

# SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

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## PEOPLE

### Stem-cell arrest

A US university scientist was arrested on 27 December, accused of supplying stem cells for use in unapproved therapies. The US Department of Justice says that Vincent Dammai, a researcher at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, supplied the stem cells to Global Laboratories in Scottsdale, Arizona, without the approval of his university or of the US Food and Drug Administration. Three other men are accused in the case, which may be the first in which a researcher has been charged with supplying stem-cell clinics. See [go.nature.com/vvxznh](http://go.nature.com/vvxznh) for more.



with wilful violation of health and safety standards. UCLA had already paid fines relating to the death of 23-year-old Sheharbano Sangji (pictured); the latest charges are thought to be the first instance of criminal prosecution over an accident in a US academic lab. See [go.nature.com/cvxyii](http://go.nature.com/cvxyii) for more.

## RESEARCH

### XMRV retractions

Two controversial papers reporting links between chronic fatigue syndrome and viruses have been retracted. Partially retracted last October, the first study to make the connection to the virus XMRV (V. C. Lombardi *et al. Science* 326, 585–589; 2009) was fully withdrawn on 22 December — unusually, without the full agreement of

the authors. This was followed, five days later, by the retraction of a paper that found links to related viruses (S.-C. Lo *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* 107, 15874–15879; 2010). See [go.nature.com/ixulai](http://go.nature.com/ixulai) for more.

### Neutrino test OK

Japan's T2K neutrino experiment is back online, nine months after the Tohoku quake forced it to close down. On 24 December, neutrinos were again generated by a proton accelerator in Tokai; the experiment sends the particles 295 kilometres to a detector in Kamioka. Researchers hope to confirm tentative observations of muon neutrinos changing into electron neutrinos (see [go.nature.com/ty8t3i](http://go.nature.com/ty8t3i)), and are discussing an upgrade that would allow T2K to test the claim that neutrinos can travel faster than light.

## POLICY

### Fukushima clean-up

It could take 40 years to clean up and decommission the three reactors that went into meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, Japan's government said on

## COMING UP

### 5–8 JANUARY

To celebrate the 70th birthday of Stephen Hawking on 8 January, theoretical physicists meet in Cambridge, UK, for a conference on 'The State of the Universe'. [go.nature.com/igptyq](http://go.nature.com/igptyq)

### 10 JANUARY

At the American Astronomical Society's meeting in Austin, Texas, the US National Science Foundation announces a new name for the Very Large Array radio telescopes in New Mexico. [go.nature.com/cobpfu](http://go.nature.com/cobpfu)

21 December. Under a newly approved clean-up plan, plant operators the Tokyo Electric Power Company will remove spent fuel rods in two to three years, try to repair building leaks over six years, and start removing melted fuel in ten years. The plan says that research is needed on what to do with the radioactive waste.

### Curbs on mercury

The US Environmental Protection Agency announced on 21 December that it had passed air-pollution regulations that will sharply curb emissions of mercury and other toxic chemicals from some 600 power plants across the country. The rules set limits on mercury emissions for the first time, requiring a 90% reduction from present levels at an estimated cost of US\$9.6 billion. See [go.nature.com/iasvgw](http://go.nature.com/iasvgw) for more.

## TREND WATCH

The drug TC-5214 once seemed set to become the first of a new class of therapies that aim to treat depression by targeting neuronal nicotinic receptors. But it has now failed two phase III clinical trials, with the latest negative result announced on 20 December by co-developers Targacept, based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and AstraZeneca in London. Two additional clinical trials of TC-5214 against depression are ongoing, but the drug has lost the support of investors (see chart).

### DEPRESSION DRUG DECLINE

Targacept's share price fell again in late 2011 after its promising antidepressant TC-5214 failed a second late-phase clinical trial.



SOURCE: NASDAQ