

**16th Hemoglobin Switching Conference October 11-14, 2008
Asilomar Conference Center, Monterrey, California**

Summary

The 16th Hemoglobin Switching Conference was held October 14 - 16, 2008 in the Asilomar Conference Center, CA. One hundred eighty three people attended from all over the world. This meeting focused on a natural phenomenon observed decades ago during human development. Three contiguous genes encoding slightly different forms of β -globin (one of the components of hemoglobin, which is the oxygen-carrying protein that makes blood red) are expressed one at a time during embryonic, fetal and adult stages. In most adults, both embryonically and fetally-expressed genes are silenced. However, in certain individuals, fetal globin can still be found. Exactly how this happens is a major topic of this conference with the goal of being able to manipulate the "switch" for therapeutic needs.

There were twelve sessions in this conference. Some of the topics were: Developmental regulation of globin genes, Hemoglobin switching (mechanisms), Control of erythropoiesis and globin gene expression, Transcription factors and accessory factors, Induction of fetal hemoglobin, and Gene therapy. There was also a "Late-Breaking" session, where ten Early-Stage Investigators presented their findings.

Findings that were revealed and discussed at this conference have led NIDDK to propose a Workshop entitled, "All Stressed Out: Comparing Stress Erythropoiesis with Normal". Concept clearance for this workshop will be presented to NIDDK's Council in May 2009. In addition, NIDDK is working with NHLBI to organize a workshop on Thalassemia, entitled, "Clinical Priorities/Clinical Trials". This workshop will be held at Natcher Auditorium on May 20-21, 2009.

NIDDK would like to work with ORDR to post a summary of the workshop on the web.