

BIOLOGY

Immunologist **Josef Penninger** has been lured back to his native Austria to set up and run a new institute. Penninger, a member of the Amgen Institute in Toronto since 1994, this month formally agreed to head the Institute for Molecular Biotechnology of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Penninger was initially hesitant about moving away from the tight focus of his research in cell signalling. But he eventually decided that being presented with a “blank slate” was a rare chance to gain complete academic freedom. “I can decide what research direction to take, what researchers to hire,” Penninger says. He has already offered input on the new building’s design. Construction on the site near downtown Vienna will begin early in 2002. Penninger will stay with Amgen until next year and retain his lab there until his existing graduate students finish their projects.

BIOLOGY AND PHYSICS

Next month, **Jeremy Gunawardena** will move from Hewlett-Packard’s Basic Research Institute in the Mathematical Sciences, which he established in Bristol, UK, to become a director of the systems biology programme at Harvard University’s Bauer Center for Genomics Research. Gunawardena, who has been with Hewlett-Packard since 1987, decided to switch countries and sectors after he realized the company was not going to move aggressively into biosciences. The Harvard institute is using tools and techniques from mathematics, physics and computer sciences to tackle biological problems. Gunawardena was attracted to it because it will allow him to apply his skills in an attempt to understand complex systems. “They needed new tools and new ways of thinking about problems,” he says. He is happy to have a short-term appointment, as he is keen to keep moving towards programmes that are responding aggressively to scientific changes. “I’m not going to be at any one place for 10 years,” Gunawardena explains.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

San Diego-based biotech company Structural GenomiX will next month get a new chief scientific officer. **Stephen Burley** is leaving his post at Rockefeller University in New York after 11 years to take up the new position. At Rockefeller,

Burley directed a structural biology lab, held an endowed professorship and received a Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant. Together, those positions gave him what he calls “one of the best academic jobs in the country”. But industry beckoned.

After Structural GenomiX this spring bought Prospect Genomics, a San Francisco-based bioinformatics company he co-founded, he soon realized that the move made sense. Structural GenomiX has automated equipment for protein structure discovery, as well as access to a beamline at the Advanced Photon Source at the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago in Illinois. That, along with the software from Prospect, will allow Burley and his colleagues to solve structures of proteins bound to small molecules. Doing so will allow the company to see how subtle variations in a protein or a drug affects the binding of the two, an essential component of rational drug design. The company expects to recruit about 30 scientists by the summer, mostly chemists.

BIOTECH MANAGEMENT

NicOx, a French biotech company based in Sophia Antipolis, has appointed **Marco Sardina** as senior medical director and **Romano Rivolta** as director of chemistry and formulation. Since 1997, Sardina has been medical director of Italfarmaco, a biotech company based in Milan, Italy. Before joining NicOx, Rivolta was technology-transfer manager at Patheon Italia, a pharmaceutical firm near Milan.

Last month **Ian Gilham** was appointed group managing director, laboratory division, at Axis-Shield, a diagnostics company based in Dundee, Scotland. Gilham joins the company from pharmaceuticals giant GlaxoSmithKline, where he was vice-president of pharmacogenetics and applied diagnostics.

Ingenium Pharmaceuticals, a biotech company in Martinsried, Germany, has appointed **Erich Platzer** and **Richard Aldrich** to its supervisory board. Platzer is chairman of Novuspharma, a drug-discovery company based in Monza, Italy, and is the former therapeutic area head of oncology global strategic marketing at drugs company Hoffmann-La Roche. Aldrich is the former senior vice-president and chief business officer of biotech firm Vertex Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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