This week in therapeutics

Indication	Target/marker/pathway	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Neurology				
Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS); transverse myelitis	Solute carrier family 1 (glial high affinity glutamate transporter), member 2 (SLC1A2; EAAT2)	<p>Rodent studies suggest that transplantation of astrocyte precursor cells may help treat ALS by slowing the loss of respiratory motor neuron function. In a rat model of ALS, astrocyte precursor cells transplanted around the cervical spinal column replaced the diseased astrocytes that support respiratory motor neurons, thereby restoring Eaat2 function and slowing the onset of respiratory failure. Ongoing studies are aimed at identifying other mechanisms by which the transplants confer benefits. The researchers are collaborating with Q Therapeutics Inc. to develop human analogs of astrocyte precursor cells to treat ALS and idiopathic transverse myelitis.</p> <p>Rilutek riluzole, a sodium channel blocker from sanofi-aventis Group, is the only approved treatment for ALS.</p> <p>Three compounds are in Phase III trials for ALS: Radicut edaravone from Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma Corp., E0302 from Eisai Co. Ltd. and AL-202 from Avicena Group Inc.</p> <p>At least 15 other companies are developing non-cell based treatments for ALS.</p> <p>SciBX 1(40); doi:10.1038/scibx.2008.978 Published online Nov. 6, 2008</p>	Patented; licensing status undisclosed	<p>Lepore, A. <i>et al. Nat. Neurosci.</i>; published online Oct. 19, 2008; doi:10.1038/nn.2210</p> <p>Contact: Nicholas Maragakis, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Md. e-mail: nmaragak@jhmi.edu</p>