

## Max Planck-NCBS sets up Centre of Lipid Research to focus on developmental biology, molecular medicine

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National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) in Bangalore and the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics (MPI-CBG) in Dresden have teamed up to open the Centre of Lipid Research.

During the Centre's start-up phase, which will extend over a five year period, a research group would be set up in Dresden and Berlin. Researchers will be involved in the biochemical and biophysical analysis of biological membranes and the genetic analysis of lipid metabolic processes in various animal model systems.

An established research group in Bangalore will also be included in the work and another new group will be established that will focus on lipid research.

Prof K Vijay Raghavan, director, NCBS, will be spearhead the scientific coordination of the project. Prof Zerial will be responsible for the new Max Planck-NCBS Centre on Lipid Research. The other scientific coordinators are Teymuras Kurzchalia from Max Planck and Satyajit Mayor on the Indian side. Dr Dominik Schwudke, an NCBS international investigator.

The Centre is also designed to promote the mutual exchange of doctoral students and post doctors. Regular monitoring of the research work will be undertaken by a Joint Scientific Advisory Board, set up by the MPI-CBG and the NCBS, to evaluate the work every three years.

Both the MPI-CBG and the NCBS are already world leaders in the area of biomembrane studies. With the new Centre, the NCBS will have the opportunity to increase its own research in the cell biology area and the systematic analysis of lipids using quantitative lipidomics technology developed by the MPI-CBG.

Intensive cell biology research in India also ensures the availability of well-educated scientists, who are urgently needed in Indian industry and science.

India is an important research partner for the Max Planck Society. One in ten foreign doctoral students currently at Max Planck institutes comes from India. In addition, almost 50 project cooperation programmes exist between Max Planck institutes and research institutes in India.

"This is an occasion where two strong partners join forces in a research area with great forward-looking potential and the creation of optimal funding conditions for young scientists in both Germany and India," stated Peter Gruss, president, Max Planck.

The MPI-CBG in Dresden and the NCBS in Bangalore, both of which are key players in the setting up of the new Max Planck Centre, have already been cooperating closely for a long time. In addition to Max Planck institutes working successfully in the area of lipid chemistry, other similar entities are likely to join and may include collaboration with industry, he added.

Research focus of the new Max Planck -NCBS Centre on Lipid Research would be lipidomics which could be key tool in cell and developmental biology, molecular medicine and nutritional science.

"We would like to analyse the complete inventory of lipids in various cells and organisms in order to be able to develop tools that can use lipidomics for biological systems analysis and for investigating and treating diseases," explains Prof. Marino Zerial, Director, MPI-CBG and one of the two managers responsible for the Centre.

The German and Indian researchers would cover a systematic analysis of all fat molecules in different organisms. The identification of biochemical paths for the production and removal of lipids. The determination of the roles and tasks performed by certain lipids in the functioning of membranes in cell organelles, cells, tissue and the entire organism.

The scientists expect that the decoding of the lipid inventory of an organism can still offer many surprises, such as the discovery of new lipid classes or types, which differ only at a molecular level.

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