

This week in therapeutics

Indication	Target/marker/pathway	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Cancer				
Melanoma; breast cancer	Nodal; left-right determination factors 1 and 2 (LEFTY1/2)	A cell culture and xenograft mouse model study suggests that transforming growth factor- β (TGF- β) superfamily members Nodal and LEFTY could be cancer targets. Nodal protein was found in human metastatic melanoma and breast carcinoma but not in healthy tissue. LEFTY, secreted as a glycosylated TGF- β homolog by human embryonic stem cells (hESCs), reduces Nodal expression and subsequent tumorigenesis and increases apoptosis. Next steps include characterizing how LEFTY antagonizes Nodal expression and then developing cancer therapeutics based on LEFTY.	International patent application filed covering use of hESC-derived proteins to treat cancer; available for licensing	Postovit, L.-M. <i>et al. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA</i> ; published online March 2, 2008; doi:10.1073/pnas.0800467105 Contact: Mary J.C. Hendrix, Northwestern University, Chicago, Ill. e-mail: mjchendrix@childrensmemorial.org