Mouse Models of Cancer
Early History of mice in research

- Mice were originally studied by European zoologists as a means to test Galton’s law of ancestral inheritance (latter half of the 19th century)
- “Fancy” mice were bred with unusual traits that could be quantified to test genetic laws.
- With the re-discovery of Mendel’s laws of inheritance in 1900 by Carl Correns, Hugo De Vries, Erich Von Tscharmak-Seysenegg, the mouse was repurposed to test whether Mendelian genetics applied to mammals
- In 1902, Lucien Cuenot confirmed that coat color inheritance followed Medelian inheritance patterns.
- In 1904, Cuenot also proved the presence of two alleles at the same genetic locus.
Early History of mice in research

• In 1908, William Earnst Castle established the Bussey institute at Harvard as a center for mammalian genetics. Castle and his undergraduate, Clarence Cook Little, expanded coat color studies to 9 genetic loci, and demonstrated the first lethal phenotype ($A^y$) in mammals. Inbred strains were established.

• As a grad student, C.C. Little joined the lab of Earnst Edward Tyzzer at Harvard, and studied the transplantation of spontaneous tumors between mice of different strains.

• From this work, Little and Tyzzer (1916) accurately predicted some basic concepts in immunology, specifically the multi-gene basis for immune recognition of “self”.

• C.C. Little went on to become the President of the University of Michigan, and later to found the Jackson Laboratories in Maine.
History of mice in cancer research

• Extensive efforts to identify mice with high or low cancer incidence culminated in 1933 with the discovery that the tendency to inherit mammary tumors in mice had both genetic components and non-genetic components.

• While the study of “extrachromosomal factors” (viruses and chemicals) quickly became an experimental science, the study and “chromosomal factors” (genetics) was revolutionized in 1980’s. Forward vs. reverse genetics.

• The development of restriction enzymes and the isolation of embryonic stem cells in the 1970’s led to the first engineering of mouse genes in the 1980.
Uses of Mouse Models of Cancer

• Studies of cancer gene function
  (Mouse +/- Gene X)

• A source of genetically defined cells of many types
  (Isolate cell lines from different tissues)

• Understand the biology of specific diseases
  (Engineer mice with a type of cancer, and study how it works)

• Understand the role of environment in disease and its interaction with genetics

• Understand the interactions of drugs with cancer
  (Pharmacology and molecular biology of tumors treated with drugs)

• As final efficacy screens before clinical trials (pre-clinical trials)

• Better interpret the results of clinical trials (co-clinical and post-clinical trials)
## Advantages/Disadvantages of Cancer Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humans</td>
<td>Most accurate</td>
<td>Least manipulable&lt;br&gt;Extremely slow generation time (16 – 40 years)&lt;br&gt;Genetically outbred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacteria</td>
<td>Extremely fast growth (30 minutes)&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic tools&lt;br&gt;Powerful biochemical techniques</td>
<td>Haploid, unicellular&lt;br&gt;Great evolutionary divergence&lt;br&gt;Not useful for efficacy screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeast</td>
<td>Very fast growth (100 minutes)&lt;br&gt;Eukaryotic cells&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic and biochemical techniques</td>
<td>Unicellular&lt;br&gt;Significant evolutionary divergence&lt;br&gt;Not useful for efficacy screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammalian Cell Culture</td>
<td>Fast growth (18 - 24 hours)&lt;br&gt;Accurate genetics (especially in human cells)&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic and biochemical techniques</td>
<td>2D growth is different than 3D growth&lt;br&gt;Only one or a few cell types (no stroma)&lt;br&gt;No immune system&lt;br&gt;Often inaccurate in predicting response to therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drosophila</td>
<td>Multicellular&lt;br&gt;Reasonably fast growth (7 days)&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic tools</td>
<td>Significant evolutionary divergence&lt;br&gt;Differences in organ composition/structure&lt;br&gt;Not useful for efficacy screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zebrafish</td>
<td>Vertebrate&lt;br&gt;Optically clear for longitudinal studies&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic techniques</td>
<td>Few antibodies available&lt;br&gt;Difficult to interpret histopathology&lt;br&gt;Very slow generation time (3-4 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mice</td>
<td>Mammal&lt;br&gt;Fairly accurate genetics&lt;br&gt;Powerful genetic tools&lt;br&gt;Accurate histopathology of diseases</td>
<td>Slow generation time (9 weeks)&lt;br&gt;Mice are not small, furry people</td>
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</table>
Classes of Mouse Models of Cancer

