

Patenting the genes of marine creatures and why it could matter for research

From the tiniest microbe to the biggest [whale](#), the ocean is teeming with life. For corporations and researchers, that biodiversity is a veritable gold mine of genetic potential.

...

[Robert] Blasiak is the first author of a new paper, [out \[June 6\] in the journal Science Advances](#), that charts currently-held patents on marine genetic resources. That paper's findings paint a strange picture: of the almost 13,000 genetic patents held on marine species, almost half are held by a single corporation.

...

In this case, for a company that has patented a gene from a sea organism (known as a Marine Genetic Resource), owning the patent to a particular genetic sequence allows them the sole right to do research on it and produce products related to it.

...

The concerns with gene patenting are that giving corporations control of the literal code of life inherently devalues that life, and that lack of free access to genetic information could impede research and development of novel things like cancer treatments.

...

This September, the United Nations will begin negotiating a new treaty to regulate the high seas that will explicitly include MGRs. The negotiations are expected to stretch into 2020. Blasiak says he and his colleagues would like to see BASF, the corporation that holds holds 47 percent of the MGR patents, take a seat at the table.

Read full, original post: [The genes of many marine creatures are patented—and one company owns half of them](#)