

# ELIZABETH MURCHISON WINS EPPENDORF YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD 2012

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2012 winner Elizabeth Murchison, PhD (Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom)

## DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES!

We invite biological and biomedical researchers not older than 35 years, working in Europe, to apply for the 2013 Eppendorf Award. The deadline for entries is 15th January 2013. The prize ceremony will take place at the EMBL Advanced Training Centre (ATC) in Heidelberg, Germany. To find out more visit [eppendorf.com/award](http://eppendorf.com/award).

The Eppendorf Award for Young European Investigators was established in 1995 to recognise outstanding work in biomedical science. It also provides the opportunity for young European researchers to showcase their work and communicate their research to a scientific audience. *Nature* is pleased to partner with Eppendorf to promote the award and celebrate the winner's work in print and online. *Nature* Podcast Editor Geoff Marsh talks to the 2012 winner Elizabeth Murchison about her work, and how it felt to win the award. To listen to the full interview, visit: [nature.com/nature/awards/eppendorf](http://nature.com/nature/awards/eppendorf).

**Elizabeth Murchison:** My research is on two very unusual cancers that are transmissible between individuals by the physical transplantation of cancer cells.

**Geoff Marsh:** So let's touch on one of those cancers, Tasmanian devil facial tumour disease (DFTD).

**EM:** Tasmanian devils are actually in danger of going extinct within the next 20-30 years, because of this transmissible cancer. It's transmitted by biting, and it causes these horrific facial tumours, which kill within months.

**GM:** Tell me about the cancer itself.

**EM:** It first arose in a single devil, which lived possibly 15-20 years ago. In sequencing the cancer's genome, we're actually sequencing the genome of the animal that first gave rise to the cancer, as well as all the somatic mutations that have occurred in the lineage as it spread through the devils' population.

**GM:** Did it look like a devil genome?

**EM:** It was clear that this cancer arose first in a single devil and by looking at the sex chromosomes, we were able to determine that this was a female animal.

**GM:** Does it act like a normal cancer?

**EM:** Yes, we think it originated as a Schwann cell tumour, and in some ways it looks just like a normal cancer, but then when you look at its DNA, it's unrelated to the host that it's living in.

Dirk Ehlers, CEO of Eppendorf AG congratulating Elizabeth Murchison



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