

# SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

## FUNDING

### WHO crisis fund

The director-general of the World Health Organization, Margaret Chan, outlined plans for a US\$100-million fund on 18 May to help the agency to respond to global health emergencies. The fund, announced at the annual World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, will be filled by voluntary donations. The measure is one of many that WHO member states are discussing in light of what the agency has acknowledged were shortcomings in its response to the Ebola outbreak (Y.-A. de Montjoye *et al. Sci. Rep.* 3, 1376; 2013).

### Australian grant cut

Australia's government will remove Aus\$263 million (US\$211 million) from university grants over the next three years to keep key national research facilities running, according to its 12 May budget. The cash is to save the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), which employs 1,700 staff across 27 facilities, many of which faced closure earlier this year. Researchers persuaded the government to provide Aus\$300 million to save the NCRIS, but the budget now shows that this money will mostly be

## NUMBER CRUNCH

# 5,154

The record-breaking number of authors on a single paper, published in *Physical Review Letters* on 14 May.

*Phys. Rev. Lett.* 114, 191803 (2015)



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## Polar Code to curb pollution from vessels

Ships plying Arctic and Antarctic waters face specific environmental regulations for the first time, after the International Maritime Organization agreed rules to combat polar pollution on 15 May. The environmental provisions are designed to prevent pollution

from oil, sewage and rubbish from vessels, and will begin coming into force in 2017. The rules are an addition to the 'Polar Code', which was adopted in 2014 as the first set of standards specifically regulating polar shipping (see [go.nature.com/xhsanz](http://go.nature.com/xhsanz)).

diverted from university grants. Overall, researchers have grudgingly accepted the science budget, which is flat relative to last year's, as a reprieve after years of funding cuts. See [go.nature.com/h62vub](http://go.nature.com/h62vub) for more.

### Antibiotic fund

Drug companies should be offered lump-sum payments as a reward for developing new antibiotics in the face of growing drug resistance, according to a review commissioned by the UK government. The review, led by economist Jim O'Neill, says that companies would get an immediate return on their investment, rather than waiting years for an antibiotic to become widely used — which often happens near the end of

its patent. A global incentive system could cost as little as US\$16 billion over 10 years. O'Neill's team also proposes a global fund of \$2 billion for basic research on antibiotic development.

## BUSINESS

### Drugs super-spend

The number of people in the United States who spend more than US\$100,000 a year on medicines tripled to 139,000 last year, compared with 2013. The figure was published on 13 May in a report by Express Scripts, a prescription-management service headquartered in St Louis, Missouri. Hepatitis C drugs, cancer treatments and specially mixed formulas called 'compounded' medicines were

the main drivers of the rise. More than 500,000 people spent at least \$50,000 on drugs in 2014, compared with 352,000 in 2013 — a 63% rise. Prescriptions cost Americans \$374 billion in 2014. The rise in spending was the largest in a decade.

### Science spin-offs

The University of Oxford, UK, is raising a £300-million (US\$470-million) fund to commercialize ideas from its science departments, it announced on 14 May. The money, towards which high-profile investors have already committed £210 million, will be channelled through Oxford Sciences Innovation, a company that will provide both capital and advice for the university's spin-off

companies. Oxford vice-chancellor Andrew Hamilton said that the venture would significantly expand the funding and commercial expertise available to the university's research teams.

## RESEARCH

**Peer-review log**

Researchers can now use their ORCID profiles to keep a record of their peer-review activities. ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID), a global non-profit organization that gives each researcher a unique 16-digit identifier and web page to log their scientific contributions, announced on 18 May a standardized format for recording peer reviews of manuscripts, grant applications and conference abstracts. Some publishers said that they would adopt the standard. See [go.nature.com/8pvt4y](http://go.nature.com/8pvt4y) for more.

**James Bond rodent**

A new rodent has been found on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. The animal (**pictured**) is one of just eight remaining species of hutia — guinea-pig-like rodents native to the Caribbean — and is named James Bond's hutia (*Plagiodontia aedium bondi*), not after the fictional spy, but after the US naturalist



who inspired Ian Fleming's creation. Bond identified a barrier between ecosystems in southern Haiti, known as Bond's Line, which marks the boundary between the latest hutia and its closest relatives. The team that discovered the species, led by Samuel Turvey at the Zoological Society of London, warns that it is already endangered.

**Summer bee losses**

Losses of honeybee colonies in the United States have increased substantially over the past year. They are now more than double the level generally considered sustainable. The rate of colony loss in winter 2014–15 was 23.1% — below the rolling 9-year average of 28.7% — but summer losses exceeded winter ones for the first time, reaching 27.4%. The overall loss for April 2014 to April 2015 was 42.1%. Beekeepers consider a loss rate of 18.7% per year economically

acceptable, according to the US Department of Agriculture, which conducted the survey with non-profit partners.

**El Niño to persist**

El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean are likely to persist throughout 2015, forecasting agencies have said. The gathering of warm waters in the east and central Pacific was first reported in March by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In its forecast on 14 May, NOAA estimated that there is a 90% chance that the El Niño will continue into the Northern Hemisphere summer, and an 80% chance that it will persist until the end of 2015. El Niño conditions have been linked to extreme weather around the globe.

## POLICY

**EU science panel**

The European Commission announced plans on 13 May to install a new scientific advice system to aid its policy decisions. The panel will replace the post of chief scientific adviser, which was created in 2012 but abolished in 2014 after it failed to match the complex needs of the commission. The commission will now recruit a high-level group of seven internationally renowned researchers, and

## COMING UP

24–28 MAY

Planetary and Earth scientists meet in Chiba for this year's meeting of the Japan Geoscience Union.

[go.nature.com/wg4j73](http://go.nature.com/wg4j73)

draw on scientific expertise in national academies and other learned bodies in European Union member states. The system will be operational by the autumn, the commission says. See [go.nature.com/vlm19i](http://go.nature.com/vlm19i) for more.

**Non-GM food stamp**

US regulators plan to offer a 'non-GM' certification service to verify food manufacturers' claims that products are free of genetically modified (GM) ingredients. The programme was described by agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack in a letter to US Department of Agriculture (USDA) employees, but has not been publicly announced. The USDA already verifies other food-marketing claims for a fee, and Vilsack noted that companies have expressed interest in obtaining the non-GM verification.

## EVENTS

**Genome standard**

The US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has created the first reference standard for validating DNA tests. On 14 May, NIST announced that it will sell tubes containing 10 micrograms of the reference genome — that of a woman with European ancestry — for US\$450 each. The material is intended for laboratories and companies to ensure the accuracy of their genetic-sequencing tests for diseases or personalized treatments.

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## TREND WATCH

The world has made huge progress in some of the health-related goals set by the United Nations in 1990, said a report from the World Health Organization on 13 May. Although the 194 member states have together slashed child mortality by half, the world will not meet the Millennium Development Goal of cutting it by two-thirds by the end of this year. Much of the fall is from reducing deaths caused by pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases, measles and malaria.

**CHILD DEATHS FALL**

Under-five mortality has halved since 1990, but the reduction remains far from the United Nations target of two-thirds.

