

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Stem-cell lawsuit

To the relief of stem-cell scientists, a District of Columbia judge has thrown out a lawsuit that sought to block US government funding of research using human embryonic stem cells. The decision, released on 27 July, came 11 months after the same judge issued a preliminary injunction on such research. See page 14 for more.

Primate research

Research using primates should continue in the United Kingdom because of its importance to human health and basic science, a report released on 27 July concluded. But the review, commissioned by funding bodies the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, found that 9% of projects using non-human primates between 1997 and 2006 showed no obvious scientific or medical benefit. Around 3,000 primates — mostly macaques and marmosets — are used in UK labs each year. See go.nature.com/6p6sad for more.

Yucca's successor

To reinvigorate its quest for a permanent storage site for nuclear waste, the United States needs an independent waste-management organization with dedicated funding, says an interim report by a White House commission, published on 29 July. The report also calls for a public-engagement process to identify a viable replacement for the proposed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada, which remains in legal limbo following the decision by President Barack Obama's administration to shutter the project. The commission plans to release its final report in



ESO/S. STANGHELLINI

ALMA ready to study the Universe

A 16th radio antenna (pictured) was delivered last week to the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), 5,000 metres above sea level in Chile's Atacama Desert. This milestone means that the radio telescope can begin original science observations in September. ALMA, an international

collaboration with a cost well over US\$1 billion, will study the Universe at submillimetre wavelengths, providing a new window on the cool star-forming regions of the Milky Way and on early galaxies. Its complete array (54 12-metre-diameter antennas, and 12 7-metre antennas) won't be in place until 2013.

January. See go.nature.com/k2piu4 for more.

Research integrity

Britain's oversight of research integrity is "unsatisfactory", according to a 28 July report from the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, a cross-party group of politicians. The report repeats recommendations made last year by the UK Research Integrity Futures Working Group to set up an independent advisory body on the subject, and calls for an external regulator for research integrity.

Fuel standards

US President Barack Obama announced new fuel economy standards on 29 July, unveiling an agreement with car

makers that would bring the average fuel efficiency for all cars and trucks sold to 23.2 kilometres per litre (54.5 miles per US gallon) by 2025, nearly double the current average. According to preliminary estimates by the International Council on Clean Transportation in Washington DC, that would bring emissions down to around 107 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre travelled — still more than the target of 95 g CO₂ per km set by the European Commission for 2020.

officer of the US National Academy of Sciences, as its new science adviser. Colglazier's appointment was announced on 25 July; he succeeds geneticist Nina Fedoroff, who ended her three-year stint in the post last July.

Marburger dies

John 'Jack' Marburger, who served as science adviser to US President George W. Bush for eight years, died on 28 July, aged 70. A physicist with a background in lasers and nonlinear optics, Marburger (pictured) was president of Stony Brook University in New York from 1980 to 1994, then in 1998 became director of Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New

PEOPLE

US science adviser

The US Department of State has appointed physicist William Colglazier, who recently retired as executive

York. As science adviser during 2001–09, he staunchly defended Bush's policies in the face of angry criticism from researchers.

E. ALTERMAN/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



NASA loses leaders

NASA, an agency seemingly uncertain of its mission, is losing its most senior power couple. Laurie Leshin, deputy associate administrator of NASA's exploration division, and her husband Jon Morse, head of astrophysics in the science division, are leaving NASA for the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York. Morse, who has overseen the astrophysics division through its toughest times, will become the RPI's associate vice-president for research, the university announced on 27 July. Leshin will become dean of the school of science. Both start at the beginning of October.

RESEARCH

China's deep dive

China's *Jiaolong* submersible completed a test dive to 5,188 metres in the central Pacific Ocean on 28 July — well past its previous 3,759-metre record and a depth that, in theory, gives China access to more than 70% of the ocean floor. The 8-metre long, 22-tonne craft is designed to dive to 7,000 metres. Japan's *Shinkai* submersible is rated to 6,500 metres, and Russia's *Mir* to around 6,000 metres. The venerable US submersible *Alvin* is being upgraded from its current 4,500-metre depth rating to 6,500 metres. See go.nature.com/doysot for more.

