This week in techniques

Approach	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Drug platforms			
Plant-based biosynthesis of non-natural indole alkaloids	<p>Expression of an engineered alkaloid synthase in plant cell culture could enable large-scale biosynthesis of non-natural alkaloids. <i>Catharanthus roseus</i> (Rosy periwinkle) cell cultures that expressed a modified strictosidine synthase produced non-natural analogs of tabersonine, an early precursor of bisindole alkaloid cancer therapeutics. Ongoing work is focusing on isolating other new compounds produced by the system, such as catharanthine analogs, which could serve as precursors for the synthesis of cancer drug vinblastine analogs.</p> <p>SciBX 2(4); doi:10.1038/scibx.2009.166 Published online Jan. 29, 2009</p>	Unpatented	<p>Runguphan, W. & O'Connor, S. <i>Nat. Chem. Biol.</i>; published online Jan. 18, 2009; doi:10.1038/nchembio.141 Contact: Sarah O'Connor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. e-mail: soc@mit.edu</p>