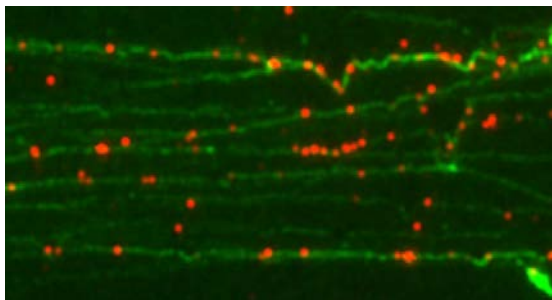


## Leading expert in DNA Damage Signalling joins IMB as Scientific Director

**Mainz, October 2012.** *The Institute of Molecular Biology appoints Prof. Helle Ulrich as its third Scientific Director. Prof. Ulrich is a world leader in the field of DNA damage tolerance. Her research group undertakes innovative studies into how genomes are maintained in a stable state in the face of a multitude of insults.*

Our genomes are under constant attack from a wide variety of sources. These attacks come from the environment, such as UV radiation from the sun, or from chemicals in the food we eat and in the air we breathe. Additionally, our bodies also produce molecules that can damage our DNA.



*Microscopic image of DNA fibres (green) isolated from yeast cells after being exposed to ultraviolet radiation which causes DNA damage. Labeled in red are tracts of damage processing, where new DNA has been inserted in order to preserve the integrity of the genome.*

One of the mechanisms required to repair this damage and protect our cells from these threats is particularly active during genome duplication. This repair process needs to be tightly controlled, as incorrect activity can lead to the genome becoming unstable, which can result in diseases such as cancer. Helle Ulrich investigates the involvement of two small proteins, ubiquitin and SUMO, in the regulation of DNA repair. These proteins function by attaching to other proteins

and thus changing their properties. Helle Ulrich has previously provided important insights into how such modifications of proteins can govern the efficiency and accuracy of DNA damage processing during genome duplication. In recognition of her research achievements, Helle Ulrich was elected as a member of the prestigious European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) in 2008.

Helle Ulrich joins IMB from the Cancer Research UK London Research Institute's Clare Hall Laboratories and has previously worked at the University of California Berkeley and the Max Planck Institutes for Biochemistry and Terrestrial Microbiology in Munich and Marburg, respectively. She will be taking up her appointment at IMB in January 2013. Prof. Christof Niehrs, IMB's Founding

Director, is excited about Helle Ulrich joining IMB: “Helle brings outstanding expertise in an area that is central to research at IMB to the institute. Moreover, her work perfectly complements related research initiatives at other institutes in Mainz. This will further increase the international visibility of the region as a hub for research into DNA damage.”

In addition to becoming a Director at IMB, Helle Ulrich will also be appointed as Professor within the Faculty of Biology at Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) Mainz. “We are enthusiastic about Helle Ulrich moving to Mainz. As an internationally leading expert on the DNA damage response, she will make sure Mainz is at the forefront of this rapidly developing and important field of the modern Life Sciences” states Prof. Georg Krausch, President of JGU.

“We are thrilled that such a renowned scientist will be joining IMB. Professor Ulrich’s appointment adds to IMB’s international visibility and marks an important step on its way to becoming a first-rate location for biomedical basic research”, says Otto Boehringer, chairman of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation. To mark the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the company Boehringer Ingelheim in 2010, the foundation has endowed 100 million Euro for the scientific running of the IMB.

### **Institute for Molecular Biology gGmbH (IMB)**

The Institute of Molecular Biology gGmbH (IMB) is a new centre of excellence in the life sciences. It was established in March 2011. Research at IMB concentrates on three cutting-edge areas: epigenetics, developmental biology and DNA repair. The institute is a prime example of a successful collaboration between public authorities and a private foundation. The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation has dedicated 100 million Euro for a period of 10 years to cover the operating costs for research at IMB, while the state of Rhineland-Palatinate provided approx. 50 million Euro for the construction of a state-of-the-art building. For more information about IMB please visit: [www.imb-mainz.de](http://www.imb-mainz.de).

### **Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation**

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation committed to the promotion of the medical, biological, chemical and pharmaceutical sciences. It was established in 1977 by Hubertus Liebrecht, a member of the shareholder family of the company Boehringer Ingelheim. In addition to various awards for up-and-coming scientists at the University of Mainz, the foundation has endowed 100 million Euro over a period of ten years to finance the scientific running

of the Institute of Molecular Biology (IMB) at the University of Mainz. For more information about the foundation and its programmes, please visit [www.boehringer-ingelheim-stiftung.de](http://www.boehringer-ingelheim-stiftung.de).

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