Climate data freed

After years of bitter dispute with climate-change sceptics, the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, UK, has released most of the raw meteorological data it used to put together a data set of global land temperatures. CRU had resisted releasing the data under freedom-of-information requests, but was ordered to do so last month by the UK Information Commissioner. Only data from 19 stations in Poland are not included. The Polish meteorological service, say CRU officials, refused to have

its data publicly released. See go.nature.com/tyi2ty for more.

Genome diversity

The consumer genetics firm 23andMe announced plans on 26 July to offer free genome scans to 10,000 African Americans in an effort to boost the ethnic diversity of its customers. The company, based in Mountain View, California, also hopes to determine whether genetic variants linked to diseases in other ethnic groups apply to African Americans. Ninety-six per cent of all such genome-wide association studies have been conducted in people of European ancestry (see *Nature* 475, 163–165; 2011), and the majority of 23andMe's current customers are also of European descent.

BUSINESS

Gene patents upheld

The US biotechnology industry's ability to patent genes, threatened by a lawsuit in which seven such patents were ruled invalid, seems safe again. Last March, a federal judge had ruled that patents for genes associated with breast and ovarian cancer were improperly granted, because they referred to isolated DNA that was a product of nature, and was

COMING UP

5 AUGUST

NASA's Juno mission is scheduled to launch for Jupiter. See page 13 for more.

www.nasa.gov/juno.

7–12 AUGUST

The Ecological Society of America has its annual meeting in Austin, Texas. The theme is preserving and enhancing a sense of "Earth stewardship".

www.esa.org/austin

therefore not patentable under US law. But on 29 July, a New York appeals court said that isolated DNA molecules were sufficiently distinct from their natural forms to be eligible for patent protection. The patents are held by Myriad Genetics, based in Salt Lake City, Utah; the issue is likely to require further judgments in higher courts. See go.nature.com/lhmdem for more.

RNAi shutdown

Pharmaceutical powerhouse Merck is shutting down the San Francisco research facility it acquired in 2006 when it paid US\$1.1 billion for Sirna Therapeutics, a California biotechnology firm specializing in RNA interference (RNAi) as a treatment. The 29 July announcement seems to be another blow to the RNAi field, which has been hit hard by pharma restructurings in the past year (see *Nature* 468, 487; 2010).

Separately, Merck, which is headquartered in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, announced job cuts of 12–13% by 2015, on top of the 17% cuts it announced after purchasing Schering-Plough in November 2009. See go.nature.com/av5uho for more.

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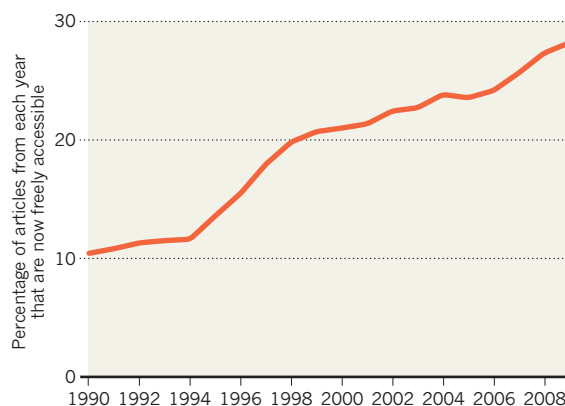
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

The 19 July indictment of activist and ethics researcher Aaron Swartz, who downloaded more than 4 million articles from the academic journal archive JSTOR, unleashed a ferment of support for the principle that research papers should be freely available. Unremarked so far is that the proportion of research papers freely available is increasing (see chart) thanks to public-access mandates by governments and funding agencies, and the success of open-access publishers. See go.nature.com/gmpdbq for more.

FREEING RESEARCH ARTICLES

More than one-quarter of biomedical research articles indexed in PubMed in recent years are freely accessible.



SOURCE: D. LIPMAN/NCBI