for this research, the committee gained the power to approve or reject proposed experiments in humans. As the field has grown, so has the number of experiments that must be given the green light by the RAC, including those that fall under the umbrella of gene therapy.

The problem, as gene therapists see it, is that many other parallel regulatory hurdles have been erected in the meantime. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve clinical trials of gene therapy in humans. And institutions have their own biosafety committees and institutional review boards.

Naturally, the RAC disagrees from time to time with the findings of the other scrutineers. When it does, the delays can drag on.

Enough, said the American Society of Gene and Cell Therapy last March. It told the NIH that in recent decades, more than 1,000 gene-therapy clinical trials have been conducted. The worst fears of the public — that gene therapy would lead to alterations of the human genome, or to the release of genetically modified super microbes — have not come to pass. The society told the NIH that the RAC should no longer review individual gene-therapy protocols, and should instead "identify new areas of research that require a public forum for discussion and review".

The gene-therapy field is not free from the risk of adverse events, but the RAC has never claimed to be able to prevent them. Instead, it has had a crucial role in helping the field to learn from setbacks.

After the death of US teenager Jesse Gelsinger in a gene-therapy trial in 1999, for instance, the RAC adopted rules that compel investigators to report all serious adverse events that occur during gene-therapy trials. When children who had been cured of severe combined immunodeficiency by gene therapy developed leukaemia in 2001, the RAC investigated how gene therapy might have contributed to the problem and recommended action to stop it recurring.

Researchers feel strongly that RAC review of individual protocols no longer serves an important purpose, and they resent being at the mercy of the committee's ability to call them out on questions that they often perceive as tangential to their research. Yet it is a tricky time to argue that any public-review process in medical research should be scaled back. Witness the storm of public outrage in the past decade over pharmaceutical companies' failure to report side effects of drugs for conditions from diabetes to depression (see *Nature* **431,** 122–124; 2004). Long after these drugs were approved, it was revealed that their sponsors had held back crucial information about their safety.

"It is a tricky time to argue that any public-review process in medical research should be scaled back."

Gene-therapy clinical trials have proceeded with an unusually high degree of openness, and that has been crucial in helping the field to gain public confidence and acceptance. Such a role should be emulated in other areas of research, rather than eliminated. Apart from the RAC review, none of the oversight required for gene therapy is public. FDA review includes public meetings, but the formal review process allows investigators to keep many of their data secret.

The question is how to preserve the openness that the RAC has enabled without bogging down progress. Perhaps now is the right time to scale back the RAC's purview, but it will be imperative to do so while maintaining the committee's moral authority. That position may feel burdensome, but without it, the field could not have got to where it is today. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

Nature papers enhanced

As the requirements for data presentation in research papers have grown, *Nature*'s space limitations have remained tight, so more and more essential displayed information has been relegated inappropriately to our Supplementary Information sections. Hard on the heels of our relaxation of constraints on our online Methods sections (see *Nature* **496,** 398; 2013), we are now significantly increasing the number of figures integral to the paper in its online and PDF versions. From July, *Nature* will introduce a new component to its research papers. This new category, called Extended Data (see go.nature.com/tp4vu3), will provide the online reader with immediate access to many display items (figures and tables) previously buried in the Supplementary Information PDF. From now on, most papers submitted to *Nature* can take advantage of this enhancement.

Extended Data display items will be referred to in the print version of the paper, but will be available only online (as is also the case with our full Methods sections). Individual Extended Data display items will be easily accessible by clicking on a call-out in the HTML version of the paper, generating a pop-up box containing the display item and its accompanying legend. Furthermore, the Extended Data display items will be appended to the end of the online PDF, so that the print paper, full Methods section and Extended Data section will be available in one document (see go.nature.com/gb5p6r for a breakdown of the composition of a *Nature* research paper).

Extended Data will not normally contain more than ten individual display items (figures and tables) in addition to the limits set for the printed version of the paper (typically four and five display items for Letters and Articles, respectively). Authors are encouraged to combine appropriate Extended Data figures into multi-panelled figures in order to meet this limit. Each display item should fit onto one page, ideally with its legend or footnote directly below.

The Extended Data display items will be peer reviewed but, like current Supplementary Information, will not be edited in-house. At final submission the Extended Data display items should be generated at the same quality as the figures for the print paper, although there will be differences in formatting (see go.nature.com/zmitgz for a full formatting guide).

Extended Data display items can be used to present essential information relating to the Methods section.

The Supplementary Information section will remain as part of the online-only content, comprising material directly relevant to the conclusion of a paper that cannot be included in the printed version for reasons of space or medium (for example, video clips or sound files). However, this section should no longer contain figures or tables unless there is an exceptional justification (for example, if information is best presented in an Excel file).

From the beginning of July, editors will ask authors who have been invited to revise their papers after the first round of peer review to reformat their papers for consistency with Extended Data. In addition, editors will identify papers at later stages in the editorial process (up to and including the final revision) that might be easily reformatted to include Extended Data display items, and invite authors to revise their papers accordingly. Eventually, all new submissions to *Nature* will be required to comply with this formatting of research papers. The result will be a higher standard of data presentation within the online-only versions of the paper, which will be to the benefit of our readers. ■