

ETP = enabling²

ETP 2007 was not only an exposition of Enabling Technologies for Proteomics, but also enabled (or at the least facilitated) the commercialization of Mass Cytometry and established an essential collaboration of my research team with the leading flow cytometry laboratory of Prof. Garry Nolan of Stanford University.

The organizers of that meeting had strategically, but unbeknown to either Garry or myself, invited the two of us to present because they saw a potential overlap of interests. Garry is the foremost protagonist of multi-colour flow cytometry, and my team was developing a mass spectrometer analog of a multi-parameter cytometer. As fate would have it, Garry arrived just after my talk, but his talk on phosphoproteomics in single cells clearly resonated with our ambition. It is now well-reported that Garry tried to politely ignore my overture during the break (after all, what could possibly be interesting about atomic mass spectrometry to a flow cytometrist?), but the message tunneled through the blockade and unleashed the veritable tidal wave of interest that has ultimately led to the commercial success of mass cytometry. We abandoned the prescribed ETP schedule and ran to our laboratory across the University of Toronto campus. That afternoon Garry determined that he had to be the early adopter and proselytizer of the technology. He soon after bought the first instrument outside of my laboratory (and later the third, and soon the seventh), introduced us to the other leading lights of flow cytometry, led us to both corporate and venture capital partnerships, and recently published a mammoth application and technology paper in Science that has garnered the attention of the entire flow cytometry world.

Not only has the relationship established at the ETP 2007 meeting facilitated the commercial acceptance of the technology, and hence established the success of our company DVS Sciences Inc., but our research groups have become close collaborators. Garry joined the Scientific Advisory Board of my university research project (and subsequently the Board of our company), and his team is now our leading partner in the major Global Leadership (Ontario Research Fund) that principally funds our research efforts at the university.

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