

Monkey shortage causes delays for medical researchers

Washington Life-saving research is being slowed by a shortage of lab primates, according to a global audit in the current issue of the *American Journal of Primatology* (63, 225–237; 2004).

Hans-Erik Carlsson from Uppsala University in Sweden and his colleagues looked at nearly 3,000 papers published in 2001, which together used more than 41,000 animals. But the team reports that many experiments require a specific type of primate, which can often be in short supply. This can delay research and means that some animals are repeatedly used for different experiments. This in turn can affect the outcome of some studies, say the authors.



Primate number: a lack of monkeys means that some will be used in several experiments.

More disturbingly, 86% of the studies did not disclose the history of their primate subjects, making it difficult to repeat the experiments or assess the results. “The re-use of animals is a danger in any experiment,” says William Morton, director of the Washington National Primate Research Center in Seattle. “I think that, more and more, the scientific literature will include the characteristics and history of the particular animal.”

Carlsson says that journal editors may delete information about primate histories even when authors include it, considering it extraneous.

Anthropologist turns heads with mystery dates

Munich A German anthropologist is facing accusations of misconduct from the University of Frankfurt, after concerns came to light about his research and apparent attempts to sell university property.

According to the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Reiner Protsch von Zieten carbon-dated several human skulls from Germany and found them to be up to 30,000 years old. Other labs date the bones at just 7,000–8,000 years old. Protsch von Zieten’s

Cash injection helps China line up HIV drugs

Tokyo As queues grow in China for access to drugs to fight HIV (see right), the country’s clinics received a US\$32-million boost on 19 August with a grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The money will be administered over two years by the China Comprehensive AIDS Response (China CARES), a community-based network of clinics created by the government last year. The cash should initiate a five-year US\$165-million programme, co-funded by China and the Global Fund, to combat HIV.

The project aims to make antiretroviral medicines more readily available. Of an estimated



840,000 HIV patients in China, only about 3,000 currently have access to the drugs. The project aims to raise this to 40,000 over five years. The government has also licensed two Chinese companies to make generic antiretrovirals, which should lower the cost of the drugs.

results have been used to back controversial hypotheses on prehistoric population movements in central Europe. It is unclear how Protsch von Zieten managed to get such radically different results; the university says that he stands by his findings.

Protsch von Zieten was suspended from the university in April, after allegedly attempting to sell more than 200 institute-owned ape skulls to collectors in the United States. According to the university, Protsch von Zieten says he owns the skulls himself. Legal proceedings in this case are pending.

Nature was unable to reach Protsch von Zieten for comment.

Parents upset by mass removal of child organs

London A long-running furor regarding the removal of organs from deceased children without parental consent has heated up in Ireland.

In the past few weeks, several Irish hospitals have revealed that they supplied pituitary glands to pharmaceutical companies in the 1980s. Some have confirmed that, in accordance with their practices at the time, consent was not sought for this. The companies often paid a small fee for the organs and used them as a source of human growth hormone — a product that is now made synthetically.

Novo Nordisk, a Danish-based company, said last week that it received some 7,500 pituitary glands from 32 Irish hospitals in the 1980s. Protest groups say this adds to the need for further investigation.

The Irish group Parents for Justice, which represents parents of the deceased children, claims to have evidence that these revelations are just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the deceased children “had almost every organ in their body removed”, claims the group’s chairwoman, Fionnuala O’Reilly.

An inquiry into the matter, set up by the government in 2002, is expected to report by the end of the year.

Biotech firms settle up over HapMap contract spat

San Diego Two biotechnology firms last week settled litigation that was casting a cloud over the International HapMap Project, a US\$120-million effort to identify how human genetic variation affects disease.

San Diego-based Illumina was accused last year of not fulfilling contractual obligations to Connecticut-based biotech giant Applera (see *Nature* 423, 470; 2003). The two companies were involved in a 1999 joint venture to develop a genetic analysis system. But after the agreement went sour, both developed competing technologies. Illumina’s system is now used for at least half of the HapMap project. Illumina has agreed to return \$8.5 million of \$10 million that Applera’s subsidiary company Applied Biosystems provided for the joint venture.

Correction

The 12 August 2004 News article ‘Victims hit out at university over handling of harassment cases’ (*Nature* 430, 711; 2004) included the following errors.

Officials at the University of Toronto did not ask Lorilyn Benoit inappropriate questions after she made accusations of sexual harassment. In addition, Benoit did not bring her harassment claim against the university. Nor did the university ask Benoit to sign a confidentiality clause. In both cases, Benoit alleges that the officials involved worked at a teaching hospital affiliated to the university but not under its control.

The investigation into Gwen Schwartz’s allegations was discontinued when she and the other parties started to mediate the settlement that they later reached. The University of Toronto has asked us to make clear that the mediator’s report stated: “although the facts remained significantly in dispute, the mediation was successful and all parties were able to reach a comprehensive, final and binding settlement, fully resolving all issues amongst them”.

Nature also wishes to state that Claude Cantin is employed by the teaching hospital, not the university.