



Andrew Z. Fire (left) of Stanford University School of Medicine and **Craig C. Mello** (right) of the University of Massachusetts Medical School have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for 2006 for their discovery of RNA interference (RNAi). Working in the nematode worm *Caenorhabditis elegans*, the scientists found that double-stranded RNA can silence genes, that this

RNA interference is specific for the gene whose code matches that of the injected RNA molecule, and that RNAi can spread between cells and even be inherited.

They published their discovery in *Nature* in 1998, opening up a new research avenue for human therapeutics and leading to the establishment of over a dozen RNAi-focused biotech companies. The market for RNAi-based products—including small interfering RNA (siRNA), RNA oligonucleotides and DNA vectors encoding siRNA is estimated to reach \$185 million by 2008.

Ronnda L. Bartel has joined Aastrom Biosciences (Ann Arbor, MI, USA) as vice president of research and development. Dr. Bartel has more than 20 years of research and product development experience, holding several management positions including senior principal scientist, cell biology at Advanced Tissue Sciences; vice president, scientific development and senior director, stem cell development at Stem Cells Inc.; and most recently executive director, biological research at MicroIslet. In addition, Aastrom has announced that **Janet M. Hock**, vice president of global research and chief scientific officer, has accepted the position as founding director of the Maine Institute for Human Genetics and Health, a new program in cancer, genetics and regenerative medicine.

Geron (Menlo Park, CA, USA) has named **Alan B. Colowick** president of oncology, a newly created position. Dr. Colowick was most recently chief medical officer of Threshold Pharmaceuticals, and he previously served as Amgen's vice president of European medical affairs.

Fovea Pharmaceuticals (Paris) has appointed **Bernard Davitian** as executive vice president and chief financial officer. Mr. Davitian was formerly CEO of Neurotech, as well as senior vice president and chief financial officer of Transgene.

Iconix Biosciences (Mountain View, CA, USA) has announced that **Heiner Dreismann** has been appointed as a company director. Dr. Dreismann most recently served as president and CEO of Roche Molecular Systems and a member of Roche Diagnostics' global executive committee.

Edward L. Erickson has been named to the board of directors of BioTrove (Woburn, MA, USA). Mr. Erickson is currently chairman of the board of Immunicon, and has served as president, CEO or a director for eight life science companies including Megabios, DepoTech and Cholestech.

Avalon Pharmaceuticals (Germantown, MD, USA) has announced the appointment of **David Kabakoff** to its board of directors. Dr. Kabakoff cofounded and previously served as chairman and CEO of Salmedix, and is currently president and CEO of Strategy Advisors, which he established in 2001 to provide business and strategic advisory services to life sciences companies.

John Maraganore, currently president and CEO of Alnylam Pharmaceuticals, has joined the board of directors of privately held MacroGenics (Rockville, MD, USA). Dr. Maraganore previously served as senior vice president of strategic product development at Millennium Pharmaceuticals.

Synthetic biology company Amyris Biotechnologies (Emeryville, CA, USA), in conjunction with a \$20 million first-round financing, has named **John G. Melo** as CEO. Mr. Melo comes to Amyris from BP plc, where he served as president of US fuels operations. In addition, the company has added **Samir Kaul** of Khosla Ventures, **John Doerr** of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and Texas Pacific Group Ventures' **Geoff Duyk** to its board of directors.



Plexxikon (Berkeley, CA, USA) has appointed **Fletcher Payne** (left) to the position of vice president and chief financial officer, with responsibility for

finance, accounting, facilities and information technology. Mr. Payne joins Plexxikon from Rinat Neuroscience, where he was vice president of finance. He previously held senior finance and treasury positions at Dynavax Technologies, Cell Genesys, Sun Microsystems and IBM.

Jean-Pierre Riffaud has joined Quantum Genomics (Jersey City, NJ, USA) as head of preclinical development. He was previously in charge of preclinical development at Cellpep, until its acquisition by Procyon Biopharma. Before that, he was senior project leader at NicOx, where he focused on preclinical development for clinical studies.

Paul Strauss has joined Omeros (Seattle, WA, USA) as vice president, clinical development. Dr. Strauss was previously the therapeutic area vice president and project leader for arthritis, inflammation and pain for Pharmacia.

Cubist Pharmaceuticals (Lexington, MA, USA) has announced the death of its chief scientific officer, **Francis Tally**. Dr. Tally was considered the "father of Cubicin," Cubist's first-in-class antibiotic for treating methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and other drug-resistant bacterial infections. He had reduced his day-to-day responsibilities over the last two years in anticipation of his retirement, but was still actively involved with the company.