



## Pioneers

**NOT ALONE.** Dozens of parents whose children suffer from neuroblastoma, a rare and deadly childhood cancer, have banded together to fund a drug development effort at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in New York City. The idea came out of a meeting this summer between patients' families and MSKCC pediatric oncologist Nai-Kong Cheung (left), who more than 20 years ago developed a therapy for the disease, a mouse antibody called 3F8. Answering questions about the most urgent needs in neuroblastoma, Cheung pointed out that humanizing the antibody—replacing the mouse genes in the antibody blueprint with human ones—would reduce immune resistance to the therapy. “I

told them, get organized and raise money to help,” Cheung says.

Last month, the fundraising effort got under way as seven fathers of children with neuroblastoma completed a cross-country bike ride dubbed “The Loneliest Road.” It netted \$200,000. More than 60 families have formed a group called Band of Parents to raise the \$2 to \$3 million needed for the project. “From a grants standpoint ... there’s no discovery aspect” to humanizing 3F8, making it unappealing to government funders, says Thomas Melgar, a physician whose 6-year-old son Austin has neuroblastoma and who is on the Band of Parents executive committee. “We want to be involved,” he says, in determining what type of neuroblastoma research is pursued.



### CHECKING IN

**NEW HOME, NEW PURPOSE.** The new president of the Human Genome Organisation (HUGO) says the 18-year-old international

group should try to find common ground on pressing privacy and ethical issues now that the human genome has been sequenced. Edison Liu, a noted cancer researcher who directs the Genome Institute of Singapore, began his

3-year-term this summer and recently initiated HUGO’s move from London to Singapore.

“HUGO has to have a new role,” says Liu, who served as director of clinical sciences at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, before founding the Singapore institute in 2001. He says increasing scientific capabilities means that the developing nations of Asia and Latin America will not only benefit from but also contribute to the rapid advances in genomic medicine.

### MONEY MATTERS

**SHARING GOOD LUCK.** A billionaire cancer survivor is putting \$100 million into a new

institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge to help geneticists, molecular biologists, and engineers combat the disease.

David Koch, an MIT grad, is executive vice president of Koch Industries Inc., an industrial powerhouse in the chemical, mining, timber, and banking fields. Koch, 67, has an estimated net worth of \$17 billion, good for ninth place on *Forbes’* list of the 400 richest Americans. He also has a political streak, running unsuccess-

fully as the vice presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party in 1980.

The David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research will open in 2010 and will be led by MIT biologist Tyler Jacks. More than two dozen researchers and engineers will work together on new therapies and advanced diagnostics. “As a cancer survivor, I feel especially fortunate to be able to help advance” efforts to conquer the disease, says Koch, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer 15 years ago.

## << MOVERS

**PAN-EUROPEAN.** Finnish molecular biologist Marja Makarow has become the first woman to be named head of the European Science Foundation (ESF), headquartered in Strasbourg, France. Makarow, currently a research administrator at the University of Helsinki, says she wants to build stronger scientific links across Europe by developing



pilot programs that encourage cooperative funding and networking, in addition to strengthening existing programs such as the European Collaborative Research scheme. She also wants to see the 33-year-old foundation play a bigger role in the policy arena by engaging researchers from different disciplines, including the social sciences.

“There are opportunities to learn from each other,” she says of ESF’s 75 member organizations from 30 countries. “Our great challenge is that money does not cross borders. ... The vast majority of research money lies with national agencies.” Makarow will succeed outgoing chief John Marks in January 2008.

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