

Ion Torrent first to enter newly revised \$10m X-Prize genome sequencing contest

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Ion Proton Sequencer

(Phys.org) -- Ion Torrent signified its intention to win the \$10 million prize that will be given to whoever can sequence the entire genome of 100 people over the age of 100 in just one month's time, by signing up as an entrant in the latest X-Prize contest. The winner must also complete their sequencing in a way that costs a thousand dollars or less per genome, a formidable proposition to be sure as current estimates typically run three to five thousand dollars. There's also an accuracy test at the end, which appears to have caused some of the big names in the field to hesitate in throwing their hats into the ring. Results must be at least 95% complete.

The contest will begin September 5, 2013, and end on the 4th of the following month. Each contestant will be given a vial containing the

DNA of the one hundred people who have volunteered samples for the contest. Those considering entering the contest have until May 13, 2013 to sign up.

Officials with the [X-Prize](#) organization say the goals of the contest are twofold; one, to advance the science, i.e. make new discoveries that will hopefully result in new advances in sequencing genomes (and maybe uncover some clues as to why some people live to be a hundred despite living normal lives) and two, to bring some honesty to the field. Sequencing genomes has become big business as several companies now sequence genomes for customers looking to find out if they have genes that indicate they are susceptible to various genetic diseases.

Funds for the contest are being provided by Stewart and Marilyn Blusson who made a fortune with Archon Minerals, a company they run that has found many gold and diamond deposits. The [contest](#), named the Archon Genomics X Prize, will have J. Craig Venter as one of the members on the advisory board, who has gone on the record roundly applauding the idea of separating the marketing hype surrounding [genome](#) sequencing from the reality of what is actually available.

Ion Torrent, which is owned by Life Technologies, plans to rely on its semiconductor/chemistry based Proton machines (rather than the light based devices most others in the field use) that founder Jonathan Rothberg has said are now capable of sequencing a human genome in two hours. Other, more established companies have been non-committal thus far suggesting they might be worried about their reputation should their claims to potential customers not hold up to close scrutiny.

More information: www.iontorrent.com/

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