

# UQ gene expert joins global company

22 April 2014

The world's largest genomics company, Illumina, has chosen a researcher from The University of Queensland to join as Director of Scientific Research.

Dr Ryan Taft, from UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB), has started with the billion-dollar global company, which is based in San Diego.

Dr Taft, who will maintain a joint appointment at UQ, said human genome sequencing is revolutionising medicine – enabling researchers around the world to identify valuable genetic information that could be used to help diagnose, manage and treat disease.

“ These discoveries are ushering in an era of truly personalised medicine, where diagnoses and treatments will be based on an individual's genetic information,” Dr Taft said.

“ One of my roles at Illumina will be to help build the scientific and diagnostic community networks that will aid scientists in analysing a genome quickly and identifying disease-causing mutations.

“ My hope is that one day soon these approaches will be used to determine the best care possible for a patient.”

Dr Taft, who is from San Diego originally, completed his PhD at IMB and has been leading a laboratory focused on identifying the genetic causes of rare diseases.

In collaboration with a worldwide team, he identified a new disease, HSBL, and the gene responsible, a discovery that provided a diagnosis for Melbourne boy Massimo Damiani and was profiled on the ABC's *Australian Story*.

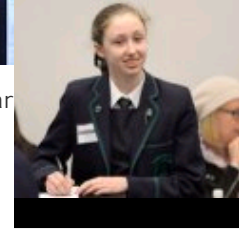
Dr Taft said his time at UQ, both as a student and a researcher, gave him the platform to reach out to a global community of experts and ultimately secure a position at one of the world's leading life sciences companies.

“ When I started my PhD at IMB, there weren't many places in the world that were so focused on genomics and computational biology,” Dr Taft said.

“ My PhD gave me the foundational tools, and helped me develop a powerful way of thinking about problems that has allowed me to ask and answer any number of questions.

“ As I moved into a postdoctoral position, and then into leading my own laboratory, the IMB allowed me to make connections that I wouldn't have been able to make otherwise, which led to this amazing opportunity.”

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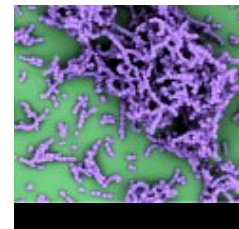


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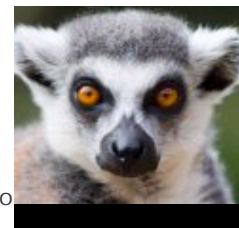


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Dr Taft said his joint appointment with UQ meant he would retain a strong connection with the university and Australia.

" I think Australia is an ideal place to pilot these technologies because it has world-leading genomics expertise, a well-educated and well-resourced society, a centralised medical system and a small population. Australia should aim to be a world leader in this space," he said.

" Both Illumina and I are eager to continue the work I have begun in Australia and look for opportunities for improving the health of this nation' s population through personalised medicine."

The Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) is a research institute of The University of Queensland that aims to improve quality of life by advancing medical genomics, drug discovery and biotechnology.

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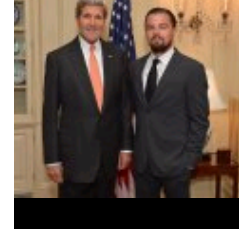
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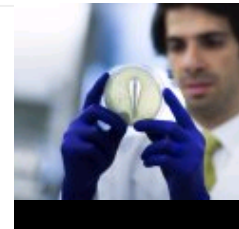
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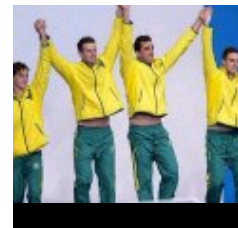


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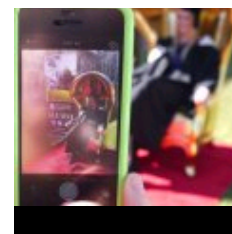
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