



European centre of excellence for mouse biology celebrates its 10th anniversary

For a decade EMBL's mouse biology Unit has been investigating the molecular basis of neurological disorders, leukemia and muscle regeneration in mice



EMBL's Mouse Biology Unit in Monterotondo. (Photolab/EMBL)

Monterotondo, 22 June 2009 - Mice are one of biology's most important model organisms, because 98% of their genes and many of their traits and diseases are similar to ours. Researchers at the Mouse Biology Unit of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) take advantage of these similarities and use mice to study molecular mechanisms of health and disease that also apply to humans. Today the EMBL Mouse Biology Unit in Monterotondo, close to Rome in Italy, celebrates its 10th anniversary.

The EMBL Mouse Biology Unit was founded in 1999 on the 'Adriano Buzzati-Traverso' International Scientific Campus in Monterotondo to exploit synergies and encourage collaborations with the European Mouse Mutant Archive (EMMA), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology and the Institute of Cell Biology operated by the Italian National Research Council (CNR), and to jointly create a European centre of excellence and innovation in mouse biology on the campus.

"Mouse biology bridges the gap between basic research in the life sciences and human medicine. Sequencing the human genome has identified many genes that are involved in causing diseases, but to harness this knowledge for medicine we need

to know what exactly the genes do. Together with our neighbour institutes in Monterotondo we have gathered all the expertise, infrastructure and technologies necessary to address these questions in mice," says Nadia Rosenthal, who took over as Head of EMBL's Mouse Biology Unit from internationally renowned immunologist Klaus Rajewsky in 2001.

"EMBL has been an important addition to the Monterotondo campus and has contributed to developing and internationalising Italian biological and biomedical research. We are looking forward to many more years of fruitful collaboration," says Glauco Tocchini-Valentini, Head of CNR-EMMA International Activities on the Campus.

Scientists at EMBL's Mouse Biology Unit investigate a broad spectrum of basic research topics and over the past 10 years have generated mouse models of over 20 different human diseases, including heart failure, stroke, leukemia, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis, as well as mental and behavioural disorders such as depression and anxiety. The Mouse Biology Unit also provides a wide array of services and technologies to the European scientific community and is part of various Europe-wide initiatives for mouse biology.

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About EMBL

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 20 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and associate member state Australia. Research at EMBL is conducted by approximately 80 independent groups covering the spectrum of molecular biology. The Laboratory has five units: the main Laboratory in Heidelberg, and Outstations in Hinxton (the European Bioinformatics Institute), Grenoble, Hamburg, and Monterotondo near Rome. The cornerstones of EMBL's mission are: to perform basic research in molecular biology; to train scientists, students and visitors at all levels; to offer vital services to scientists in the member states; to develop new instruments and methods in the life sciences and to actively engage in technology transfer activities. EMBL's International PhD Programme has a student body of about 170. The Laboratory also sponsors an active Science and Society programme. Visitors from the press and public are welcome.

About EMBL Monterotondo

The EMBL Mouse Biology Unit based in Monterotondo (Rome), is a basic research center of excellence and innovation in mouse genetics and functional genomics, capturing new opportunities and applications of mouse genetic manipulation and becoming a hub for the international mouse research network. Alliances with other EMBL research units, neighboring facilities in the European Mouse Mutant Archive (EMMA) and Italian national research (CNR) groups, and European academic research and clinical centers has resulted in the participation of EMBL in several EU-wide initiatives to establish an international research and knowledge database, linking information on genetics/genomics, phenotyping/physiology and biomedical features. EMBL Monterotondo currently has six research groups, with a staff of over 80 people.

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