This week in techniques

Approach	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Drug platforms			
Direct conversion of fibroblasts into functional neurons	<p>A method for directly converting human fibroblasts into functional neurons could be useful for developing human cell models for neurological diseases. Conventional protocols for converting human fibroblasts into neurons require an intermediate step of reverting cells to induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells. In human fibroblasts, forced expression of microRNA-124 (miR-124), myelin transcription factor 1-like (MYT1L) and POU class 3 homeobox 2 (POU3F2; BRN2) generated cells that expressed neuronal cell markers. The induced human neurons were able to generate action potentials and form functional synapses with one another. Next steps include using the approach to generate new human cell models of neurodegenerative diseases.</p> <p>SciBX 4(32); doi:10.1038/scibx.2011.919 Published online Aug. 18, 2011</p>	Patent and licensing status unavailable	<p>Ambasudhan, R. <i>et al. Cell Stem Cell</i>; published online July 28, 2011; doi:10.1016/j.stem.2011.07.002 Contact: Sheng Ding, University of California, San Francisco, Calif. e-mail: sheng.ding@gladstone.ucsf.edu Contact: Stuart A. Lipton, Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute, La Jolla, Calif. e-mail: slipton@sanfordburnham.org</p>