

# Cambridge blockbusters and 100 Years of the MRC

WRITTEN BY [LAUTARO VARGAS](#) ON 13 NOVEMBER 2013. POSTED IN [THE CLUSTER](#)

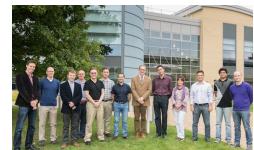


Exactly one hundred years ago, the UK government of the day established an organisation to take care of medical research on behalf of the 1911 National Insurance Act. The initial impetus behind the scheme was to tackle tuberculosis, but that soon widened, leading to the establishment of the Medical Research Committee and Advisory Council.

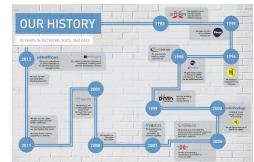
By 1918 it had gained independent status and became known as the [Medical Research Council](#) (MRC). It continued to receive government funding, but was now responsible for making its own decisions on where to allocate the money. It is now one of the two main government funding pots for health related research and in 2011/2012 spent £760 million on research.

The influence of the Medical Research Council In Cambridge has been and continues to be enormous. Former MRC CEO, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, is now the University of Cambridge vice

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This year alone has seen several major announcements for the MRC in Cambridge including the transfer of its MRC Epidemiology Unit to Cambridge University's School of Clinical Medicine, £24m for a new Metabolic Diseases Unit to study obesity as well as research that pretty much spells the end for lie detector tests.

However, it is the the work of one centre in particular that stands out, a place that has come to be known as the 'Nobel Prize Factory', the Laboratory of Molecular Biology. Recently moved into a new £212m building on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus that was opened by the Queen, the MRC LMB is the birthplace of modern molecular biology and home to nine Nobel Prizes shared amongst 13 LMB scientists.

Not only that, but the LMB has demonstrated an ability to take what is truly world-leading research out of the laboratory and into industry, including the launch of the company responsible for the UK biotechnology industry's only blockbuster drug.

Humira, a treatment for arthritis and Chron's disease was developed by Cambridge Antibody Technology (CAT) before the company was acquired by AstraZeneca for \$1.3bn and is now predicted to become the world's top selling drug by 2016.

Other companies spun out of the Lab include Domantis, Ribotargets, Protein Design Labs, Celltech, Biogen and more recently Heptares and Population Genetics. Here's to the next 100 years.

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*This article first appeared in the Cambridge Tech Quarter.*



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**Mike Clark** • 22 days ago

Protein Design Labs was founded in the USA by Cary Queen and first humanized an anti-IL2 receptor antibody of Tom Waldmann's also from the USA. They filed patents in Europe that were opposed by the MRC so I don't think it correct to claim that PDL spun out of the MRC!

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