

## China charges drugs lab with making illegal Tamiflu

Six people are on trial in Shanghai for making counterfeit versions of Tamiflu, the drug thought to be the most effective treatment for avian influenza.

Xun Wang, head of a pharmaceutical operation known as Shanghai Xidi, is accused of running a lab that produced Tamiflu 24 hours a day between November 2005 and May 2006. Official Chinese news sources said on 9 February that Wang had obtained instructions about how to produce the drug. It is not clear whether the counterfeit pills contained the correct ingredients. The authorities were alerted to the alleged fraud via Internet sites that advertised the drug. More than 400 kilograms of pills were subsequently seized.

Countries around the world have been stockpiling Tamiflu to prepare for a possible pandemic. China's health ministry seized control of distribution of the drug last year amid fears of hoarding and piracy.

## Puzzle-solving quantum computer is unveiled

A Canadian firm has revealed what it claims is the first fully functioning quantum computer — generating both interest and scepticism from physicists.

D-Wave Systems, based in Burnaby, British Columbia, debuted its system on 13 February at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California. The computer used its 16 quantum bits, or qubits, to match proteins in a database, create a seating chart for a wedding party and solve a sudoku puzzle.

Critics say that the machine, which takes an unusual approach known as

'adiabatic quantum computing', may not be performing strictly quantum-mechanical computations. The adiabatic technique leaves the machine to conduct quantum computations on its own, making it difficult to tell whether it is behaving in a quantum or a classical manner.

"I'm really very sceptical," says Umesh Vazirani, a computer scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, adding that he would like to see more data before he is convinced.

## Kansas puts evolution back on the curriculum

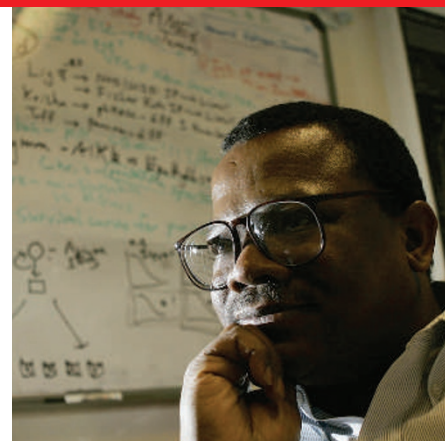
The Kansas State Board of Education has scrapped standards that many scientists said supported intelligent design, a concept that holds that a supernatural power shaped evolution (see *Nature* 436, 899; 2005).

On 13 February, the board decided by six votes to four to replace the current guidelines with a set that strongly supports the theory of evolution and that was written and endorsed by scientists and educators. Several board members who supported the old standards lost their seats in primary elections last August, which all but ensured this month's reversal.

The decision is a victory for supporters of evolution, says Jack Krebs, who heads Kansas Citizens for Science, an advocacy group that fought for the changes. "Kansas has once again returned to the fold of mainstream science," he says.

## Biologist calls time on hunger strike at MIT

An African-American stem-cell researcher has ended a hunger strike that was designed to protest against racism at the



C. SUZUKI/AP

Food for thought: James Sherley has highlighted the issue of race in academic appointments.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge.

James Sherley held his strike outside the provost's office for 12 days before accepting solid food on 16 February. Sherley, who began the action after being denied tenure at MIT, said he was ending "in celebration of the attention that has been brought to bear on issues of equity, diversity and justice at MIT and in higher education".

A statement from MIT acknowledged that Sherley's protest had "focused attention on the effects that race may play in the hiring, advancement and experience of under-represented minority faculty". MIT president Susan Hockfield has already promised to establish a committee to study potential racial bias in the institute's hiring and career-advancement procedures. But officials said that no change had been made regarding the decision on Sherley's tenure, which they maintain was made fairly.

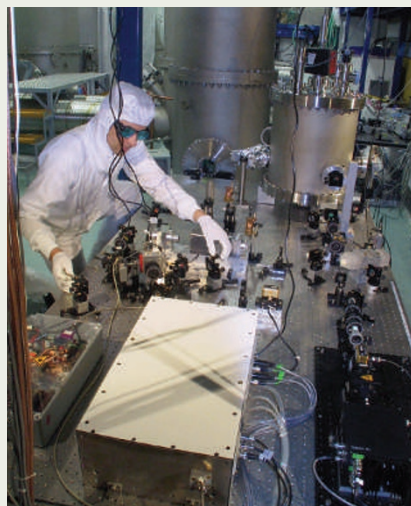
## Healthcare company takes lead with biobank

A private healthcare organization in the United States has announced plans for one of the largest studies of how genes and lifestyle affect health.

Medical researchers are keen to collect data on large cohorts of people to help them tease apart the genetic and environmental factors that cause some people to develop diseases such as cancer. Kaiser Permanente, a non-profit healthcare provider based in Oakland, California, announced on 14 February that it is inviting about 2 million of its members in northern California, who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, to add data to the new bank. Participants will submit a DNA sample, medical history and lifestyle information.

A huge cohort study proposed by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) is still some way from recruiting participants, although Kaiser Permanente says that it will collaborate with NIH researchers on the project.

## Labs join forces to detect gravitational waves



ALBERT-EINSTEIN-INSTITUT, HANNOVER

Physicists have decided to pool their data in an effort to detect gravitational waves, the perturbations of space-time that are predicted to ripple away from events such as the merger of black holes.

The teams behind the three biggest projects to search for such waves announced the move on 13 February. If all the facilities detect a signal, it would increase the teams' confidence that their findings are valid. In addition, slight differences in the time that a signal arrives at the different sites should help to pinpoint the source.

The agreement was struck between the Virgo detector, based in Italy, the three Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) detectors in the United States, and the GEO600 detector (pictured) in Germany. Virgo aims to begin its first science run in May; LIGO and GEO600 are already gathering and sharing data.