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COVER Expression of the trk proto-oncogene in neurons of the adult mouse trigeminal ganglion. This photomicrograph shows a toluidine blue-stained section of trigeminal ganglion that has been hybridized with an antisense trk complementary RNA probe. The grains that overlie the large, light blue neurons indicate trk expression. The smaller, dark blue, nonneuronal cells do not express trk. See page 554. [In situ hybridization and photomicroscopy by L. F. Parada]

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Jupiter's stratosphere

TOR the past decade, measurements of the thermal infrared (methane) emissions from Jupiter have been made with the NASA Infrared Telescope at Mauna Kea, Hawaii. In the Jovian stratosphere, any variations in the methane emissions arise from variations of temperature and not from variations in methane abundance. Orton et al. find that the Jovian stratosphere is as dynamically active as is Earth's stratosphere (page 537). Temperatures vary both spatially and temporally, with global-scale and local variations and shortlived and long-term variations being detectable. Composite profiles of the dynamic features of the Jovian stratosphere that will be based on the methane-emission data, on data that will be obtained by the Galileo spacecraft after it goes into orbit around Jupiter in 1995, and on data that will be collected at other infrared wavelengths by astronomical cameras that are now under development should lead to a better understanding of the Jovian stratosphere itself, the effects of the stratosphere on global circulation, and the interactions of the stratosphere with the troposphere.

RNA as a transcription factor

THE cellular machinery that brings about the transcription of genes is protein; or so it was thought. In a study by Young et al., a transcription factor that is not protein but RNA has been identified (page 542). The heretical RNA factor assists the enzyme RNA polymerase III in its activity of transcribing class III genes of silkworms. What will this discovery reveal about the transcription process? Will it alter understanding of how the transcription machinery has evolved? How does a research laboratory discover something this unexpected? And what, in fact, might the RNA be doing? These are some of the questions addressed in a Research News story by Hoffman (page 506).

Fullerenes

OLLOW cage-like all-carbon molecules, fullerenes, are produced when carbon burns. Scanning tunneling microscope investigations by Li et al. show that when buckminsterfullerene (C₆₀) is deposited on gallium arsenide surfaces, the strong interaction leads to large stable monolayer islands of C_{60} ; within each island the C_{60} molecules line up in ordered arrays in register with the substrate (page 547). Diederich et al. have identified four higher fullerenes, C76, C84, C_{90} , and C_{94} , and a stable oxide $C_{70}O$ as common products of the heating of graphite (page 548). Like buckminsterfullerene, these larger molecules have cage-like structures. Future characterizations should provide insights into novel physical and electronic properties of the fullerenes and into the factors that might enhance stability and account for preferential production and survival of these stable species.

Nerve growth factor and Trk

FERVE growth factor (NGF) is vital to the differentiation and maintenance of nerve cells (cover). It binds to receptors at the cell surface, initiating intracellular events that result in neuronal differentiation. Many basic elements of this process have been unclear, including the nature of the receptor and the way in which signals are transduced. Three Reports this week provide new information on the role of the proto-oncogene product Trk in NGF actions (pages 554, 558, and 561). The potential significance of these studies and of other recently published data on NGF and Trk is discussed by Barinaga (page 505).

Genome scanning

NUMBER OF "REVERSE GENETics" procedures have been devised for identifying mutant genes when a mutant phenotype is

known but gene products or linked markers are not. One such procedure, genome scanning, has led to the identification of the gene that causes the pink-eyed unstable mutation of mice (page 566). Mice with the normal allele p have heavily pigmented eyes and coats; those homozygous for the disease allele p^{un} have greatly reduced pigmentation. A repetitive DNA probe was used to detect differences between the genomic DNAs of inbred normal mice and affected mice that are coisogenic; between the two strains of mice only genes relating to sex and the disease are expected to differ. The p^{un} allele was found to be duplicated in affected mice; the duplication was lost when the phenotype reverted to the wild type. Brilliant et al. discuss how the duplication and its loss could be directly coupled to the unusually high reversion rate of this allele, the highest known in mammals.

