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News and Views

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Stem cells: To be and not to be

Haifan Lin¹

It has long been proposed that stem cells function by dividing to generate an identical daughter cell and a cell that becomes more specialized. New work illustrates such asymmetric division and its molecular basis.

Stem cells have the unique ability to perpetuate themselves while continually replenishing tissues throughout the life of an organism. This ability has long been attributed to a distinctive asymmetry in their division, such that when a stem cell divides, it gives rise to both an exact copy of itself and a new type of cell that will differentiate into mature cells of the tissue.

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