This week in therapeutics

Indication	Target/marker/ pathway	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Various				
Diabetes; obesity; atherosclerosis	Sterol regulatory element binding protein (SREBP)	<p><i>In vitro</i> and mouse studies suggest that inhibiting SREBP could help treat obesity, type 2 diabetes and atherosclerosis. In rat hepatocytes, the small molecule SREBP inhibitor betulin lowered fatty acid and cholesterol biosynthesis better than vehicle control and comparably to the statin Altacor lovastatin. Also in mice, betulin decreased weight gain, increased insulin sensitivity and decreased serum and liver lipid content compared with vehicle control. In a mouse model of atherosclerosis, betulin lowered the number and size of atherosclerotic plaques compared with vehicle control. Next steps include optimizing the compound's structure and testing toxicity and metabolism in animals.</p> <p>Merck & Co. Inc. and GlaxoSmithKline plc market Altacor to treat hypercholesterolemia.</p> <p>SciBX 4(4); doi:10.1038/scibx.2011.113 Published online Jan. 27, 2011</p>	Patent application filed; available for licensing	<p>Tang, J.-J. <i>et al. Cell Metab.</i>; published online Jan. 5, 2011; doi:10.1016/j.cmet.2010.12.004 Contact: Bao-Liang Song, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai, China e-mail: blsong@sibs.ac.cn</p>