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JÖRN PIEL

Mining microbial dark matter for drug development

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Jörn Piel joined ETH Zurich as a Full Professor of Microbial Interactions at the Institute of Microbiology, D-BIOL, in February 2013.



Jörn Piel studied chemistry at the University of Bonn, Germany. From 1995-1998 he conducted his PhD work in Bonn with Prof. W. Boland, studying biosynthesis and regulation of natural products involved in plant signaling. As an Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellow (1998-1999) he worked on biosynthetic pathways of marine bacteria in the laboratory of Prof. B. S. Moore and Prof. H. G. Floss at the University of Washington, Seattle. From 1999-2004 he headed a junior research group at the Max Planck Institute of Chemical Ecology, Jena, Germany, and obtained the habilitation at the University of Jena in 2004. In the same year he was appointed a C3 (Assistant) Professor at the Kekulé Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of Bonn, Germany.

Prof. Piel's research focuses on natural products. These substances, found only in small amounts in nature, can play a big role in medicine development. Using biological and chemical methods, his group investigates how these often complex substances are produced. This knowledge is then applied in Synthetic Biology to produce compounds that are difficult to obtain from nature.

