

MOVERS

Thomas Hudson, president and scientific director, Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, Toronto, Canada



2003-07: Director, McGill University and Genome Quebec Innovation Centre, Montreal, Canada

1996-2002: Director, Montreal Genome Centre, McGill University Health Centre, Montreal, Canada

1995-2001: Assistant director, Center for Genome Research, Whitehead Institute, Cambridge, Mass.

If you are going to crack the human genome, or diagnose cancers when they are only one millimetre in diameter, you have to be ambitious. Thomas Hudson says he learned to think big during the early 1990s, when some were calling the plan to decipher the human genome impossible.

His genome work began when Hudson, an allergist and immunologist, joined Eric Lander's laboratory at the Whitehead Institute for Biological Research/MIT Center for Genome Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as a postdoc. Hudson supervised a team of engineers, biologists and computer scientists who built one of the first high-throughput robots for replicating short segments of DNA. 'Genomatron' could perform 300,000 polymerase chain reactions daily and sent the project into high gear.

Hudson became the project leader for the physical map of the human genome and later the sequence map, nurturing a competitive, but collaborative group dynamic. "Each time we launched one of these big projects it got done way ahead of time, under cost and the results were much better than we anticipated, because we learned from each other," says Hudson. In 1995 he became the assistant director of the Whitehead Institute and held that position until 2001.

Meanwhile, in 1996, he returned to Canada to run the Montreal Genome Centre, which later became the McGill University and Genome Quebec Innovation Centre. But he kept close ties with his collaborators in Massachusetts, and went on to publish a trio of papers in *Nature Genetics* that sparked the International HapMap project. "That's when this centre became a true genome centre," says Hudson. "Everyone wanted to be as good as the Sanger Centre and the Broad Institute. It spilled over into other projects, in terms of quality control and team spirit."

His thoughts then turned to experimental therapeutics and diagnostics. A job offer to direct the newly created Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, in Toronto, Canada, came at the right time. Since July 2006, Hudson has been setting up this multidisciplinary, multi-institutional translational research centre that carries a five-year funding commitment of Can\$350 million (US\$305 million).

"Tom has the capacity to hold on to lots of disparate information and then creatively bring it together to see where the connections are," says John Rioux, associate professor of medicine at the University of Montreal and Montreal Heart Institute. "It's important for the science and doesn't hurt in a leadership position."

Hannah Hoag

NETWORKS & SOCIETY

A more attractive career

While member states of the European Union (EU) stress the importance of developing knowledge-based economies, they often overlook those likely to play a crucial role: highly educated early-stage researchers.

That was the conclusion of a meeting in London of more than 50 delegates at the annual conference held by Eurodoc, the European council of doctoral candidates and other junior researchers. This federation now consists of organizations from 28 countries, making it a strong partner for the European Commission and the European University Association, among others.

In 2005, the commission adopted the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, with recommendations on making research a more attractive career. Much work remains, particularly in recognition of doctoral candidates as professionals instead of students. Training for research by performing research, they deserve a fair salary and social security, including pension rights and parental leave.

At the meeting, the delegates started a campaign to promote the Charter and Code. Universities and governments should realize that in a competitive global market, talent will

only stay if treated well. Many young researchers still plan to leave for the United States to gain higher status and better career prospects.

In a keynote lecture, Cornelis-Mario Vis from the European Commission's directorate-general of research advocated a single, open and attractive labour market for researchers — whose mobility is often limited by legal and administrative obstacles.

Eurodoc is enthusiastic about proposals such as the €4.75-billion (US\$6.38-billion) People programme, building on the highly successful Marie Curie fellowships to support researcher mobility. We plan to contribute to the EU's European Research Area Green Paper, which should push for more concrete, even more enforceable, measures. Perhaps signing the Charter and Code should become a necessary condition for an institute to participate in EU research funding programmes.

Delegates also decided to conduct a Europe-wide survey on working conditions and career paths later this year. We hope to determine an overview of the different doctoral models and point out best practices. ■

Koen van Dam is the president of Eurodoc and a PhD candidate at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

POSTDOC JOURNAL

Science for life?

"Each man has his own vocation," said Ralph Waldo Emerson. "His talent is his call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him." Science is often portrayed as a vocation, a calling — as something more than just a job. Underlying this portrayal is the notion that scientists have an intrinsic curiosity about the natural world; indeed, this is probably the most commonly shared attribute among successful scientists of the past and present.

I'd like to tell you that I have an insatiable curiosity for my new field, and chose my project because I couldn't dream of anything else. But frankly, other factors, such as the chance to live in the same city as my fiancée, came into play.

Do we all need to have rabid inquisitiveness in order to be scientists? I can't help pondering this question on those days when the passion for discovery, the longing to know more, is absent. Perhaps a short holiday might provide a chance to recharge. But then I hear Eleanor Roosevelt gently reminding me, "It's not more vacation we need — it's more vocation."

During those periods of drought, is it okay to treat science as if it's just a job, rather than a vocation? Maybe if I just keep turning up at the lab, day after day, the discipline alone will sustain me until the next Earth-shattering breakthrough gets me back on track. ■

Peter Jordan is a visiting fellow at the National Institute of Diabetes and Kidney Diseases in Bethesda, Maryland.