- **Viral infection models**
  Infection with natural or engineered viruses

- **Chemical induced carcinogen models**
  Treatment with cancer-causing chemicals

- **Transplantation Models**
  Implantation/injection with tumor tissues or cells

- **Engraftment Models**
  Incorporation of tumorigenic cells into normal tissues

- **Transgenic Models**
  Randomly inserting tumor-promoting DNA into the mouse genome

- **Genetically Engineered Models**
  Targeted manipulation of specific sites in the mouse genome

- **Somatic Engineering Models**
  Targeted manipulation of specific sites in the mouse
Chemical Carcinogen Models

- **1775- Sir Percival Pott**, a London surgeon, noticed that chimney sweepers frequently developed a peculiar form of scrotal cancer. He ascribed it to frequent, direct contact with coal tar. This launched 125 years of research into the chemical basis of cancer.

- **Treatment of mice with carcinogens** is the basis of numerous mouse models of cancer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tissue</th>
<th>Carcinogen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>7,12-dimethylbenz[α]anthracene (DMBA) + 2-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate (TPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>Nitrosamines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>vinyl chloride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>N-Nitroso-N-methylurea (NMU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>dimethylhydrazine (DMH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladder</td>
<td>Aromatic Amines</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Chemical Carcinogen Models

**Advantages** – Very quick, cheap, and easy to use

Some models use common environmental carcinogens

**Disadvantages** – Carcinogen models are limited by the fact that it is challenging to identify the precise mutations induced by a chemical in a given cell or tumor.

**Uses** – The understanding that carcinogens act by mutating genes has diminished their use in cancer research in favor of direct genetic approaches

Most common models today seek to replicate exposure to complex environmental carcinogens such as cigarette smoke
Viral Infection Models

- **Cancer-causing viruses** such as the Rous Sarcoma Virus (RSV) were initially discovered in chickens in 1911 by Peyton Rous (Nobel Prize, 1966) at Rockefeller U.

- **Mouse Mammary Tumor Virus (MMTV)** was the first mouse virus, isolated at Jackson labs as the “non-chromosomal factor” that caused mammary tumors in the C3H strain of mice. Transmitted through milk- pups fostered to mothers of other strains did not develop breast tumors. (John Joseph Bittner, 1936)

- **Some viruses cause cancer via random integration in certain cells**

- **Some viruses carry cellular oncogenes**
  - Abelson murine leukemia virus - Abl
  - Moloney murine sarcoma virus – Raf
  - FBJ osteosarcoma virus - Fos
  - Friend murine leukemia virus – c-fms

- This was predicted by Ed Scolnick in 1973, and proven by Harold Varmus*, Mike Bishop*, Peter Vogt in 1976 (*1989 Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine)

- The finding that viruses simply regulate endogenous genes diminished interest. However, Gardasil (Merck) is a highly effective vaccine against HPV induced cervical cancer.

- Engineered viruses now used routinely in the laboratory to induce genetic changes that lead to cancer.
Transplantation Models

Tumor cells or tissues transplanted into a host mouse
- Pioneered in the 1960’s and 1970’s

Ectopic – Implanted into a different organ than the original (typically subcutaneous or kidney capsule)

Orthotopic – Implanted into the analogous organ of the original tumor

Advantages – Typically cheap and fast
- Typically easy to use
- Not covered by patents

Disadvantages – Inaccurate histopathology compared to human tumors
- Lack of step-wise progression through pre-neoplastic stages
- Evolution of tumor cells during passaging
- Requirement for angiogenesis to support the newly transplanted tumor
- Historically poor ability to predict response to therapy in humans
Transplantation Models

Cell line based xenografts

Ectopic – Implanted into a different organ than the original (typically subcutaneous or kidney capsule)

Orthotopic – Implanted into the analogous organ of the original tumor

Advantages –
- Very easy to maintain cell lines indefinitely;
- Very fast to generate large numbers of xenograft tumors
- Relative homogeneity of tumors makes it easy to detect differences
- Comparatively cheap

Disadvantages –
- Inaccurate histopathology compared to human tumors
- Lack of an immune system
- Selection of cells during adaptation to growth on plastic
- Evolution of tumor cells during culture
- Historically poor ability to predict response to therapy in humans
Transplantation Models

Cell line based allografts

Advantages –
- Very easy to maintain cell lines indefinitely;
- Very fast to generate large numbers of xenograft tumors;
- Relative homogeneity of tumors makes it easy to detect differences;
- Comparatively cheap;
- Intact immune system.

