

Medical association acts to ensure journal autonomy

A row over editorial independence at the *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)* has ended with the association agreeing to take control of the journal from its for-profit subsidiary.

Two CMAJ editors were sacked in February after executives at the subsidiary, CMA Holdings, intervened in a story about women's access to the morning-after pill (see *Nature* 440, 10–11; 2006). Most of the editorial board resigned in protest.

The journal will now be run by the association itself, which has promised to make “editorial integrity” an explicit goal. The association will also be informed in advance of any controversial content, but will not have the power to change or cut anything. The new rules are the result of a review by an eight-member panel of academics, journal editors and representatives of the CMA.

Founder of gene therapy convicted of child abuse

William French Anderson, often known as the ‘father of gene therapy’, was convicted on 19 July of repeatedly sexually abusing a colleague's young daughter. Anderson, 69, could be given up to 22 years in prison when he is sentenced in November.

The University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where Anderson directs the Gene Therapy Laboratories, immediately began proceedings to fire the physician, who is famed for initiating breakthrough clinical trials at the National Institutes of Health. Anderson was jailed after the verdict and is undergoing psychiatric examination. His attorney says he will appeal.

In 1997, when the victim was ten years old, Anderson began a five-year-period of abuse (see *Nature* 430, 600–601; 2004). Crucial trial evidence included surreptitious audio tapes that the police made in 2004 of Anderson acknowledging the activity to his victim.

Fifteen-year goal to transform rice yields

Can rice be bred or engineered to photosynthesize as efficiently as corn (maize)? Researchers at an International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) workshop say that it can, and have identified two strategies for achieving this ambitious goal.

Maize uses carbon dioxide more efficiently in photosynthesis, so transferring the underlying biochemical machinery to rice would lead to far bigger yields. At the

Gibbon has cheek to join the genome sequencing elite

The Northern white-cheeked crested gibbon (*Nomascus leucogenys leucogenys*, pictured) is the latest species to be lined up for genome sequencing, the National Human Genome Research Institute, based in Bethesda, Maryland, announced on 19 July.

The primate is of interest in part because it has an unusually large number of segmental duplications — large, almost identical stretches of DNA that are present in two places in its genome. Similar duplications are known to be associated with disease and birth defects in humans.

Also scheduled for detailed sequencing are the domestic cat (*Felis catus*), the African savannah elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), five species of fungus that infect humans and up to 50 strains of the yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.



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IRRI meeting, held on 17–21 July in Laguna in the Philippines, a consortium of about 20 research institutes set the goal of achieving this within 15 years.

The groups will try to introduce the more efficient photosynthetic apparatus by studying wild relatives of rice that may have maize-like photosynthesis, or by introducing genes from maize into rice. The aim is to meet growing demand for food in developing countries.



Rice may benefit from receiving genes that encode the photosynthetic apparatus of maize.

Nobel laureate accused of blocking MIT appointment

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has launched a review of its neuroscience research following allegations that a Nobel-prizewinning neuroscientist used his position to interfere with the appointment of a researcher at MIT.

In a 15 July story in *The Boston Globe*, Susumu Tonegawa, head of MIT's Picower Institute for Learning and Memory, was accused of deterring Alla Karpova from accepting a position at the McGovern Institute for Brain Research, which is based in the same building as the Picower. Karpova has since rejected MIT's offer and accepted a job at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Janelia Farm research campus in Virginia. The allegations have been disputed

by some of Tonegawa's colleagues.

According to *The Boston Globe*, MIT president Susan Hockfield acknowledged that there are “ongoing tensions among MIT's neuroscience entities”.

The review, which is due to report within the next few months, will examine the structure of MIT's neuroscience research and how to boost cooperation between groups.

See related blog entry on Nature Network Boston:

► <http://network.nature.com/boston/community/view/35>

Private funds set to counter ‘crazy’ retirement rules

Germany's much-criticized retirement regulations, under which university staff are compelled to leave when they reach 65, are to be tackled by a private funding agency.

The Frankfurt-based Hertie Foundation, which funds neuroscience projects, said on 16 July that it will provide a series of grants for neuroscientists over 60. The scheme is designed to prevent the loss of some of the country's most experienced scientists to the United States.

Federal research minister Annette Schavan supported the programme at its launch, saying that the German rules for researchers were “crazy and unsuitable for the future”. The foundation acknowledged that only a few older scientists remain active and successful, and said that its selection criteria were stiff.

The first recipient is 63-year-old neurologist Thomas Brand from the University of Munich.

Correction

Our “Science at the Solstice” News Feature (*Nature* 441, 1040–1045; 2006) should have reported that Diana James Junau works with Grand Perfect Conservation, and the picture of her shows her working in its laboratory, not at a university facility.