

An occasional column, in which Caveman and other troglodytes involved in cell science emerge to share their views on various aspects of life-science research. Messages for Mole can be left at mole@biologists.com. Any correspondence may be published in forthcoming issues.



The Mole

First things first: let me introduce myself. Mole isn't my real name of course, but after careful consideration of a number of alternative noms de plume I decided that this is the most apt – not least because there are those of you out there who, if you knew my real identity, would argue that there are startling similarities between me (or at least my habits) and that fierce and furry little animal. Obviously, if there have to be parallels drawn, I would prefer that you thought of the Mole as a misunderstood creature scraping towards the light than as a noxious rodent who ruins your lawn.

So, the Mole – who is (s)he? First up, I'm not British (can ya'll tell), and therefore, by definition, not gifted with that glib, seemingly effortless, wit that trickles down from the Queen via the upper classes. Nope, pratfalls and pies in the face for me. I've moved through the ranks of academic science, attaining a certain level of credibility (maybe), and what some would call success – a somewhat arbitrary and subjective form of validation but as we know, peer review and acceptance *is* our only measure of success in this game. But in a way I'm still the kid who couldn't

believe that you actually can get *paid* to do this stuff, who found science just a blast and who always suspected that he'd be found out (others seemed so sombre and depressed about the world of research). So I hid, disguised myself, and waited for the appropriate signal. When one of the Editors asked me to contribute a column to JCS, I resurfaced.

Fortunately, the nature of this recently bestowed task necessitates complete anonymity – for many, an enviable position and, if I'm truthful, one that I too relish. Let's be completely honest: how many of you reading this would have, at one time or another, loved the chance for an honest and heart-felt outpouring about one of many of the troublesome afflictions or pet peeves we as scientists regularly deal with? And not just a verbal rant within the confines of our office or in the direction of a poor unsuspecting postdoc but to an international audience – *and* without any repercussion – that is, no likelihood of retaliatory refereeing of submitted papers or spiteful triaging of grants? Well, that's basically the opportunity that I've been given – of course, any position of power goes hand in hand with the chance to abuse that position and, while it may be tempting to voice

my very own pet peeves, to cast subjective and pointed aspersions towards those I feel have wronged me at some point in my career, or to foster rumor mongering regarding the dubious sexuality of one or more of my colleagues, that would be wrong – wouldn't it? Well, maybe I'll only do it a little...

Okay, then, more about me. I'm a fat, stuffy, and (so I'm told) smelly professor, who slurps pinot at international meetings in lovely, romantic venues. I'm an emaciated student desperately trying to get at least *one* paper published so that I can

graduate and get a job and stop being so emaciated. I'm a tall, blond and (so I'm told) beautiful postdoc, fed up with lecherous, leering scientists who paternally pat my khakis while I'm trying to show my poster. I'm a cranky reviewer, a cantankerous referee, and I'll steal your ideas as I trash them. I'm brilliant, barely getting by, confused, wizened, annoying, and kind. I never do today what can wait until just after the deadline so that I can drive everyone around me crazy. And I've got *your* number.

There's probably some of the mole in every one of us – industrious, probing,

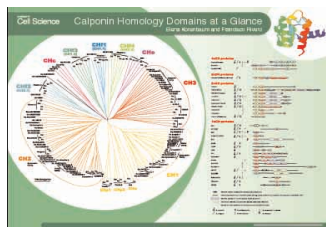
and occasionally intent on anonymous destruction – destruction that no one witnesses – destruction that no one is aware of until after the job is done – and then its just too late. There are things that raise our hackles, boil our broccoli, steam our dry cleaning, perforate our aplomb, and just tick us off. So if you're feeling Mole-y, send me a note at the email address the journal has provided (mole@biologists.com) – lets see what we can dig up.

Mole

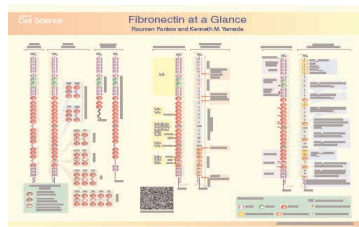
Journal of Cell Science 115, 4389-4390
© 2002 The Company of Biologists Ltd
doi:10.1242/jcs.00192

Cell Science at a Glance

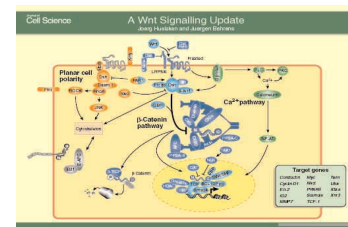
Cell Science at a Glance is included as a poster in the paper copy of the journal and available in several downloadable formats in the online version, which we encourage readers to download and use as slides. Future contributions to this section will include signalling pathways, phylogenetic trees, multiprotein complexes, useful reagents . . . and much more.



Calponin homology domains
(September 2002)



Fibronectin
(October 2002)



Wnt signalling
(November 2002)

We would like to encourage readers to submit ideas for future contributions to this section.

Potential Cell Science at a Glance articles should be addressed to the Executive Editor and sent to

Journal of Cell Science, 140 Cowley Rd, Cambridge, CB4 0DL, UK.