Retractions trigger lawsuit over a damaged reputation

A legal battle has broken out over two retracted plant-biology papers.

In a lawsuit filed on 26 August, Meena Chandok of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, alleges that her former postdoctoral supervisor and co-author damaged her scientific reputation by retracting the papers without her consent. The papers appeared in 2003 and 2004 in *Cell* (M. R. Chandok *et al. Cell* 113, 469–482; 2003) and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (M. R. Chandok *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* 101, 8239–8244; 2004). They concerned nitric oxide, a chemical that is increasingly being recognized as a major signalling molecule.

Chandok's former supervisor, Daniel Klessig of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, made the retractions late last autumn together with his other co-authors, saying they were not able to replicate some of the key data. Press reports also state that Klessig and Chandok had disagreed over how long she would work in his laboratory. A date for the hearing has not been set.

S. CORVAJA/ESA

High hopes: CryoSat launched on 8 October, but fell into the Arctic Ocean shortly after.

Crashed polar satellite could fly again, says ESA

The European Space Agency (ESA) hopes to rebuild CryoSat, its crashed Earth observation mission. A new launch of the satellite, which would monitor changes in the thickness of the polar ice sheets, could take place by 2008.

CryoSat crashed into the Arctic Ocean shortly after launch atop a converted Russian missile on 8 October. It was intended to be the first project in ESA's Earth Explorer programme, a series of satellites designed to collect data on global environmental issues.

Building and launching a 'clone' of the crashed satellite could cost less than the €136 million (US$164 million) spent on the original mission, says Volker Liebig, director of ESA's Earth observation programmes. Whether a rebuilt satellite would use the same Russian launcher depends on the results of an inquiry into CryoSat's loss, he adds.

Radical moves proposed to help US keep its global edge

A report from the US National Academies recommends a slew of measures to ensure that the United States remains a leader in global research.

With scientific output from Asia booming, the agency wants the federal government to respond by spending an extra $10 billion a year on education and research. Suggested schemes include 10% annual funding increases in basic research in the physical sciences, engineering, maths and information sciences for the next seven years; a new agency for energy research; and a one-year visa extension for international researchers,

who would receive automatic work permits if they found a job.

The report, which was requested by Congress, lists many examples where the United States is falling behind other countries. In US schools, for example, only 41% of eighth-graders (13–14-year-olds) in 1999 had a maths teacher who had trained in maths, compared with an average of 71% internationally. Also, China produced more than 600,000 engineers last year, whereas the United States produced only 70,000.

www.nationalacademies.org

UK science panel targets evidence for policies

Britain's key parliamentary science committee looks set to adopt a different strategy under its new leader, Liberal Democrat Phil Willis.

Willis, who took over on 20 July, says he wants the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology to look harder at evidence used by the government when setting policy. The 11-strong panel will discuss possible topics next month, but Willis says he would like to investigate issues such as whether the government has followed evidence on matters such as mobile-phone safety.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Phil Willis has signalled a fresh course for the UK parliamentary science committee.

The committee has already pledged to study the technology that could be used to capture and store greenhouse-gas emissions from power stations.

Japan launches plans for supersonic jet travel

Japan took a small step towards developing a next-generation supersonic plane when an unmanned jet aircraft flew for 15 minutes at twice the speed of sound on 10 October over Woomera in Australia. The flight was powered by a rocket booster (see *Nature* 437, 14; 2005).

Engineers sighed with relief as "everything went as planned", says Keiichi Hirako, the experiment's leader at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). In a test three years ago, the plane separated from its rocket booster and crashed. JAXA aims to commercialize a supersonic jet capable of carrying 300 passengers by 2025.

C. ISON/EMPICS

Corrections

In the News story "Japan jumps towards personalized medicine" (*Nature* **437,** 796; 2005), the description of aminoglycosides, drugs that can cause ear damage in people with a certain genetic mutation, was wrongly attributed to the cancer drug irinotecan. Both are candidates for Japan's efforts to create personalized medicine as described in the article. *Nature* wishes to apologize for the confusion.

Contrary to a statement in the Editorial "Responding to uncertainty" (*Nature* **437,** 1; 2005), there is no evidence that lives have been lost as a result of the significant dip in take-up in Britain of the triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella.

Clarification

California-based Bio-Rad remains licensed to produce and sell thermal cycler products. The court injunction reported in "PCR spat broadens out" (*Nature* **437,** 317; 2005) applies only to the sale of the products of its subsidiary, MJ Research, within the United States.