

Expand free journal project so poor countries can share their valuable climate data

SIR — I warmly approve your Editorial ‘Millennium development holes’ (*Nature* **446**, 347; 2007) about the lack of weather data from Africa and other developing countries. A further problem is that when measurements have been taken they are often not disseminated to interested organizations within their own country, let alone beyond it.

Both aspects became very apparent at the second international conference on coastal zones in sub-Saharan Africa held in Ghana in 2005 (see www.acops.org/CoZSSA/CoZSSA_conf_report_Jan06.pdf). Excellent data taken by Ghana’s meteorological service along the coast, showing steadily rising temperatures and declining rainfall over 20 years, are not widely known even at the African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development at Niamey in Niger. I found a similar situation in the West Indies. These local time series show the seriousness of the problem of climate change for these countries.

There is currently no financial or other incentive to share these data. African colleagues complain that, even if they send the data to international centres, they cannot benefit, as they do not receive current issues of the journals and bulletins where the results are published.

One way forward, which I have been pursuing by lobbying UK ministers and others, is to ensure that the latest publications of such literature are sent, at no cost, to the regional and national meteorological services that are providing data in developing countries. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation is already providing current literature to some agricultural centres in the world’s poorest countries, through its AGORA programme (www.aginternetwork.org/en). The OARE programme (www.oaresciences.org/en), launched last November, has similar arrangements for the environmental-science literature, including weather and climate journals — and more countries are being included in the programme next year.

These are suitable projects for extension to more countries, and for further donations from environmental and other charities. The media organizations that focus on ghoulis pictures of climatic devastation around the world might also contribute.

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AGORA, OARE or HINARI (www.who.int/hinari/en), which covers health. These provide information in a timely fashion to people who might not otherwise be able to obtain it or obtain it promptly — Editor, *Nature*.

Animal-welfare section in papers would be a burden

SIR — Victoria Buck in Correspondence (‘Who will start the 3Rs ball rolling for animal welfare?’ *Nature* **446**, 856; 2007) calls for journals to include an animal-welfare category in the methods section of papers describing research on live animals. I disagree.

We scientists have far too many things to do to add yet another bureaucratic burden to writing papers for no useful reason. I agree that sharing information about the way animals are treated and handled during experiments could be useful, but that can and should be done in another forum.

We pay expensive rates for our animal-care facilities and personnel, and are quite often stymied by the countless new rules and regulations, many of which serve no real useful purpose other than making us jump through more hoops. We are almost regulated to inaction.

It is time for scientists to stand up and say enough is enough, even if it bucks the trend, so we can get on with our work.

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Recognition could support a science code of conduct

SIR — Recent instances of scientifically unethical behaviour such as that of Woo Suk Hwang (see *Nature* **439**, 122–123; 2006) have put pressure on governments to take official measures. In Japan, for example, a data-falsification scandal shook the scientific community last year (see *Nature* **439**, 514; 2006). In response, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), together with the Science Council of Japan, has decided to implement a code of conduct for scientists to detect and punish unethical acts: see www.scj.go.jp/ja/info/kohyo/pdf/kohyo-20-s3e-1.pdf.

Like the Hippocratic oath for physicians, the application of such a code to all scientific disciplines would surely be beneficial. It would make young researchers aware of the necessity of adopting ethical behaviour in the conduct of their work and would provide

guidance on how to do so. Yet such misconduct must often stem from the ubiquitous pressure exerted on scientists to publish quickly and, if possible, in high-impact journals in order to have a career. The possibility of publishing a ground-breaking study depends on the quality and originality of the data. It can, therefore, become tempting to modify a few things here and there in a data set.

In this regard, adoption of a scientific code of conduct may not be enough. Efforts must be made in parallel to counteract the ‘publish or perish’ dogma. If there were a method for recognizing the value of a piece of work through the examination of its contribution to knowledge, rather than through the prestige of the journal in which it was published, this would be a good start.

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Ground-breaking stem-cell work has been reproduced

SIR — Your News Feature ‘The hard copy’¹ describes the difficulties some researchers have encountered in reproducing several ground-breaking, high-profile publications in the stem-cell field. Although your News Feature accurately summarizes our principal findings², the failure of a single group to reproduce our work could lead readers to believe this work has not been reproduced.

At least three independent groups have replicated the primary tenet of our paper, that neural tissue can transdifferentiate into haematopoietic cell types. Indeed, our results have been extended by showing that both human neural stem cells^{3,4} and rodent olfactory stem cells⁵ retain this capability. Transplantation into secondary recipients demonstrates that human neural stem-cell transdifferentiation can occur in a large animal model with long-term engraftment, similar to the finding in mice that we initially reported in our paper.

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Published contributions are edited.