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## Cancer drug resistance

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STI-571 is an Abelson tyrosine kinase (Abl) inhibitor that is being tested in clinical trials to treat chronic myeloid leukemia (CML). A chromosomal translocation in CML patients results in production of the Bcr-Abl fusion protein, which is constitutively active and oncogenic. In the June 21 [ScienceXpress](#), Gorre *et al.* report on the mechanism of relapse in STI-571 patients (*Scienceexpress* 2001, 10.1126/science.1062538). They found that patients in STI-571 remission had reactivated Bcr-Abl activity; 3 of the 11 patients had amplified copies of the oncogenic *BCR-ABL* gene. Two thirds of patients tested harboured a single point mutation within the ATP-binding site of Bcr-Abl. Thus the *BCR-ABL* gene appears important in both the initiation and the maintenance of tumorigenicity. Identifying mutated alleles may help to detect drug-resistant clones prior to clinical relapse.

## References

1. Sti571: a gene product-targeted therapy for leukemia
2. *ScienceXpress* , [<http://www.scienceexpress.org>]