during the summer months. Idec Pharmaceuticals (San Diego, CA) stated in early April that temporary power losses have threatened production of the firm's monoclonal antibody, Zevalin; diagnostic kit-maker Quidel (San Diego, CA) said the energy problems could "damage our reputation, harm our ability to retain existing customers, and result in lost revenue." Meanwhile, in a more general response to the nation's energy crisis, the Biotechnology Industry Organization (Washington, DC) is drafting legislation to present to the Bush administration for federally funded research into the use of biomass energy sources that use bioengineered enzymes as a way of increasing energy supplies. *EN*

Research Collaborations

Company 1	Company 2	\$(Millions)	Details
Millennium Pharmaceuticals (Cambridge, MA)	Abbott Laboratories (Abbott Park, IL)	250	A joint venture to discover to commercialize drugs for obesity and diabetes. Abbott will buy \$50 million of Millennium stock at the outset and \$200 million more over the next two years. The aim is to place two drug candidates into the clinic by 2002 and two to three per year thereafter. The firms may also jointly develop proteins, antibodies, and antisense products, and may pursue additional therapeutics and diagnostics in the metabolic disease field.
Epigenesis (Cranbury, NJ)	Taisho (Tokyo)	100	An agreement to discover and develop antisense clinical candidates targeting respiratory disease. Taisho will finance the research, receive equity, and have exclusive rights to Epigenesis's asthma antisense product EPI-2010 in Asia.
X-Ceptor (San Diego, CA)	Sankyo (Tokyo)	45	A three-year collaboration to discover and develop synthetic ligand modulators of the orphan nuclear liver X receptor (LXR). LXR is involved with cholesterol absorption and excretion, and its regulation may prevent heart attacks and strokes. If one product is commercialized, X-Ceptor will receive up to \$45 million in funding, research support, and milestone and royalty payments.
Diversys (Cambridge, UK)	Peptech (North Ryde, Australia)	17	Diversys will develop antibody single domains—which are 10% the size of natural antibodies, giving them greater permeability and potential use for blocking viral and bacterial infections—for four targets of Peptech's choice. Peptech will pay \$10 million in cash and buy \$7 million of Diversys's stock over three years, giving it a 33.6% stake in the UK startup. <i>AB</i>