Disadvantages –
- Mouse cells rather than human;
- Inaccurate histopathology compared to human tumors;
- Selection of cells during adaptation to growth on plastic;
- Evolution of tumor cells during culture;
- Historically poor ability to predict response to therapy in humans.
Transplantation Models

Patient-derived xenografts (PDX models)

**Advantages –**
Neoplastic cells are human and may better interact with drugs designed for human proteins
Transplant both neoplastic cells and stroma
Each PDX in a mouse represents the specific human patient
No adaptation acquired during cell culture
May be serially passaged in mice

**Disadvantages –**
Lack of an immune system
Stromal cells are rapidly depleted over 1-3 passages
Requirement for angiogenesis to support the newly transplanted tumor
Requires a major infrastructure to acquire and maintain human tumors
Relatively new- unclear how accurate they are
Engraftment Models

Organ reconstitution models - cell engraft and create a normal organ, from which focal cancer then emerges.

Engraftment Models

**Advantages –**
- Step-wise progression through pre-neoplastic stages
- Can engineer the donor cells to study gene function or add reporters
- Relatively rapid and cheap
- Amenable to powerful genetic screening approaches

**Disadvantages –**
- Lack of an immune system when using human donor cells
- Only available for a few organ systems: breast, liver, hematopoietic

**Mammary reconstitution** - (Kuperwasser et al, 2004; PNAS 101(14):4966-71)
- Clear the fat pad from a recipient mouse
- Isolate mammary epithelial cells from donor mice
- Genetically manipulate donor cells (lentiviruses)
- Inject mammary epithelial cells into cleared fat pad
- Mammary adenocarcinoma

**Liver reconstitution** - (Scott Lowe lab)
- Isolate fetal liver cells
- Genetically manipulate donor cells
- Inject fetal liver cells into newborn liver
- Hepatocellular carcinoma

**Hematopoietic reconstitution** - (many laboratories)
- Isolate fetal hematopoietic cells
- Genetically manipulate donor cells
- Inject fetal liver cells into newborn liver
- Lymphoma, myeloid leukemias
Engineering Cancer in Mice

- Mice can be genetically engineered to develop cancer
- Use the human disease as a guide
- Mutations found in cancer can be programmed into mice
- Not all mice that develop cancer are "good" models of human disease
- Compare tumors in mice to human tumors - validation

Embryonic Stem Cell
Blastocyst

Mutant Embryonic Stem Cell
Injection
Chimera

Genetically Engineered Mouse

This video has been kindly provided by Johannes Wilbertz, from the Karolinska Institute, in Stockholm (Sweden) and belongs to a large collection of educational videos available from the International Society for Transgenic Technologies (ISTT) web site.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1m9kQuKXxEA
Engineered mice

Recipient blastocyst strain

Chimera

Donor ES cell strain
Genetically Engineered mice

**Advantages** –
- Step-wise progression through pre-neoplastic stages
- Can engineer specific mutations to study gene function or add reporters
- Well established and understood technology
- Amenable to powerful genetic screening approaches
- Powerful genetic tools for imaging and other applications
- Tumors develop in the presence of an intact immune system
- Can model both the neoplastic component and stroma cells
- Indications that the “best” engineered models are more accurate in predicting the response of human tumors to therapy

**Disadvantages** –
- Mice are not people; mouse cells are not human cells
- Laboratory strains fail to represent the genetic diversity of human population
- Mouse tumors typically grow very fast relative to human tumors
- Complicated engineering strategies typically have drawbacks
- Relatively slow and expensive
- Requires a dedicated infrastructure
Transgenic Models

Randomly integrate DNA constructs into ES cells

- **cDNA transgenic**
  - CMV → cDNA

- **tissues-specific transgenic**
  - TSP → cDNA

- **BAC transgenic**
  - Intact Gene

- **BAC transgenic**
  - Intact Promotor → cDNA

**Uses** — Demonstrate what happens when you overexpress gene X
Used to create tissue specific gene regulatory elements for more complex strategies

**Advantages** — Easy to engineer. Comparatively rapid and cheap

**Disadvantages** — Random site of integration can lead result in positional effects
Overexpression of cDNA lacks the physiological gene regulation
Transgenic Models

Modern transgenic techniques allow for more subtle genetic control

shRNA knockdown

Advantages:
Rapid way to learn what reduced expression of a gene does. May mimic drug action.

