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## Biomedicine to sell itself as a local hero

Lobbyists for biomedical science are changing tactics in an attempt to reverse what they see as a worrying decline in funding. As well as talking generally about the benefits of biomedical research, they plan to tailor their arguments to local economic issues, close to lawmakers' hearts.

In his 6 February budget request, President George W. Bush asked Congress to keep funding flat for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2007. This would mark the fourth consecutive year that NIH funding has not kept pace with inflation, and advocates are worried. "We're going to have to change the way we've done things in the past," says Jon Retzlaff, director of legislative relations for the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB).

Lobbyists say they aim to dispel the notion that the NIH should be satisfied with the fact that its budget was doubled between 1999 and 2003. They claim that, because of inflation, the agency now has 10% less purchasing power than in 2003, and is on track to issue 3,000 fewer grants in 2007 than in 2003. They also argue that the budget doubling spurred many young people to enter biomedical science. The erosion of that money is leaving these new researchers out in the cold.

"We're eating our seed corn," says FASEB president Bruce Bistran, a molecular biologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts. "We could lose a generation of researchers, or at least several years' worth."

So advocacy groups are going local, by showing lawmakers how NIH funding has benefited their states and home districts. Retzlaff says that FASEB will start with districts served by members of the powerful House budget committee, chaired by Republican Jim Nussle of Iowa. And the Association of American Medical Colleges will emphasize that the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center is the largest private employer in western Pennsylvania.

"There are a lot of places around the country that would like to emulate Pittsburgh," says Dave Moore of the association's office of government relations. "It's important for us to talk about the role the NIH plays as a driver for local economies."

Erika Check

The lack of communication extended even to projects that were being axed. For example, the California Institute of Technology's Fiona Harrison had an Explorer mission that was about to enter its development phase after two years of work. But in what Beichman calls an "egregious breakdown of the process", she learned during the press conference that her NuSTAR X-ray astronomy

satellite had actually been cancelled.

Harrison estimates that about 200 scientists are planning to send petitions or protest letters to NASA. Craig Wheeler, president-elect of the American Astronomical Society, says the society will argue that NASA's science projects should share in the generous increases granted to other research agencies for 2007.

But many space scientists are still just trying

to figure out what it all means — and they believe the draconian cuts won't even fix NASA's larger budget problems. Gregory Junemann is president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, NASA's largest union. "Devouring everything else at the agency, while holding out for some future financial miracle, is irresponsible," he says

Tony Reichardt

Y.-J. AHN/AP

**Happier times: close ties between Gerald Schatten (right) and Woo Suk Hwang raised the profile of the South Korean's cloning team.**



stem-cell programme at the Burnham Institute in La Jolla, California. "Ultimately a collaboration comes down to trust."

Arnold Kriegstein, who directs stem-cell work at the University of California at San Francisco, agrees, but says he is disappointed that

Schatten, as "the first line of defence" against fraud, did not spot problems earlier. "It's hard not to think of Schatten as partly a victim, but on the other hand we were all let down by the lack of careful scrutiny."

However, George Annas, a

bioethics professor at Boston University School of Public Health in Massachusetts, is deeply disappointed by the report, which he calls "pathetic". Signing off a cover letter claiming all the authors approved of the manuscript was clearly wrong, he says. He feels that the race to clear high-profile research hurdles will always bring the temptation to cut corners, and that the report is too easy on Schatten: "The university is basically saying, we will treat you pretty good if you get caught."

Donald Kennedy, editor-in-chief of *Science*, is also uneasy. "The report raises questions," he says. "Nobody I know knows what

'research misbehaviour' is." He adds that *Science's* own review will look further into the legitimacy of Schatten's senior authorship on the 2005 paper. "I thought that he had been over there [to Hwang's lab], and that he was involved with experimental strategies," he says.

Schatten has kept out of the public eye since his break with Hwang in November last year. Like Schatten, officials at the University of Pittsburgh have declined to be interviewed. The full report has been submitted to the dean of Pittsburgh's medical school, Arthur Levine, who will decide whether Schatten should face disciplinary action.

Emma Marris and Erika Check