

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

BUSINESS

Pharma fines

Drug giant GlaxoSmithKline will pay US\$3 billion in fines for enormous health-care fraud. The firm, headquartered in London, is pleading guilty to promoting antidepressants for unapproved use, and to holding back data and making unsupported safety claims about its diabetes drug Avandia (rosiglitazone). The settlement was announced last November, but legal documents detailing the guilty pleas were unsealed on 2 July.

Private telescope

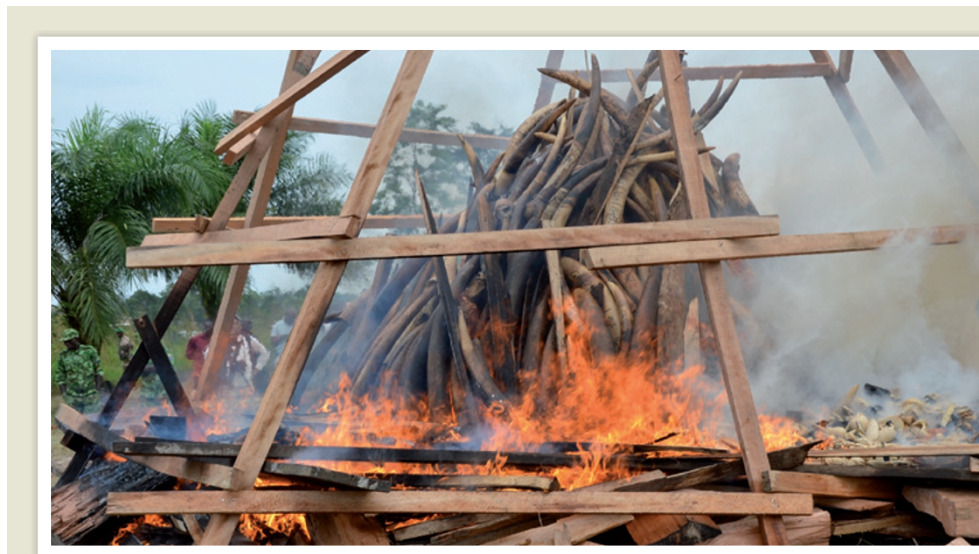
A non-profit foundation announced on 28 June that it plans to raise hundreds of millions of dollars to build a small space telescope that would orbit the Sun, discovering and tracking potentially hazardous Earth-crossing asteroids. The B612 Foundation, made up of engineers, planetary scientists, astronauts and former NASA officials, says that the telescope would be the world's first privately funded deep-space mission. See go.nature.com/7cspmy for more.

Obesity pill

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new weight-loss drug on 27 June, the first in

JOURNALISM AWARDS

Helen Pearson, *Nature's* chief features editor, last week won the Association of British Science Writers' best feature award for her article 'Study of a lifetime' (*Nature* **471**, 20–24; 2011). And in Britain's Online Media Awards (for all forms of journalism), *Nature's* website and Twitter feed both won commendations.



WILS YANICK MANIENGU/AF/GETTY IMAGES

Pyre of ivory

Gabon burned its entire government stockpile of ivory — almost 5,000 kilograms of tusks and carvings — on 27 June, in a vivid display of its intent to crack down on illegal ivory trading. Last year, international recorded ivory seizures reached their highest point since a ban on

the ivory trade was established in 1989, and African elephant poaching levels are at their highest for a decade, according to a 21 June report from the United Nations' Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

more than a decade. Belviquin (lorcaserin), made by Arena Pharmaceuticals in San Diego, California, suppresses food cravings by mimicking the effects of serotonin in the brain. The agency rejected the drug two years ago because of safety concerns, but after additional tests it is now allowing Belviquin's use in obese adults and in overweight people who have a weight-related health condition. See go.nature.com/vajfqc for more.

Pharma closure

About 1,000 jobs are to be lost with the closure of pharmaceutical company Roche's research site in Nutley, New Jersey. Announcing the job losses on 26 June, Roche said the 80-year-old base would cease operation by the end of 2013; some of its research and development

will move to facilities in Switzerland and Germany, where around 80 jobs will be created. The firm, headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, also plans to build a translational-research centre on the east coast of the United States, creating about 240 jobs.

Amylin buy-up

Two pharmaceutical giants, Bristol-Myers Squibb and AstraZeneca, are teaming up to acquire the biotech firm Amylin, based in San Diego, California, for US\$5.3 billion (or \$7 billion with existing contractual obligations). Bristol-Myers Squibb, headquartered in New York City, is buying Amylin for its lucrative diabetes treatments. As part of the deal, announced on 29 June, Amylin will receive \$3.4 billion from London-based AstraZeneca, and the

two firms will share profits and losses from Amylin's drugs pipeline.

