Public repositories need serious funding

SIR — We support the suggestion made by Carlos Santos and colleagues in Correspondence (*Nature* **438**, 738; 2005) that data associated with peer-reviewed articles should be submitted to recognized, public repositories wherever possible.

We suggest that attaining this goal requires the support of national and international funding bodies that are willing both to implement data policies and to fund efforts to create community-driven standards and public repositories.

For funding bodies, supporting a data policy can be expensive. Current policy for the UK Natural Environment Research Council (NERC; www.nerc.ac.uk) states that all data generated by projects funded under the environmental-genomics programme and the post-genomics and proteomics programme must be submitted to a suitable public repository, when one is available. NERC puts approximately 12% of the funds from each of these programmes towards data management and training through the establishment of the NERC Environmental Bioinformatics Centre (http://nebc.nox.ac.uk), which facilitates 'omic' data management by developing data standards, software, databases, bioinformatics workstations and courses, and delivering these to the community, as well as hosting digital data for cases where suitable public repositories do not already exist.

We argue that putting the tools and facilities in place to enable good data management is an area worth investing in. As well as addressing the aims of integrated, long-term data storage and access, this investment would minimize duplication of effort, facilitate uptake and sharing of data and maximize the potential for comparative analyses.

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Public repositories: users reluctant to give materials

SIR — We welcome your call to debate whether journals should impose more stringent publication criteria for biological materials, notably cell lines ("Standards for papers on cloning" *Nature* **439**, 243; 2006). Our mission at the DSMZ cell repository, the German national resource centre for biological material (www.dsmz.de) is to provide investigators with authentic, well-characterized biological material. But it is all too often compromised by users' reluctance to make their own materials freely available. About 90% of researchers contacted since 1994 after claiming to have established newly published cell lines have refused or simply ignored our requests for material. Only one in 580 contacts indicated a preference to deposit cells with another facility, and a search of a large sample of cell lines currently held by other major repositories revealed none previously denied to the DSMZ.

Even among the minority depositing human tumour-cell lines at the DSMZ 29% provided identifiably false, cross-contaminated cell lines (CCCL). Although reliable detection of CCCL is limited to institutions such as ours that hold cell lines en masse and DNA-profile all accessions, this is almost certainly an underestimate of the true level. The systematic use of CCCL is likely to generate distorted data: accordingly, the Sanger Institute has highlighted instances of CCCL among the NCI-60 reference cell line panel used to identify tumour-specific gene expression (www.sanger.ac.uk/genetics/CGP/NCI60). But if new cell lines are not deposited, they cannot be authenticated.

Initial descriptive publication is the only effective stage at which sanctions might be applied. Journals such as *Nature* and *Science* should adopt rigorous criteria requiring deposition of new cell lines, and encourage specialist journals to follow suit. Publications using existing cell lines should identify where these came from. Funding bodies could also insist that cell lines established with their support be submitted to public repositories. And those in charge of large collections could do more to clarify the availability and authenticity of their cell lines.

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Diet's healthy blend of science and practicality

SIR — Your Editorial "A recipe for trouble" (*Nature* **438**, 1052; 2005) raises concerns with me of a disconcerting mindset around the 'preciousness' of science, which I sense exists in parts of the scientific community. The view that working with industry demeans the quality or integrity of science, or that using the media to translate scientific findings into uptake strategies is tainted by commercialism, is worrying. If we continue to give the perception that science is the stuff of ivory towers, not everyday life, then we will see ever greater reductions in research funding over the years to come.

By working in partnership with industry, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) created the Total Wellbeing diet, which can contribute to reducing obesity in Australia. This has been an outstanding success for the CSIRO, not because it is returning funds to the organization for further research, but because it represents a successful translation of research findings to the public in a way that can be understood and absorbed into everyday lives. Just as the CSIRO was pleased to have its name associated with the peer-reviewed publications associated with the diet, so it continues to support further communication of the work to the public through the diet book. It has not been manipulated either by the food industry or by the publisher.

Of course, human nutrition is complex, and a lively debate continues about the benefits of high-protein diets (see, for example, www.atkinsdietalert.org/advisory.html). But the book's high-protein, moderate-carbohydrate eating plan is based on peer-reviewed science within robust experimental frameworks and the term 'scientifically proven' is justified.

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What goes around comes around in drug discovery

SIR — We read with interest your Business story "Merck opts for shake-up to clear drug pipeline" (*Nature* **438**, 1076–1077; 2005), which concluded with the thought-provoking quote by an industry analyst: "Merck is good for the pharmaceutical industry. You can't make me-too drugs unless you have someone to copy."

We were drawn to this statement since your story focuses on Merck's anti-nausea drug Emend, without pointing out that Emend itself could be considered a drug based on incremental scientific advance. Merck scientists Malcolm MacCoss and Thomas Baillie, discussing the history of Emend (*Science* **303**, 1810–1813; 2004), trace its direct lineage to the publication of the discovery of non-peptidic substance P antagonists (R. Snider *et al. Science* **251**, 435–437; 1991).

Our view, as three of the co-authors of the 1991 paper, is that the world needs a healthy and innovative pharmaceutical industry and that, as such, we are all good for each other.

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Contributions to Correspondence may be submitted to corres@nature.com. They should be no longer than 500 words, and ideally shorter. They should be signed by no more than three authors; preferably by one. Published contributions are edited.