Cellular plasticity

HEN, during development, does the fate of a cell become fixed? Eisen has examined this issue as it pertains to primary motoneurons of zebrafish (page 569). These organisms have relatively fast-developing embryos, and their motoneurons, which innervate axial muscles, are large and distinctive. Single cells were moved to new spinal cord locations and development was then observed. If the cells were transplanted 2 to 3 hours before they typically reach the stage of axon development (some 18 hours after fertilization), the trajectories of the axons were appropriate to the new location; thus the cells were still responsive to local positional cues. If the cells were transplanted within an hour of axogenesis, the axons developed as would be appropriate for their old location, an indication that an irreversible stage of differentiation had been reached. This type of study helps to fix both the time when cell fate is decided and the stages leading up to it, such as when an embryonic cell is destined to become a generic versus a specific motoneuron.

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PCR: A revolution in molecular biology

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This novel method for amplifying gene sequences was developed by scientists at Cetus Corporation. Using PCR, investigators can use extremely small amounts of biological material in the amplification process. Fully automated *in vitro* PCR performs in a few hours what used to take days or weeks.

Recently, PCR technology was made even more specific, more flexible, and more cost-effective. That's because it has been improved by replacing heat-sensitive DNA polymerase from *E. coli* with *Taq*, a patented thermostable enzyme isolated from the bacterium, *Thermus aquaticus.**

Plus BSA: A breakthrough in archaeology.

A key advantage of PCR is its ability to amplify a specific DNA fragment of defined length and sequence from small amounts of a complex template. This feature recently facilitated a major breakthrough in our knowledge of New World colonization.

This unique application of PCR came from the field of molecular archaeology. Bovine serum albumin in tandem with PCR made it possible to copy and reproduce in large quantities some of a very few pieces of DNA left intact in a 7,000 yearold brain excavated from a Florida spring. Investigators used bovine serum albumin with the heat-resistant DNA polymerase to amplify small numbers of informative DNA sequences. In doing so, DNA from the ancient cranium revealed firsttime evidence of a previously unknown maternal lineage for Native Americans.

Svante Paabo on albumin in PCR...

"The basis for using albumin was it's ability to take care of enzyme inhibitors. Regarding other applications of albumin with PCR, it also takes care of heme, a molecule from hemoglobin. Heme is a strong inhibitor of DNA polymerase and often contaminates preparation of DNA from blood."

BSA enhances PCR by countering enzyme inhibitors

While PCR helps avoid errors and cloning artifacts, the use of bovine serum albumin for certain PCR applications may offset troublesome and unidentified—inhibitors.

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Source references:

Paabo S, Gifford JA, Wilson AC: Mitochondrial DNA sequences from a 7000-year-old brain. Nucleic Acids Research 1988; 16(20):9775-87. Saiki RK, Gelfand DH, Stoffel S, et al: Primer-directed enzymatic amplication of DNA with a thermostable DNA polymerase. Science 1988;239:487-91. White TJ, Arnheim N, Erlich HA: The polymerase chain reaction. Trends in Genetics 1989;5(6):185-9.

*In 1989 Cetus Corporation received a patent on purified thermostable *Thermus aquaticus* DNA polymerase either isolated from *T. aquaticus* or derived form a genetically engineered organism containing a gene that codes for production of enzymes. Patent number 4,889,818.



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Graphics Overlay plots Drivers for most graphics devices *Two-dimensional:* Error bars Scatterplots Line and vector graphs Vector, dot, bubble and quantile plots Bar graphs (single, multiple, stacked, range) Box plots (single and grouped) Stem-and-leaf diagrams Linear, quadratic, step, spline, polynomial, LOWESS, exponential smoothing Confidence intervals and ellipses (any alpha value) Smooth mathematical functions Rectangular or polar coordinates Log and power scales ANOVA interaction plots Histograms (regular, cumulative, fuzzy) Stripe and jitter plots Gaussian histogram smoothing Scatterplot matrices Voronoi tesselations ¹⁰ Minimum spanning tree ¹⁰ Maps with geographic projections (U.S. state boundary file included, county and world boundary files available) ¹⁰ Chernoff faces ¹⁰ Star plots ¹⁰ Fourier plots ¹⁰ Pie charts ¹⁰ Contour plots on regularly and irregularly spaced points ¹⁰ Control charts and limits ¹⁰ *Three-dimensional:* Data plots ¹⁰ Smooth function plots ¹⁰ Vector plots ¹⁰ Linear, quadratic, spline, least squares surface smoothing ¹⁰ Typefaces that print in perspective.

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