

nature biotechnology

Please send letters to:
Nature Biotechnology
345 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010-1707, USA
Fax: +1 212 696 9635
E-mail: m.francisco@natureny.com

Host-defense peptides

To the editor:

I am amused by a significant omission in the otherwise well-written review of host-defense peptides (*Nature Biotechnology* 14:587-590, May 1996) by Kenneth J. Kelley, the venture capitalist who founded IntraBiotics



Pharmaceuticals. Much as certain scientific review writers occasionally, and unfortunately, choose to cite previous publications of their collaborators while omitting citation of their competitors, so Mr. Kelley chooses to ignore the work of

his scientific and commercial collaborators.

IntraBiotics was founded on the basis of work conducted in the laboratory of Robert Lehrer of the University of California at Los Angeles. During the course of his negotiations with the University, Kelley was unable to acquire the broader rights he sought, in part because of a collaborative research and development agreement between the University and Biosource Technologies. A press release from the University of California at Irvine, dated May 16, 1994, describes this broad initiative based on the work of Michael Selsted, a leading innovator in the field of mammalian host-defense biology: "The company will fund \$9.6 million in basic research to support investigations of the body's innate immunity against disease-causing microorganisms. . . Several of the molecules have commercial promise as antibiotics and sterilizing agents."

In addition to omitting reference to the work of Biosource Technologies and Selsted, Kelley fails to mention several other commercial competitors, including Demeter BioTechnologies, Incyte Pharmaceuticals, and Trimeris. Given the typical venture capitalist's keen awareness of the nature and identity of competitors, I suspect that Mr. Kelley's selective review was more by design than by accident.

Robert L. Erwin
CEO

Biosource Technologies, Inc.
3333 Vaca Valley Parkway
Vacaville, CA 95688

Kenneth J. Kelley responds:

I selected companies for my article on the basis of the most advanced stages of pharmaceutical development of their antimicrobial peptide products. IntraBiotics was founded on the work of multiple academic researchers and their antimicrobial peptide technologies, notably including the protegrins discovered by Robert Lehrer. By the way, I am an entrepreneur and the founder of IntraBiotics, but I am not a venture capitalist.

Software on the Internet

To the editor:

We appreciate *Nature Biotechnology's* recent coverage (14:690, June '96) of Chemscape Chime from MDL Information Systems, Inc., and are pleased that the reporter found the software so useful.

Unfortunately, the June article contains many serious inaccuracies. We are disappointed that our efforts to clarify several key facts with both reporter and editor were ignored and that *Nature Biotechnology* elected to print an article that is based on a false premise.

This article misrepresents both Chemscape Chime and our announced line of Chemscape products for internet and intranet applications. For an accurate description of Chemscape Chime and our announced line of Chemscape products, we suggest a visit to MDL's Web site: <http://www.mdli.com/chemscape/chime/html>.

MDL values our long relationship with Glaxo Wellcome, and we know that researchers there and elsewhere appreciate MDL's efforts to improve scientific information management. One of these efforts is Chemscape Chime, which has been downloaded free of charge from our Web site by more than 20,000 scientists worldwide.

Steven Goldby

Chairman and CEO
MDL Information Systems, Inc.
14600 Catalina Street
San Leandro, CA 94577

John Hodgson responds:

I am pleased that Steven Goldby appreciated my article. Its primary aim was to highlight a gray area of intellectual property rights surrounding software being distributed via the WorldWide Web, an issue of some considerable concern to readers of *Nature Biotechnology*.

In the preparation of the article, I (and my colleagues) sought clarification of a number of points about which MDL has expressed concerns. However, in contrast to the implications in Steven Goldby's letter, no clarification was forthcoming. None of the three MDL executives with whom I spoke was able or willing to expand on or to correct what they saw as "serious inaccuracies." Instead, they asked *Nature Biotechnology* to withdraw the article without providing any substantial further insights.

On the broader issue of software use and development, I would be very interested in receiving feedback from users of Chemscape Chime or RasMol, and from others who have views on the distribution of software via the WWW.

Arabidopsis sequencing

To the editor:

Pioneer contributed openly to the content of the article, "EC and US agencies fund large-scale *Arabidopsis* sequencing," which appeared in June issue of *Nature Biotechnology* (14:696, June '96). We were disappointed by the last sentence of this article. This was not the information conveyed to Ms. Glaser.

We kindly request that the following addendum or clarification be included in the next issue to give the scientific community a better understanding of Pioneer's intentions:

"Pioneer Hi-Bred is finalizing plans on the release of data (source library information and sequences) from its maize sequencing collaboration with Human Genome Sciences (Rockville, MD) to the public sector. Data will be made available as part of the numerous collaborative relationships Pioneer has in place and will establish with selected plant molecular biologists. Once Pioneer and these scientists have had time to consider and evaluate the thousands of sequences expected, we will work with HGS to establish a mutually acceptable process to bring maize sequences into the public domain while protecting our respective commercial rights."

A. Cavaliere

Vice President
Pioneer Hi-Bred International
Johnston, IA 50131-1004