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## Destruction before salvation

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Mouse models of cancer are primarily [soft tissue sarcomas and lymphomas](#), whereas 90% of human cancers are epithelial in origin. In the August 10 [Nature](#), Artandi *et al.* suggest that the difference arises from higher levels of telomerase (the enzyme that adds a protective cap on the end of chromosomes) in mice (*Nature* 2000, **406**:641-645). When the researchers combine a mouse telomerase knockout with a mutation in the tumor suppressor p53, non-reciprocal translocations appear, followed by epithelial cancers. Artandi *et al.* believe that low levels of telomerase lead to genome rearrangements that initiate tumorigenesis, before subsequent telomerase reactivation saves the cells from excessive rearrangements that would cause self-destruction.

## References

1. The role of p53 in tumour suppression: lessons from mouse models.
2. Nature magazine, [<http://www.nature.com/nature/>]