

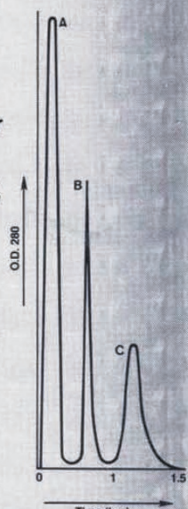
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CELL CULTURE DEPOSITORY

U.K. STARTS CELL BANK

PORTON DOWN, Wiltshire, U.K.—A National Collection of Animal Cell Cultures (NCACC), set up with funds from the U.K. Department of Trade and Industry, has opened at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research. The first of its sort in Europe, the collection was created because of biotechnologists' increasing demand for animal cells.

Without any rental charge, scientists and commercial organizations will be able to use the NCACC's banking service to deposit ampoules containing cell stocks. These will be made freely available to other researchers. Under contract, the NCACC will also maintain cell lines and distribute them as requested by other users. The charge for these "safe deposit" facilities with restricted distribution will be £60 for the first year and £30 for subsequent years. In addition, the NCACC will hold specialized cell types needed for standardization (such as those, derived from families, used for disease marker studies), and will make these either freely available or accessible only to recognized groups of customers.

Application has been made to the World Intellectual Property Organization for the new collection to serve as Great Britain's internationally recognized patent depository under the terms of the 1977 Budapest Treaty. NCACC will charge £600 for depositing a culture that is the basis of a patent.

The curator of the collection, A. Doyle, has also decided to maintain examples of all internationally recognized, well-characterized cell lines as a safeguard against possible future imposition of import/export restrictions. The sole aim of this policy is to guarantee future supplies—not to act as a distribution agency while alternative sources remain available.

Among other services offered by the Porton Down laboratory are identification (karyotype and isoenzyme analysis), sterility testing (for bacteria, fungi, mycoplasma and selected viruses), and functional testing (including product expression and virus susceptibility). But the curator and his staff, who will work closely with other national and international centers, emphasize that this is only a provisional outline of functions planned for the NCACC, development of which will depend upon users' requirements. —Bernard Dixon

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