

LAB PHILOSOPHY

December, 2003

Our lab's goals are to explore the mechanisms of brain development, to produce important new insights into these mechanisms, and to bring a standard of excellence to all that we do as individual scientists and as a laboratory. Lab members cooperate and collaborate in planning and carrying out experiments using the following guidelines. The fundamental standard is to treat others with respect, courtesy, and consideration and to treat the laboratory as a professional environment.

New lab personnel need to:

- 1) Read and sign these guidelines.
- 2) Complete safety training.
- 3) Complete training in the use of radioactivity or animals in research (as needed for research goals).
- 4) Participate in shared lab duties by performing a lab job.

Courtesy and consideration:

- * We are a laboratory comprised of people with diverse ages, backgrounds, values, and expectations. Be considerate of others, respectful of their talents, needs, and points of view, patient with their weaknesses, and courteous in your interactions.
- * The laboratory is a workplace and thus must be conducive to the performance of excellent science. Excessive noise, yelling, and profanity are disruptive and distracting to those trying to focus on their work.
- * Complaining about others in public and/or making mean or disparaging statements about labmates is hurtful and seriously erodes lab morale.
- * There are few things more irritating in a lab than finding that someone has used up the last of a reagent, right when you need it. Not only is this annoying, it slows the progress of our research. If you notice supplies, reagents, an ink cartridge, or similar item getting low, it is your responsibility to check for backup supplies and to ask the Lab Manager to order replacements if new supplies are needed.
- * Plan ahead. When you plan an experiment, check to ensure that someone else hasn't reserved the space or equipment you require. It is ideal to ascertain whether others in the lab may be able to share tissue, reagents, radioactivity, etc. Sign up in advance to use shared equipment such as the cryostat, microscopes, surgery room, hybridization ovens, etc.
- * Don't change the standard settings on equipment without first checking whether others are currently using or soon in need of that equipment. If you must change the standard settings, leave a signed and dated note describing the changes you made and the time during which you will use the equipment. Change the settings back to the standard settings when you are finished.
- * When you use a piece of equipment or lab space, leave it as you would wish to find it - turn it off, cover it, clean it, return chemicals to their proper location. Use extra caution with dangerous chemicals (radioactivity, DAB, ethidium bromide), as only the user knows what needs to be cleaned up. *Please respect reagents and areas reserved for RNA work.*

Conflict resolution:

- * Use signals to alert others that an event or situation represents a problem that needs to be addressed and resolved. For example, in the simple case of the room being too noisy, one might say "Too noisy for me to think!" and the noisy individuals would then either lower their voices or go outside.

- * Mistakes will be made; we should learn from them and try not to make them again.
- * Conflicts and grievances should be resolved directly between or among the individuals involved, if possible.
- * Resolution of certain conflicts should always involve the PI and should do so at an early stage. These include issues of authorship, authorship order, collaborations (both within the lab and with other labs), choices of projects on which to work, and similar issues in which the status of the PI necessitates such a role.
- * Conflicts should be resolved in private, not in public.
- * Yelling, angry outbursts, sarcasm, or insults are inappropriate and ineffective ways to resolve conflicts. If tempers flare, take a "time out" and attempt to resolve the situation after tempers have cooled. Things said in anger can do long-lasting damage to relationships, so take a deep breath, cool down, and discuss the problem when you're calm with a mindset of finding a solution.
- * Apologize for your mistakes, and do your best not to repeat them.

Cooperation and collaboration:

- * We are all involved in a cooperative research venture. This requires sharing our resources, knowledge, and ideas. If you hear about a seminar, inform the lab via e-mail; if you find an interesting article, make copies for others who may be interested and/or place the PDF in an easily accessible folder on a shared computer; if you devise a new way to do something, write a protocol and distribute it to the lab; if you have questions about anything, ask!
- * When you ask someone else for help, ask nicely and show consideration for their time and effort. That person may not be able to help immediately. Be aware that an interruption may be disruptive to the work that's being done at that moment.
- * When you are asked by someone for help, respond with courtesy and a willingness to share your knowledge and expertise. If you are not able to help immediately, let the other person know when you will be able to help.
- * If you are able to contribute your expertise to someone else's project, offer! Collaboration within the lab greatly facilitates the progress of research. None of us can do everything by ourselves; furthermore, collaborative efforts generate interesting scientific discussions (and they're just plain fun).

