This week in techniques

Approach	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Drug platforms			
Direct conversion of quiescent cardiomyocytes into pacemaker cells	A gene therapy approach for direct conversion of quiescent cardiomyocytes into pacemaker cells could be useful for treating arrhythmias. In cultured rat ventricular myocytes, adenoviral vector expression of <i>T-box 18</i> (<i>Tbx18</i>) resulted in the formation of monolayers of spontaneously beating cells. In guinea pigs, cardiac injection of the adenovirus vector encoding <i>Tbx18</i> led to pacemaker activity at the site of injection, whereas injection of the same vector encoding a control protein did not. Next steps include validating the results in a large animal model and evaluating the safety and pharmacokinetics of the vector. SciBX 6(2); doi:10.1038/scibx.2013.47 Published online Jan. 17, 2013	Patent and licensing status undisclosed	Kapoor, N. <i>et al. Nat. Biotechnol.</i>; published online Dec. 16, 2012; doi:10.1038/nbt.2465 Contact: Eduardo Marbán, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, Calif. e-mail: eduardo.marban@cshs.org