RESEARCH

Higgs hunt

Results from the Large Hadron Collider, due to be presented on 4 July at a conference on high-energy physics in Melbourne, Australia, will provide evidence of a new particle, physicists told *Nature* as this issue went to press. But, they added, more data would be needed to confirm whether the particle behaves exactly as the standard model of particle physics predicts for the long-sought Higgs boson. See go.nature.com/uzvtfcd for the latest news.

Cell bank to close

The Massachusetts Human Stem Cell Bank, at the University of Massachusetts

Medical School in Shrewsbury, will close when it runs out of public funding this year. The bank opened with state money in 2008, to allow work on newly derived human embryonic stem-cell lines while restrictions were in place on federal funding. But President Barack Obama's administration lifted the restrictions in 2009, obviating the need for the repository. See go.nature.com/beu3ww for more.

NIH funding

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) will fund an initiative to help extramural researchers to diagnose mysterious maladies, and another to study how cells use RNA outside their membranes to communicate, the agency announced on 2 July. The two five-year projects, funded at US\$145 million and \$130 million, respectively, are the latest from the Common Fund, a pot of money worth \$545 million a year that the NIH director uses to make strategic investments. The two programmes will begin in 2013.

POLICY

Carbon tax

Australia introduced a carbon tax on 1 July, in which the country's 300 biggest emitters of carbon dioxide will pay



Aus\$23 (US\$23.5) per tonne emitted. The tax will increase by 2.5% a year above inflation until an emissions-trading scheme replaces it in 2015. But national newspaper polls reported considerable opposition; some 2,000 protesters marched against the tax in Sydney (pictured); and opposition politicians have vowed to scrap it if they win power, with elections due in late 2013.

Single EU patent

Politicians are still arguing over how to replace the current costly and fragmented European patent arrangements with a unified system, under which inventors can obtain a single patent for the entire region. Everything except the location of the patent court for ruling on disputes was agreed last year, and at a meeting in Brussels on 28–29 June, ministers from European Union member

states concluded that Paris, London and Munich would split the court. But Europe's parliament then postponed its vote on the law, complaining about the way it reduced the power of the European Court of Justice. See go.nature.com/yuiw8v for more.

Health act upheld

The US Supreme Court on 28 June voted narrowly in favour of upholding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, including a key provision requiring everyone to buy health insurance. The law also includes provisions relevant to biomedical research, such as measures to speed up approval of generic versions of protein-based drugs. See page 13 for more.

UK science chief

Mark Walport will be the United Kingdom's next chief scientific adviser, the UK Cabinet Office announced on 28 June. Walport has been director of the Wellcome Trust, the United Kingdom's largest biomedical charity, since 2003. See page 20 for more.

Romania plagiarism

A Romanian academic committee has confirmed allegations of plagiarism in the PhD thesis of the country's prime minister, Victor Ponta. But the committee officially

COMING UP

6–10 JULY

In Ottawa, five of the world's largest societies for studying evolution and ecology team up for their first joint congress on evolutionary biology. go.nature.com/hwsqna

11–15 JULY

Europe's largest science conference, the Euroscience Open Forum, meets in Dublin. esof2012.org

ceased to exist before the end of its meeting on 29 June in Bucharest — it was disbanded by acting education minister Liviu Pop. That move has outraged Romanian academics. The government has referred the case to a national research-ethics council. See go.nature.com/nrdjp2 for more.

Nuclear restart

Japan restarted its first nuclear reactor, at the Ohi plant in Fukui prefecture, on 1 July — despite last-ditch protests against its reopening (see go.nature.com/tjylu4). Another Ohi reactor unit should also start this month. All of Japan's 48 other working reactors remain shuttered after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011.

Open access

The Wellcome Trust has made good on promises to enforce its open-access policy more rigorously. Since 2006, the trust has required research papers from work that it funds to be free to access within six months of publication. But the policy has only 55% compliance. On 28 June, the trust announced that those who fail to make papers open access will be refused funding renewals and new grants. See go.nature.com/5iizko for more.

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TREND WATCH

Several years of high prices are driving what could be the largest surge in global oil production since the 1980s, says a report from Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Contrary to fears of a peak in oil production, the report suggests that global oil-production capacity could expand from 93 million barrels per day in 2011 to 110.6 million barrels per day in 2020. The increase is driven by advances in the production of 'unconventional' oil, such as that trapped in 'tight/shale' formations.

OIL-PRODUCTION SURGE

The production capacity of most oil-producing nations is set to increase dramatically by 2020, a study predicts, with the top 11 countries accounting for 80% of the potential new capacity.