Disadvantages:
Never get zero expression.

Lentiviral transgenic

Advantages:
Extremely rapid generation of transgenic lines

Disadvantages:
Random integration.
Can be multicopy.
Silencing of viral LTR promoters is common
Genetically Engineered Mouse Models

Targeted integration of DNA into specific sites within the genome through homologous recombination

**Uses** – Precisely engineer gene loss, gene addition, subtle mutations, reporter constructs into specific places within the mouse genome

**Advantages** – Physiological gene regulation

**Disadvantages** – Slow and more difficult to carry out
Targeted mutations can cause embryonic lethal phenotypes
Types of GEM Models

Wild-type locus

Knockout mouse

Knockin mouse

Targeted Mutant

Examples

p53 ^/- mice: lymphomas, sarcomas
Rb +/- mice: pituitary tumors

SHH-β-Gal: marking SHH^+ cells
K-ras_H-Ras: ID differences between K-ras and H-ras

p53 R172H/-: lymphomas, sarcomas and carcinomas

Uses:
- Loss of function mutations in tumor suppressor genes
- Reporter alleles for developmental biology
- Gene function analysis
- Targeting subtle mutations into mice
Latent mice rely on stochastic recombination in vivo

**Uses** – Spontaneous tumor models

**Advantages** – Random cells are mutated, surrounded by wild-type cells.

**Disadvantages** – Don’t know which cells underwent recombination
Different cell types have different rates of recombination
Allele is null prior to recombination

*K-ras^{LA1} Lung Cancer Model*
Advanced genetic tools enable construction of complex gene regulation strategies

**Recombinases** – Enzymes that catalyze site specific recombination

**Inducible alleles** – Genes or proteins sensitive to the presence of a specific chemical

**Transposons** – Mobile genetic elements who excision and reinsertion into the genome is catalyzed by an enzyme (transposase)

**Reporters** – Genes that allow visualization through microscopy, histochemistry, or *in vivo* imaging
Cre is a site-specific bacterial recombinase.

LoxP sites are conventionally represented as:

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**Diagram**

- LoxP (44bp) sites before Cre recombinase action.
- Cre recombinase activity results in the integration of a genetic element between the two LoxP sites.

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Cre catalyzes two types of reactions

**Excision**

LoxP

LoxP

Cre

+ 

**Inversion**

LoxP

LoxP

Cre

LoxP

LoxP

LoxP
Variant Lox sites have been identified with useful properties

Unidirectional Inversion (10-fold weighting towards forward reaction)

Incompatible Sites

Not seen:

Lox66  Lox71  Cre  Lox72  LoxP

Lox2722  Lox2722

LoxP  LoxP

Not seen:
**Conditional mouse models**

Cre/lox technology is widely used to create conditional alleles

**Uses** – Conditional loss of gene function in mice

**Advantages** – Spatial control can be achieved by expressing Cre from a tissue specific promoter. Temporal control can be achieved by expressing Cre from a stage specific promoter, or by using inducible alleles to control Cre expression. Gene is COMPLETELY lost from recombined cell.

**Disadvantages** – Requires two alleles: conditional knockout, and Cre allele. Because deletion is a binary event, even very low-level expression of Cre yields a 100% deletion.
Conditional mouse models

Conditional activatable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-targeted Cells Before</th>
<th>After</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Targeted Cells Before</th>
<th>After</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/+</td>
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</table>

Conditional mutant

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>After</th>
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</table>

**Uses** — Conditional expression of wild-type or mutant proteins under endogenous regulation

**Advantages** — Pysiological control of gene expression
Spatial and temporal restriction of gene expression

**Disadvantages** — Requires two alleles: conditional knockout, and Cre allele
Allele is null prior to recombination
Sensitive to low-level Cre expression

