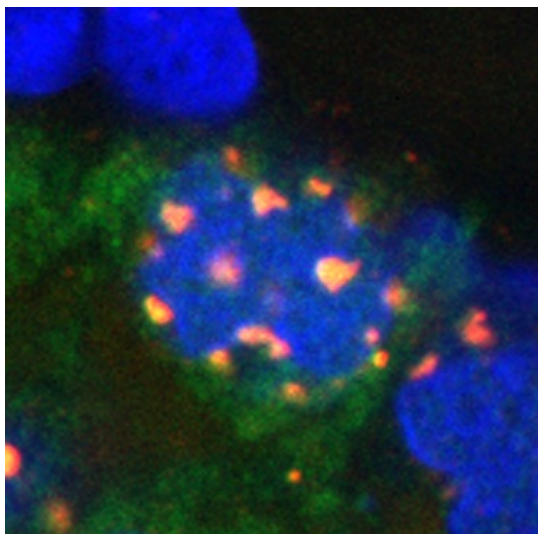


Leading RNA biologist René Ketting joins IMB as Scientific Director

Mainz, May 2012. *The Institute of Molecular Biology appoints Prof. René Ketting as its second Scientific Director. René Ketting, [40], is a leading molecular biologist who will be focussing on the biology of non-coding RNAs. He will introduce C. elegans and the zebrafish as model systems at IMB to study mechanisms controlling development and disease.*

For decades, RNAs have only been seen as intermediates in the production of proteins. However, the discovery of new classes of RNA which control the activity of genes has dramatically changed our view of these molecules. Prof. Ketting is one of the pioneers of this exciting, emerging area. His research focuses on so-called non-coding RNA (ncRNA), which he, with others, has shown to play a key role in embryonic development. Furthermore, errors in the control of gene activity by ncRNAs contribute to major diseases, such as cancer and heart failure.



Germ cell labelled with GFP (green), DAPI (blue) and Tdr6 (red), a component of a small RNA pathway acting in germ cells

Specifically, Prof. Ketting investigates three central aspects of ncRNA biology: (i) how certain ncRNAs are able to silence the expression of specific genes, (ii) how ncRNAs regulate the activity of genes by triggering changes to chromatin, i.e. the way the DNA is packaged, and (iii) how they act to stop transposons, short pieces of DNA that can jump within the genome, from moving. The movement of transposons has a major impact on the stability of our genetic material. Understanding how ncRNAs prevent such movement therefore provides important insights into how our genomes are maintained in a healthy state.

IMB's Founding Director, Prof. Christof Niehrs, is enthusiastic about René Ketting joining IMB: *"René's research perfectly complements the work already carried out at IMB. His recruitment significantly bolsters the institute's expertise and international visibility in the field of RNA biology and will lead to many exciting collaborations"*. In addition to becoming a Director at IMB, Prof. Ketting has also been appointed as Professor within the Faculty of Biology at Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) Mainz.

“We are very glad to have succeeded in recruiting Prof. Ketting. His appointment brings an internationally renowned scientist to Mainz and further strengthens biological research at the University” states Prof. Georg Krausch, President of JGU.

René Ketting is currently Professor of Epigenetics at the Hubrecht Institute in the Netherlands. He has been an EMBO Young Investigator since 2007 and is holder of a prestigious European Research Council Starting Grant. Prof. Ketting will be taking up his appointment at IMB in September 2012.

“Professor Ketting’s appointment marks another important step in establishing IMB as an international beacon of research in the life sciences. We are very happy that IMB could attract a scientist of such calibre from abroad and are confident that the search for a further scientific director will be equally successful”, says Otto Boehringer, chairman of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation. To mark the 125th anniversary of the company Boehringer Ingelheim in 2010, the foundation pledged itself to donate 100 million Euro for the scientific running of IMB.

Institute for Molecular Biology gGmbH (IMB)

The Institute of Molecular Biology gGmbH (IMB) is a new centre of excellence in the life sciences. It was established in March 2011. Research at IMB concentrates on three cutting-edge areas: epigenetics, developmental biology and DNA repair. The institute is a prime example of a successful collaboration between public authorities and a private foundation. The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation has dedicated 100 million Euro for a period of 10 years to cover the operating costs for research at IMB, while the state of Rhineland-Palatinate provided approx. 50 million Euro for the construction of a state-of-the-art building. For more information about IMB please visit: <http://www.imb-mainz.de>.

Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of the medical, biological, chemical and pharmaceutical sciences. It was established in 1977 by Hubertus Liebrecht, a member of the shareholder family of the company Boehringer Ingelheim. For more information about the foundation and its programmes, please visit www.boehringer-ingelheim-stiftung.de.

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