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Antisense RNA

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Gene silencing by RNA interference (RNAi) has become a powerful tool for functional genomics. In the January 25 *Science*, Tijsterman *et al.* report a gene-silencing method induced by short (25 nucleotide) antisense RNA molecules (*Science* 2002, **295**:694-697). They found that injecting single-stranded, antisense RNA (asRNA) oligomers into the gonadal syncytium of *Caenorhabditis elegans* resulted in silencing of the maternal *pos-1* gene and of germline-expressed genes. Tijsterman *et al.* found that asRNA silencing requires the mutator/RNAi genes *mut-7* and *mut-14*. They cloned the *mut-14* gene and report that it encodes a putative RNA helicase with a DEAD-box motif. The authors propose that asRNA-induced gene-silencing may result from the priming of RNA synthesis on mRNA templates, thereby creating dsRNA for subsequent degradation.

References

1. Functional anatomy of a dsRNA trigger: differential requirement for the two trigger strands in RNA interference.
2. *Science*, [<http://www.sciencemag.org>]