

Merck licenses CRISPR gene-editing technology to Evotec

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Evotec plans to use Merck's CRISPR intellectual property portfolio to develop precisely engineered assays



Merck, a leading science and technology company, has announced that it has signed a license agreement providing Evotec SE access to Merck's foundational CRISPR intellectual property. Evotec, an international biotechnology company headquartered in Hamburg, Germany, will use Merck's CRISPR genome-editing technology to create edited cell lines for Evotec's commercial and internal research purposes.

Evotec plans to use Merck's CRISPR intellectual property portfolio to develop precisely engineered assays to determine the biology and toxicity for potential drug candidates during the drug development cycle.

This new license reinforces past collaborations between Merck and Evotec. In November 2016, the companies entered into a set of agreements whereby Evotec would provide screening services using Merck's collection of genetic reagents including CRISPR and shRNA libraries. Combining access to Merck's genome editing libraries with Evotec's screening expertise offers a faster path to explore and identify new drug targets.

Merck holds 20 CRISPR-related patents worldwide in methods and composition, including the fundamental technology of CRISPR Cas9 for genetic integration in mammalian cells.

Merck supports research with genome editing under careful consideration of ethical and legal standards. The company established an independent, external Bioethics Advisory Panel to provide guidance for research in which its businesses are involved, including research on or using genome editing. Merck has also defined a clear operational position considering scientific and societal issues to inform promising therapeutic approaches for use in research and applications.