



Swiss Sequencing-Service Shop Fasteris Installs an Illumina Genome Analyzer

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By [Julia Karow](#)

Swiss sequencing service shop Fasteris has installed an Illumina Genome Analyzer, the company said last week.

The Geneva-based firm is among the first service providers to install the instrument [..].

Fasteris CEO Laurent Farinelli said the company will initially limit its service on the new instrument to re-sequencing bacterial genomes, but plans to expand it to applications such as gene-expression analysis or small RNA discovery.

Farinelli, who more than a decade ago helped develop the DNA cluster-amplification technology that Solexa and Lynx licensed for their sequencing platform, said Fasteris chose the Genome Analyzer over Roche 454's Genome Sequencer because of the larger number of short fragments the instrument can analyze in one run.

"Probably, a lot of short fragments will be very, very useful" for the resequencing applications and different types of RNA analyses Fasteris plans to perform, Farinelli said.

"We believe there is a market," he said, adding that several of his customers had already expressed an interest in using the technology. Most of Fasteris' customers are academic labs and biotech companies in Switzerland, although the firm has also provided services to groups abroad for special applications, such as telomere sequencing.

One of the first users of its Illumina instrument will be a research group at the institute of veterinary bacteriology at the University of Bern that plans to analyze bacterial genomes.

Farinelli said he believes Fasteris needs to be an early adopter of next-generation sequencing in order to stay competitive.

"We asked ourselves if we could, as a small company, afford to go into this field of high-throughput DNA-sequencing technology, or if we could afford not to go," he told *In Sequence* last week. "If we are not among the first movers, maybe the large companies will have established experience [first], so we decided to go."

Fasteris, which employs fewer than 10 people, has been offering small-scale Sanger sequencing on the "latest generation" of Applied Biosystems' platform since 2003.

With help from a bank financing, Fasteris acquired and installed Illumina's instrument last week. Fasteris plans to offer services on the new instrument in June, after making sure it performs properly in-house.

"It was difficult for us to choose among the technologies," Farinelli said. "We tried to be as objective, with as little emotional background as possible, to choose the one that we believe is the most interesting."

Familiar Ground

Farinelli's history with next-generation DNA sequencing technology goes back to 1996 when he and colleague Pascal Mayer, working at GlaxoWellcome's Geneva Biomedical Research Institute, were developing a new sequencing method that involves amplifying DNA on a surface to generate DNA colonies, or DNA clusters.

Glaxo sold the research institute to Serono in 1998, and Farinelli and Mayer, together with three co-founders, founded Manteia Predictive Medicine in 2000 to further develop the technology.

But Manteia ran into financial trouble, and Lynx Therapeutics and Solexa jointly acquired the DNA cluster amplification technology for \$4 million in a bankruptcy auction in March 2004, a few months before the two companies announced their merger.

Solexa called the Manteia DNA cluster technology a "key IP acquisition" in a presentation last year and has incorporated it into its sequencing platform.

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