

Health

SITE INDEX

Homepage
Search
CyberSurveys
▶ News Talk
▶ Sports Talk
▶ Wings Talk
▶ Car Talk
Horoscope
Hot Sites
Lottery
Weather
Staff

NEWS

Autos
▶ Joyrides
Business
Careers
Columnists
Commuting
Detroit History
Editorials
Health
Metro/State
▶ Livingston
▶ Macomb
▶ Oakland
▶ Wayne
▶ On Detroit
Nation/World
Obituaries
▶ Death Notices
Politics
Real Estate
Religion
Schools
Special Reports
Technology

SPORTS

Sports Home
Scoreboards
▶ Lions
▶ Pistons
▶ Shock
▶ Tigers
▶ Red Wings
College Sports
▶ U-M
▶ MSU
▶ State Colleges
High Schools
Motor Sports
Golf

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment
▶ Casino Guide
▶ Movie Finder
▶ TV Listings
Crossword
Features
Food
Homestyle
Wine Report

Financial impact

State hopes to lure biotech industries

By Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

ANN ARBOR -- The Human Genome Project may be the prescription the state needs to invigorate its fledgling life science industry, industry members said.

The project, by breaking new ground in the research of human genes, will allow Michigan drug and biotech companies to expand their work in the field.

"I think we'll see an explosion in the number of (company) startups," said Russell Hopper, a biotech consultant who is president of the Michigan Biotechnology Association. "There's a legitimate chance that Michigan could become a hub for biotechnology."

The announcement comes as the state tries to develop what it calls a Life Science Corridor -- a grouping of businesses similar to the high-tech enclaves typified by California's Silicon Valley.

Michigan companies involved in gene-related work said the genome project would boost those efforts by helping create new companies and improving the business of existing ones.

"It's a huge boost for business," said Mike Hennessey, vice-president for business analysis for Gene Codes Corp. in Ann Arbor. "It's great for science and great for industry."

Gene Codes develops software that helps scientists and companies to decode and analyze human genetics.

In Michigan, companies such as Gene Codes have already been plying their trade for several years. Monday's announcement won't have an immediate impact, they said.

In two to five years, however, the impact will be significant as the rough draft becomes a final blueprint and researchers use the new information to develop new drugs and other medical advances.

"There's still a lot of work that needs to be done," said Steve Sensoli, chief operating officer of Gene Works in Ann Arbor. "But we made a great effort at the first step."

Others echoed that sentiment, saying the research had passed an important threshold Monday but that much still lay ahead.

However, several Michigan companies

Business firms on the Web

* Celera Genomics Web site:
<http://www.celera.com/>

* DoubleTwist, a private company that is processing and annotating the human genome sequence obtained from the Human Genome Project:

<http://www.doubletwist.com>

* Incyte Genomics, a private company that is sequencing, processing and annotating portions of the human genome:
<http://www.incyte.com/>

Related information

▶ [Web resources on the genome project](#)

▶ [A glossary of genetic terms](#)

Previous stories

▶ [George Bullard: Genome Project raises ethical questions](#)

▶ [DNA map is nearly complete](#)

▶ [Genomes will unlock mysteries](#)

▶ [Scientists add to gene map](#)

▶ [Finished human genome project met with caution](#)

▶ [Scientists hunt for genetic triggers to cancer](#)

detnews.com
CyberSurvey
WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

Human genome

The successful mapping of the human genetic code has been compared to landing on the moon in terms of its scientific importance. Do you believe that this achievement will benefit the human condition overall?

were less optimistic than Hopper in predicting that the state would become a hub of gene-related industry one day. Things will get better in Michigan but most businesses in the field will continue to gravitate to the west and east coasts, they said.

"The west coast has a greater availability of venture capital," Hennessey said. "There's more of an entrepreneur mentality there."

But Michigan has several drug giants that should benefit handsomely from the nascent research, they said.

Drug companies such as Pharmacia & Upjohn in Kalamazoo and Parke-Davis Research Center in Ann Arbor are basing more of their research on DNA science.

"This will allow them to make breakthroughs in drug discoveries," Sensoli said.

For the drug and biotech companies, their DNA research centers on the fact that most diseases involve tiny errors in the replication of genes or a breakdown in their function.

The research tries to find those glitches at the molecular level of the genes and proteins in human cells and tissue.

One issue that could threaten companies that profit from this type of research is whether this type of information should be made available to all researchers.

If that happened, the companies would lose the ability to make any money from their data.

"If there's no exclusivity, then it's difficult to gain any economic advantage," Hopper said. "The profit motive to develop it will be gone."

yes no

▶ CHECK SURVEY RESULTS

The Detroit News

[Comments?](#)

◀ INDEX ▶