

PRESS RELEASE – 16 January 2015

A new MOOC invites the general public to discover a stem cell culture laboratory

Université de Nantes, Inserm and Thinkcovery have joined forces to produce a new kind of MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). Alternating as it does between theory and practice, “Ouvrez les portes du laboratoire: cellules et cellules souches,” (Open the laboratory doors: cells and stem cells) invites members of the public to discover, by means of enriched video content, the actual work done by researchers at Université de Nantes, Inserm and CNRS.

From 16 March 2015, all Internet users will thus be able to understand how and why researchers grow stem cells in the laboratory, and will be able to attend a course on cell biology.

After more than a year of design and production, the MOOC “*Ouvrez les portes du laboratoire: cellules et cellules souches*” will begin on 16 March 2015, and will be accessible on the FUN (France Université Numérique/France Digital University) platform. **Registration is already open.**

To put this novel MOOC together, teams from Université de Nantes, in partnership with Inserm, have joined forces with a new medium devoted to research, Thinkcovery.

They have combined their knowledge and ability to produce this six-week online course, and over fifty two- to five-minute videos, mainly with financial support from the Pays de la Loire Region and L'Oréal Research and Innovation. L'Oréal also contributed to preparing the content of this MOOC that covers aspects of somatic hair follicle stem cells.

“We regularly open up our research laboratory to the public, but for one thing it is difficult for us to accommodate everyone, and for another thing, such days do not give the public the opportunity to follow a project from start to finish.

It was this observation that gave us the idea. Based on the same principle as the MOOCs that throw open the doors of lecture theatres, we wanted to throw open the doors of our laboratory via the Internet,” says Patricia Lemarchand, a physician, lecturer and researcher at the Institut du Thorax at Nantes, of the initiative for the project with Loïc Le Gac of the Thinkcovery company.

The MOOC alternates between two series:

The “Côté Cours” (Lecture Side) introductory videos on cell biology describe the main concepts needed to understand the “Côté Laboratoire” (Laboratory Side) videos, which immerse the visitor in the daily work of a joint research team.

To register for the MOOC

The MOOC will begin on 16 March 2015

Registration is open! Go to the FUN platform to register for free for the MOOC “*Ouvrez les portes du laboratoire: cellules et cellules souches:*”
<https://www.france-universite-numerique-mooc.fr/universities/universite-de-nantes/>

The Institut du Thorax

Created in Nantes in 2004, the [Institut du Thorax](#) combines, within a shared structure, care, teaching and research in the cardiovascular, respiratory and metabolic disciplines.



This arrangement encourages the sharing of ideas, skills and expertise, and the emergence of new research avenues. In 10 years, this structure has greatly encouraged the establishment of an integrated approach that goes from patient to the identification of therapeutic targets and the development of methods for medical management. In close collaboration with the Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell ([iPSC](#)) platform at [FRS François Bonamy](#), it uses stem cells as model systems for the study of cardiovascular diseases.

Today the Institut du Thorax includes a strong medical centre at Nantes University Hospital, a clinical research structure approved by Inserm and DGOS (French Ministry of Health) and a Joint Unit for Basic Research at Université de Nantes, approved by Inserm and CNRS. The Research Unit has been given an A+ rating by the French Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education (AERES). It is presently made up of 7 teams, making it possible to cover the main research fields of the Institut du Thorax.

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The coproducers

Université de Nantes

Given the degree of active interest in these new online courses, [Université de Nantes](#) has chosen—under the impetus of its Vice-President for Digital Strategy, Francky Trichet—to offer several courses on an experimental basis. “*Ouvrez les portes du laboratoire: cellules et cellules souches*” is thus the third MOOC offered by Université de Nantes, and follows “*Num’@dict*” (online since the beginning of January) and “*ExplorUnivers: à la découverte de l’Univers*” (*ExplorUnivers: Discovering the Universe*, due to start at the beginning of March). These MOOCs will make it possible to collect feedback prior to expanding production.

The partnership with a Nantes startup company, combined with support from the Pays de la Loire Region for emerging new methods of spreading knowledge, clearly shows the innovative approach of Université de Nantes, and its spirit of openness regarding its local digital ecosystem.

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Inserm

Created in 1964, the French National Health and Medical Research Institute ([Inserm](#)) is a public scientific and technical research establishment, under the joint supervision of the French Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research and the French Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Women’s Rights. Inserm provides strategic, scientific and functional coordination for biomedical research in France, and, to this end, supports nearly 300 laboratories distributed throughout the entire French territory.

This MOOC is fully in line with the objectives for national and international dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge of the Institute’s researchers.

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Thinkovery

[Thinkovery](#) is an online medium devoted to current research, and produces a quarterly magazine distributed in kiosks throughout France. Alongside its media activity, Thinkovery contributes its know-how to the creation of teaching platforms and the production of videos and motion graphic design for popular science.

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Financial partners

Several institutions wished to contribute financial support to this project, including the Pays de la Loire Regional Council and L’Oréal Research and Innovation.

The videos in this MOOC have also had professional technical input, i.e. multi-camera recording, on-site coverage, and graphic animations to accompany the researchers’ presentations.

