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HKUST OFFERS WEB-BASED DATABASE FOR NEUROSCIENTISTS

Neuroscientists can now access a wealth of information related to a category of important chemical substances in the brain, the gamma-aminobutyric acid receptors (or the GABA receptors), through the GABAagent database on the World Wide Web at <http://www.ust.hk/gaba/>. The GABAagent is developed by researchers at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) with the support from the Industry Department.

“There are more than 15 types of GABA receptors. They form a large category of chemical substances in the brain,” said Dr Hannah Xue, Assistant Professor of Biochemistry at HKUST who heads the team to develop the GABAagent database. “They play a very critical role in the modulating function of the brain by inhibiting the nerve system from reacting to stimulation.”

“The research in the field of GABA receptors helps us understand how the brain functions and provides insights into the cures for mental diseases,” added Dr Abdelkrim Rachedi, Research Associate of HKUST’s Biochemistry Department and a key member of the development team. The GABAagent helps researchers locate useful information related to the receptors, such as publications, research institutions working in related fields, the DNA and protein sequences, and useful Web pages.

Another feature of the GABAagent is the GABAalert. It is basically an e-mail alert service that can automatically and periodically inform users about the latest additions to the GABAagent databases.

“The GABAagent database is first of its kind in the world,” said Dr Rachedi. “We have received very positive feedback from many scientists and international pharmaceutical companies in United States and the United Kingdom.

Note to Editors:

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