nature

on 6 and 9 August 1945, a new international treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons was on the table (this is set to become international law in January 2021). The treaty's architects, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, urged more scientists to play a part in helping it to succeed – a call that *Nature* supported.

September: postdocs in crisis

Nature's first-ever survey of postdocs showed the extent to which the pandemic is hurting science's workforce. Half of the 7,670 respondents – a self-selecting sample, based mostly in Europe and North America, and covering 19 disciplines – revealed that they were considering leaving academic research because of work-related mental-health concerns. Funders responded to coronavirus-related laboratory shutdowns by extending research-project deadlines, but there were few offers of extra funding. *Nature* called for postdocs to be funded throughout their deadline extensions, because many have no other source of income.

October: it has to be Biden

"We cannot stand by and let science be undermined. Joe Biden's trust in truth, evidence, science and democracy make him the only choice in the US election." So began *Nature*'s editorial less than three weeks before the presidential election of 3 November. We, along with colleagues across science and research publishing, endorsed Biden. Since the election, we have urged the incoming administration to follow through on Biden's promises to restore science and evidence to policymaking.

November: the ethics of facial recognition

Nature reported, in a series of Features, the increasing concerns of researchers working in the field of facial-recognition technology about how the technology is being used, for example by governments and law-enforcement agencies. Some, as our editorial highlighted, are rightly joining campaigners in calling for greater regulation and transparency, as well as for communities that are being monitored by cameras to be consulted – and for use of the technology to be suspended until lawmakers have reconsidered where and how it should be used.

December: vaccines are coming

COVID-19 vaccine roll-outs have begun, but global coordination is still lacking, with countries conducting approvals according to different criteria, and with the wealthiest procuring the majority of early orders. *Nature* revived the long-standing question of how the harmonization of vaccine regulation might be accelerated. A review of the regulatory landscape established that, across 24 countries, there are at least 51 pathways to various types of accelerated vaccine approval[3]. One year after the first known case of coronavirus, this pandemic, which has killed more than 1.7 million people, could, we hope, be coming to an end.

1. Zhou, P. *et al. Nature* **579**, 270–273 (2020).
2. Wu, F. *et al. Nature* **579**, 265–269 (2020).
3. Simpson, S., Chakrabarti, A., Robinson, D., Chirgwin, K. & Lumpkin, M. *npj Vaccines* **5**, 101 (2020).

The idea that science is teamwork is especially true this year."

Nature's 10: the human stories behind a year in science

Ten profiles illustrate an unforgettable year that propelled research teams to the front of the world's stage.

Nature's 10 is our annual list of ten people who helped to shape science in a given year. They might have been involved in making noteworthy discoveries, brought attention to crucial issues or gained notoriety for controversial actions. It is explicitly not an award or a ranking. Instead, it's a way to highlight key events in the world of science through the compelling, human stories of those involved.

Most of the stories we feature in this extraordinary year have a connection to the pandemic that has already killed more than 1.5 million people and continues to grow.

The people in *Nature*'s 10 raced to identify the rapidly spreading coronavirus; warned of its dangers; and developed the first vaccines in record time. Beyond the pandemic, researchers continued to make progress studying Earth's precarious climate. They also worked to combat racism and battled against other diseases that exact large tolls, especially in countries with limited resources.

Some might argue that picking one individual involved in a major advance fails to give due credit to the others who had valuable roles in that same work, especially today, when almost all research is done by collaborative teams. Picking a big name in a field can also risk seeming to elevate the influential over those with less power.

We are aware that this list risks being seen as exclusive or creating the wrong perception that these individuals are the most important people in science. So we have worked hard to address these potential concerns.

This year's *Nature*'s 10 includes a range of people from around the world. Some hail from countries that are too often overlooked by the global media. Some are at relatively early stages in their careers. And the stories highlight the contributions of many researchers, emphasizing that no advance is the work of one person.

That science is teamwork is especially clear this year. The pandemic has touched every person on the planet. And many researchers have joined the effort to combat the threat, sometimes forging new collaborations and exploring fields far from their normal work.

By telling the stories of individuals in *Nature*'s 10, we are simultaneously chronicling the collective efforts of scientists around the globe as they continue on their journey of discovery, invention and innovation.