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So Much for Immortality

Apr 22, 2011

Premium

It's thought that cancer cells are able to endlessly replicate themselves as they spread through the body. But far from being "immortal," a [new study in *Pigment Cell & Melanoma Research*](#) shows the cells seem unable to multiply at will, reports *New Scientist's* Andy Coghlan. By studying the molecular profiles of skin cancer cells as they grow in the lab, the researchers found that many appear to hit a "telomere crisis" and stop dividing when the tips of the chromosomes become so short that the cell mistakes them for DNA breaks and tries to repair them, Coghlan says. "The team found that the [few cancer cells that are immortal activate telomerase reverse transcriptase](#), a part of the telomerase enzyme that rebuilds telomeres so they avoid a telomere crisis," he adds. Cancer Research UK recently launched a trial to stop the spread of pancreatic cancer with a vaccine made of fragments of telomerase reverse transcriptase and a similar vaccine against acute myeloid leukemia is being tested in California, Coghlan says.

We recommend

ASCO: Telomeres and Cancer
[GenomeWeb, 2011](#)

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Cambrex Licenses Telomerase-Immortalized Human Cells from Geron for Drug Discovery
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Breaking News

- Veritas Genetics Halts US Operations
- New Products Posted to GenomeWeb: Quadrant Biosciences, InterVenn Biosciences, Macrogen, More
- Childhood Kidney Cancer Arises From Altered Normal Tissue, Sequencing Study Finds
- Amgen Gifts \$1M to Keck Graduate Institute for Genomics Education Center
- Ancestors of Sub-Saharan Africans Interbred With Archaic Humans
- Centogene Q3 Revenues Decrease 13 Percent Due to Non-Recurring Payments From Pharma Partners

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Hope, But Cost Worries

Nature News reports that gene therapy approaches are tackling sickle cell disease, but that the cost of treatment is a concern.

Cleared the Committee

The *Washington Post* reports that a US Senate committee voted this week to approve the nomination of Stephen Hahn to lead the Food and Drug Administration.

One Gene to Shape the Face

One gene regulates hundreds of others to influence facial development, according to *New Scientist*.

Nature Studies Review Resources for Single-Cell Analysis, Examine ALS Exomes, More

In *Nature* this week: resources for single-cell analysis, little overlap in the microRNAs used by *Salmonella* and *Shigella* to infect host cells, and more.

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Live Webinar: Emerging Biomarkers in Thyroid Cancer and NSCLC
Dr. Sandip Patel of UCSD, will provide an overview of biomarker-guided therapy for thyroid cancer and NSCLC and will discuss emerging biomarkers for these cancers with their supporting evidence.
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Advances in Precision Oncology: Tertiary Analysis Software for Solid Tumors
This webinar will address how two laboratories are implementing tertiary analysis software to improve their precision oncology workflows.
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On 12/18, Dr. Stephen Brown from the Sheffield RNAi Screening Facility will provide an overview of high-throughput RNAi screening from a dedicated RNAi screening facility.
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Dr. Gorka Alkorta-Aranburu will discuss how liquid biopsy can be considered as a non-invasive method to tissue biopsies for molecular characterization.
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On 12/12, Michael Ting of the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology will discuss the use of deep sequencing to analyze translational regulation of small RNAs.
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Live Webinar: Maximizing Diagnostic Yield with an Optimized Variant Interpretation Platform
On 12/10, Katherine Benson of the University of Surgeons Ireland will discuss the use of next-generation sequencing and an optimized variant interpretation workflow to increase diagnostic yield in complex clinical cases.
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