**LoxP**

Before After
Non-targeted Cells
Targeted Cells

LSL = LoxP-STOP-LoxP

* = LoxP site

Uses — Conditional expression of wild-type or mutant proteins under endogenous regulation

Advantages — Pysiological control of gene expression
Spatial and temporal restriction of gene expression

Disadvantages — Requires two alleles: conditional knockout, and Cre allele
Allele is null prior to recombination
Sensitive to low-level Cre expression
**Inducible alleles**

**Tetracycline inducible genes**

rtTA → TSP → TetR → VP16

**Tet inducible gene**

tetO → cDNA

**Uses** — Dose-dependent expression of gene products through administration of tetracycline

**Advantages** — Precise temporal and amplitude control of gene expression

**Disadvantages** — Requires two alleles: tet inducible allele and rtTA
Little spatial control
Non-physiological gene expression
**Inducible alleles**

**Tamoxifen inducible alleles**

- **Uses** – Regulation of protein activity through administration of Tamoxifen
- **Advantages** – Can control time and place of expression
  - Tighter than tet-induced systems
- **Disadvantages** – Tamoxifen is expensive
  - Targeted protein must tolerate an N- or C-terminal fusion
Reporter alleles

Activate expression of a marker gene under given conditions

**Cre reporter:** Activated when LoxP sites are removed

**Pathway reporter:** Activated proportional to the activity of a transcription factor

**Fusion protein:** Reporter protein is directly fused to another protein of interest

Reporter genes are typically optically based (visible, near-infrared)

May be imaged by luminescence, fluorescence

Instruments include 2-photon microscopy and whole animal imaging

May also include reporters for MRI, PET, and SPECT
Putting it together: the Brainbow Mouse

Creativity
The coming revolution...

• CRISPR = Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats
• Cas = CRISPR-associated

• Used by bacteria/archaea as an “adaptive immune defense”
• Involves targeted degradation of foreign nucleic acids using short RNA and Cas9.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M739wgbcKuA
Theme and variation

Cas9 nuclease or nickase cleavage
- Cuts
- Deletions
- Nicks
- Offset nicks

Cas9<sub>nuclease-null</sub> protein fusions
- Regulation
- Labeling
- Nucleases
- Recombinases

Cas9<sub>nuclease-null</sub> nucleic acid tethers
- Regulation
- Scaffold
- Competition
- Aggregation
Rapid modelling of cooperating genetic events in cancer through somatic genome editing

Francisco J. Sánchez-Rivera¹,²*, Thales Papagiannakopoulos¹*, Rodrigo Romero¹,², Tuomas Tammela¹, Matthew R. Bauer¹, Arjun Bhutkar¹, Nikhil S. Joshi¹, Lakshmipriya Subbaraj¹, Roderick T. Bronson³,⁴, Wen Xue¹ & Tyler Jacks¹,²,⁵
SAISR provides access to imaging technology & expertise

Vevo 2100 Ultrasound

IVIS Quantum FX Micro CT

Bruker 9.4T MRI

IVIS Spectrum
Ultrasound is a non-invasive imaging technique

cm scale
Small Animal Imaging SR

High resolution ultrasound
Tomography can be used to reconstruct 3D tumor volumes.
Contrast ultrasound shows pancreatic tumors are poorly perfused.
High resolution ultrasound applications

**B-mode:** anatomical images and movies; quantitative measurements

**Guided injections:** real-time image-guided injections of adult tissues and embryos

**Color Doppler:** directionality of blood flow

**Power Doppler:** magnitude of blood flow

**Pulsed Wave Doppler:** Dynamics of blood flow

**M-mode:** cardiac imaging; quantititative measurements of cardiac function

**3D reconstruction:** tomography of individual B-mode, Doppler, or contrast images
Optical imaging of engineered alleles

**Luminescence imaging** - of engineered alleles and cell lines

**Fluorescence imaging** - of engineered alleles and cell lines

**Spectral unmixing** - of different fluorophores

**3D luminescent imaging** - based on differential absorption of wavelengths through tissues

Co-registration with other modalities…
Optical imaging of engineered alleles

Luminescence

Fluorescence

![Optical imaging of engineered alleles](image)
Co-registration of optical + CT data
Micro CT Imaging is ideal for bone and lung
High Field MR Imaging

- Nose
- Brain
- Mouth
- Trachea
- Spinal cord