Lab meetings:

- * Lab meetings are our primary vehicle for exchanging information, providing and receiving suggestions, brainstorming about future experiments and priorities, and discussing issues that affect the entire lab. Every member of the lab is expected to attend lab meeting each week unless she or he is out of town at a meeting or on vacation.
- * Be on time for lab meetings. It is disrespectful to your colleagues to be late, and it is essential that everyone hear about and discuss lab-wide business at the beginning of each meeting.
- * Presentations at lab meetings should be undertaken with care and planning. PowerPoint presentations are preferred, but the use of overheads and/or the blackboard is acceptable so long as the presenter is well organized. Each presentation should start with an introduction to remind everyone about the background and key set of questions that are under study. The length of the introduction will vary depending on the

maturity of the project, but it is always important to remind the audience about the background and hypotheses under study. It is helpful to provide a summary of progress to date before going through your most recent experiments in detail. It is also helpful to end with a plan for the coming months, so that your priorities are clearly articulated.

* Each member of the lab comes to lab meeting with an important set of responsibilities. Presenters are responsible for putting together a thoughtful, well organized, and appropriately illustrated presentation, and for dealing with input and suggestions with a rigorous but open mind. Lab members who are not presenting are responsible for thinking actively and rigorously about the project under discussion, for voicing their opinions and suggestions in a constructive, courteous and helpful manner, and doing so in such a way that the least experienced or knowledgeable individuals in the room can understand their comments. Those who feel inexperienced or lacking in relevant knowledge are responsible for asking questions when they don't understand what is going on.

* Lab meetings are an important opportunity to practice your presentation skills. Please stand while presenting and bring a laser pointer (or other portable pointer) so that you are not tied to a computer mouse. If you would like formal feedback from the PI or others on your presentation skills, please ask!

Lab notebooks:

* All of the work you do in the lab must be recorded in your lab notebook. These documents must be written so that your colleagues and successors can understand what you did, why you did it, what reagents, equipment, and materials you used, who worked with you, and when you did it. Think ahead to someone extending, repeating, or otherwise depending on your work. What will they need to know?

Lab duties:

* The lab shares duties to make everyone's life simpler. Each person in the lab has agreed to perform certain duties and/or be responsible for certain pieces of equipment or facilities on an ongoing basis. *Be sure that you understand your job, and be sure that you do it.*

Computers:

* Please observe these rules for use of communal computers:

- 1) When storing data on a computer for the first time, create a folder for yourself under "Users." Do not create files outside that folder.
- 2) Never use a disk or CD from outside the laboratory unless you are 100% certain that it is virus-free.
- 3) No games are allowed on any communal laboratory computer.
- 4) Do not load software onto any computer without checking with the Lab Manager first.
- 5) Archive your files frequently (using a zip disk, CD, or the lab DVD burner) and delete files from the hard drives of communal computers as soon as you are able.

Safety

* If you are last to leave the lab in the evening, turn off the lights and lock all the doors. Report any suspicious people or events to the police by calling 911.

Leaving the lab:

* Finally, when you leave the laboratory for good (graduation, postdoc, new job, other life, etc), you must do the following:

- 1) Organize your lab notebook and data and give these to the PI.
- 2) Catalog your slides and store them in labeled slide boxes.
- 3) Catalog your propagatable reagents (cDNAs, antibodies, mice) and ensure that the Lab Manager knows the locations of these.
- 4) Clean out unprocessed tissue, slides, and reagents from all refrigerators and freezers and from your bench, drawers, and desk. Find a new home for appropriate items (unprocessed slides, PCR reagents, tissue blocks, etc).
- 5) Give the PI your forwarding contact information.
- 6) Remove all non-lab related files from computer hard drives, and archive important files containing data and figures using appropriate storage media (CD/DVD).
- 7) Remember us kindly and do great things in the future!

I have read this document and agree to follow these guidelines:

Name

Signature
