SciBX
Science-Business eXchange

THE DISTILLERY

This week in techniques

Approach	Summary	Licensing status	Publication and contact information
Imaging			
MRI of β cell function using a zinc ion–responsive contrast agent	Mouse studies identified an MRI contrast agent that could image β cell function to assess therapeutic responses in diabetes patients. Insulin release from β cells upon glucose stimulation is accompanied by zinc ion (Zn^{2+}) release. MRIs of mice injected with glucose followed by the Zn^{2+}-responsive contrast agent had greater pancreatic image contrast than mice given saline plus contrast agent. MRIs showed mice with diet-induced obesity had greater β cell area and those with toxin-induced type 1 diabetes had lower β cell area than control mice. Next steps include evaluating the method in larger animals and assessing the toxicity of the contrast agent.	Patent pending; unavailable for licensing	Lubag, A.J.M. *et al. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*; published online Oct. 24, 2011; doi:10.1073/pnas.1109649108 **Contact:** A. Dean Sherry, The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, Dallas, Texas e-mail: dean.sherry@utsouthwestern.edu

SciBX 4(44); doi:10.1038/scibx.2011.1252
Published online Nov. 10, 2011