

PRESS RELEASE

Developmental Biologist Joins Sbarro Institute

(Philadelphia, October 21, 2008) -- Gianfranco Bellipanni, Ph.D. has been appointed a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology and the Sbarro Institute for Cancer Research and Molecular Medicine in the College of Science and Technology at Temple University (USA).

After receiving his Ph.D. from the Department of Cellular and Developmental Biology from the University of Palermo, Dr. Bellipanni spent five years as a Post-Doctorate Fellow in the Department of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he worked to characterize the role of zOtx1 during the development of the central nervous system of zebrafish. In 2000, he won the A. Monroy Fellowship to attend the prestigious Embryology Course at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, MA.

He then joined the Institute of Developmental Genetics of the GSF-National Research Center for Environmental and Health in Munich (Germany) as a Senior Post-Doctorate Fellow, where he studied the specification and function of the serotonergic neuronal population in zebrafish. After a brief stint as a visiting scientist at the University of Milan, Italy, he returned to Philadelphia as a Research Associate in the Department of Biology at the University of Pennsylvania, before joining the Sbarro Institute in 2007.

Dr. Bellipanni's present research employs the zebrafish animal model to study two key aspects of embryo development: the mechanisms leading to Dorso/Ventral (D/V) patterning during embryo gastrulation -- when the germ layers of an embryo are formed and the body plan of the mature organism is established -- and the molecular and cellular mechanisms that instruct patterning and specification of the central nervous system.

Zebrafish, an inexpensive animal model that has become prized because its transparent embryo develops outside the mother's body, has been essential to much of Dr. Bellipanni's research. Zebrafish have helped biologists identify many genes involved in embryogenesis and, because it's a vertebrate animal, have become a valuable resource for identifying genes involved in human disease, particularly cancer.

"Although they are not mammals, zebrafish have many applications to human research," says Dr. Bellipanni. "Their external fertilization process and transparency has been useful for studying everything from classic embryology studies to the most advanced genetic work, including genetic screens and tracking genetic mutations."

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