This week in therapeutics

Indication	Target/marker/pathway	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Neurology				
Parkinson's disease (PD)	Divalent metals	<p>A study of human brain tissue suggests that increasing neuromelanin levels in the brain could help treat PD. Neuromelanin is a polymer derived from dopamine, the predominant neurotransmitter in PD-affected tissues. In brain samples from elderly patients, the substantia nigra and other areas affected by PD had neuromelanin pigment concentrations that increased linearly with age. Isolated neuromelanins contained high levels of iron, zinc, aluminum and lead compared with surrounding nonpigmented material. Neuromelanin pigments showed lower than expected oxidation potential, suggesting a protective function for neuromelanins through iron sequestering. Next steps could include testing the effect of increased neuromelanin production in animal models of PD.</p> <p>Prana Biotechnology Ltd.'s PBT427, an iron-sequestering agent, is in preclinical development to treat PD.</p> <p>SciBX 1(42); doi:10.1038/scibx.2008.1024 Published online Nov. 20, 2008</p>	Unpatented; licensing status not applicable	<p>Zecca, L. <i>et al. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA</i>; published online Nov. 6, 2008; doi:10.1073/pnas.0808768105</p> <p>Contact: Luigi Zecca, Institute of Biomedical Technologies, Italian National Research Council, Segrate, Italy e-mail: luigi.zecca@itb.cnr.it</p> <p>Contact: Nicholas Turro, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. e-mail: njt3@columbia.edu</p>