

Ian Dunham appointed as Open Targets Director

Ian Dunham set to lead drug target identification initiative, Open Targets

Summary

- Open Targets is a public-private partnership that aims to improve drug discovery by systematically identifying and prioritising drug targets
- Ian Dunham, previously the Scientific Director of Open Targets, has been appointed as new Director
- Dunham hopes to bring new technologies and approaches to the collaboration, including the increased use of single-cell sequencing, CRISPR and artificial intelligence

January 23, Cambridge – Open Targets has appointed Ian Dunham as its new Director. Dunham will focus on the delivery of Open Targets' established research programme to exploit advances in genetics and genomics for drug target identification and prioritisation. He also aims to increase the use of new approaches to the programme, including single-cell sequencing, CRISPR and artificial intelligence.

Open Targets, launched in 2014, is the public-private partnership between EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI), the Wellcome Sanger Institute, GSK, Biogen, Takeda, Celgene and Sanofi. The initiative aims to transform drug discovery through the systematic identification and prioritisation of targets.

"Open Targets is ideally placed for innovation," says Dunham. "We have built strong partnerships and established powerful research programmes that exploit advances in genetics and genomics to improve drug target identification. We're now tapping into the expertise of the Wellcome Genome Campus and our partners to bring other new technologies to our research. Some of the more promising directions include single-cell sequencing, gene editing and artificial intelligence."

Dunham has been the Scientific Director of Open Targets since 2014. He played a pivotal role in establishing the initial research programme and oversaw new bioinformatics and experimental projects initiated by Open Targets. These include experimental projects in oncology, neurodegeneration, immunity and inflammation.

Before joining Open Targets, Dunham held several roles at EMBL-EBI, and his research areas included genome-wide mapping of regulatory elements and chromatin state in the human genome. He was also an integral part of the [NHGRI ENCODE project](#), which focused on identifying all functional regions of the human genome, regardless of whether they formed genes or not. Dunham's interest in mapping the human genome has been a recurring theme throughout his career.

"Open Targets is an excellent example of how computational and experimental researchers from different backgrounds and sectors can collaborate to improve drug discovery," concludes Rolf Apweiler, Interim Head of Open Targets and Joint Director of EMBL-EBI. "I am delighted to see Ian stepping up to lead the collaboration. His expertise in genetics, genomics and his involvement with the project from its inception will be invaluable in developing the collaboration even further."

Discover more

Find out more about the Open Targets partners.

Biogen

At Biogen, our mission is clear: we are pioneers in neuroscience. Biogen discovers, develops, and delivers worldwide innovative therapies for people living with serious neurological and neurodegenerative diseases. One of the world's first global biotechnology companies, Biogen was founded in 1978 by Charles Weissmann, Heinz Schaller, Kenneth Murray, and Nobel Prize winners Walter Gilbert and Phillip Sharp, and today has the leading portfolio of medicines to treat multiple sclerosis, has introduced the first and only approved treatment for spinal muscular atrophy, and is focused on advancing neuroscience research programs in Alzheimer's disease and dementia, MS and neuroimmunology, movement disorders, neuromuscular disorders, acute neurology, neurocognitive disorders, pain, and ophthalmology. Biogen also manufactures and commercializes biosimilars of advanced biologics. www.biogen.com

Celgene

Celgene Corporation, headquartered in Summit, New Jersey, is an integrated global biopharmaceutical company engaged primarily in the discovery, development and commercialisation of innovative therapies for the treatment of cancer and inflammatory diseases through next-generation solutions in protein homeostasis, immuno-oncology, epigenetics, immunology and neuro-inflammation.

<http://www.celgene.com>

EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI)

EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI) is a global leader in the storage, analysis and dissemination of large biological datasets. EMBL-EBI helps scientists realise the potential of 'big data' by enhancing their ability to exploit complex information to make discoveries that benefit humankind.

EMBL-EBI is at the forefront of computational biology research, with work spanning sequence analysis methods, multi-dimensional statistical analysis and data-driven biological discovery, from plant biology to mammalian development and disease.

EMBL-EBI is part of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), an international, innovative and interdisciplinary research organisation funded by 25 member states and two associate member states, and are located on the Wellcome Genome Campus, one of the world's largest concentrations of scientific and technical expertise in genomics.

www.ebi.ac.uk

GSK

GSK - a science-led global healthcare company with a special purpose: to help people do more, feel better, live longer. We have 3 global businesses that research, develop and manufacture innovative medicines, vaccines and consumer healthcare products. We aim to bring differentiated, high-quality and needed healthcare products to as many people as possible using our scientific and technical know-how.

In 2014 GSK became one of the founding members of Open Targets to systematically improve the identification and prioritisation of drug targets that could lead to safe and effective medicines. For further information please visit www.gsk.com

Sanofi

Sanofi is dedicated to supporting people through their health challenges. We are a global biopharmaceutical company focused on human health. We prevent illness with vaccines, provide innovative treatments to fight pain and ease suffering. We stand by the few who suffer from rare diseases and the millions with long-term chronic conditions.

With more than 100,000 people in 100 countries, Sanofi is transforming scientific innovation into healthcare solutions around the globe.

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Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited

Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Limited is a global, values-based, R&D-driven biopharmaceutical leader headquartered in Japan, committed to bringing better health and a brighter future to patients by translating science into highly-innovative medicines. Takeda focuses its R&D efforts on four therapeutic areas: oncology, gastroenterology (GI), neuroscience and rare diseases. We also make targeted R&D investments in plasma-derived therapies and vaccines. We are focusing on developing highly innovative medicines that contribute to making a difference in people's lives by advancing the frontier of new treatment options and leveraging our enhanced collaborative R&D engine and capabilities to create a robust, modality-diverse pipeline. Our employees are committed to improving quality of life for patients and to working with our partners in health care in approximately 80 countries and regions.

<https://www.takeda.com>

The Wellcome Sanger Institute

The Wellcome Sanger Institute is one of the world's leading genome centres. Through its ability to conduct research at scale, it is able to engage in bold and long-term exploratory projects that are designed to influence and empower medical science globally. Institute research findings, generated through its own research programmes and through its leading role in international consortia, are being used to develop new diagnostics and treatments for human disease.

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