EDITORIAL

The F1000Research Antibody Validation Article Collection
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Abstract

Well validated antibodies are crucial to progress in a wide range of life science disciplines, but validating an antibody is a complex and ongoing process. Antibody validation is often carried out as preliminary work to a larger study so the validation data may go unpublished and needless duplication of efforts can occur. This collection of articles in F1000Research provides a home for papers describing antibody validation studies. Our goal is to encourage publishing of all studies, both positive and negative, which increase understanding of how antibodies perform. These could range from large studies with thousands of antibodies to small single figure studies which validate an individual antibody for a specific purpose. Opinion or Correspondence articles considering any aspect of antibody validation are also welcome. Here, we provide an introduction to the collection which we hope will grow and become a valuable resource for the many thousands of researchers who use antibodies.

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Competing interests: Andrew Chalmers a founder and a shareholder in CiteAb Limited, which runs an antibody search engine.
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Validating an antibody is a complicated process that can involve many different approaches (Bordeaux et al., 2010; Howat et al., 2014). Historically antibody validation commonly involved the now controversial antigen pre-adsorption test (Holmseth et al., 2012), while current studies may make use of knockout or knockdown tissue to demonstrate specificity. There are also large scale approaches, capable of validating many antibodies simultaneously (Holm et al., 2012). However, there is no simple experiment that can validate an antibody for all possible applications and samples. For example, validating an antibody for western blotting using a human cell line, does not guarantee the antibody will be suitable in immunohistochemistry using tissue from a rat. Instead antibody validation is a gradual process which involves testing the antibody for specific applications and species/tissues of interest, ideally using a number of approaches.

This collection provides a home for papers describing antibody validation studies. Our aim is to encourage publishing of all studies, both positive and negative, which increase understanding of how antibodies perform. These can range from large scale studies involving hundreds of antibodies, or the use of many tissues or cell lines, to small single figure studies focusing on an individual antibody in a specific setting. The studies should have been sufficiently repeated and the results accurately and fully reported. It is also crucial that the Materials and methods provide enough detail to allow the experiments to be reproduced, something which is often not the case with studies using antibodies (Helsby et al., 2013). A key part of ensuring reproducibility is to make sure the antibodies can be identified by including their supplying company name and code and a resource identifier issued by the Research Identification Initiative (http://scicrunch.com/resources).

This broad approach should encourage a wide range of studies, many of which may never be published without this initiative and we hope that as the collection grows it will become a valuable resource for the thousands of researchers who use antibodies.

Competing interests
Andrew Chalmers a founder and a shareholder in CiteAb Limited, which runs an antibody search engine.

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References
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