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New MU Metagenomics Center to Make Important Research Cheaper, Faster

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VIDEO: New MU Metagenomics Center to Make Important Research Cheaper, Faster



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Aaron Ericsson is the director of the MU Metagenomics Center and an assistant research professor in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine.

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COLUMBIA, Mo. – Today, University of Missouri officials are celebrating the opening of the MU Metagenomics Center, located at Discovery Ridge Research Park. The new center will serve as a comprehensive resource for microbiological research performed at Mizzou, other universities and private entities around the country.

As more and more science is demonstrating the importance of the study of bacteria and other forms of microbiota to cancer research and overall gut health, the need for research on complex communities of bacteria is increasing. Currently, researchers must spend hundreds of dollars and several weeks to characterize the makeups of complex bacterial populations. Now, working with the DNA and informatics core facilities at Mizzou, scientists at the MU Metagenomics Center can perform this study up to 75 percent cheaper as well as faster than previous methods.

“This new metagenomics center will provide a valuable resource for important medical, veterinary and biological research,” said Aaron Ericsson, the director the new center. “Using the methods we have employed here at Mizzou, we can greatly improve the cost and speed of this research, helping scientists at MU and around the country make important discoveries more quickly and efficiently.”

Researchers interested in using the center’s services can submit samples of microbiota from any species of animal, as well as soil samples for plant studies. The scientists at the center will extract the DNA from the samples and will facilitate the genetic sequencing of that DNA, ultimately providing the researcher with a

detailed profile of the bacterial community they want to study.

Philip Johnson, a professor of equine medicine and surgery at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, says the new metagenomics center will help advance his research on how bacteria function in the complex horse digestive system.

“Until now, we have not been able to understand which bacteria live in these locations because we cannot grow many of them in lab cultures,” Johnson said. “However, using the metagenomics center, we can identify these bacteria by finding their genetic signatures. Having both the metagenomics center and the specialist resources Dr. Ericsson provides here at MU allows us to develop projects, work together directly and send in our samples more simply to have them analyzed more quickly and efficiently.”

Ericsson says the services provided by the MU Metagenomics Center can extend beyond research. He says any practicing veterinarian or medical doctor can submit samples to the center as well, if they wish to conduct microbiota tests on their patients. To find out more about the center, visit: <http://mumc.missouri.edu/>.

This new center is a result of a grant funded through the One Health, One Medicine area of Mizzou Advantage. Mizzou Advantage is a program that focuses on four areas of strength: food for the future, media of the future, one health, one medicine, and sustainable energy. The goals of Mizzou Advantage are to strengthen existing faculty networks, create new networks and propel Mizzou’s research, instruction and other activities to the next level.

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