

POLICY

Baby-blood law

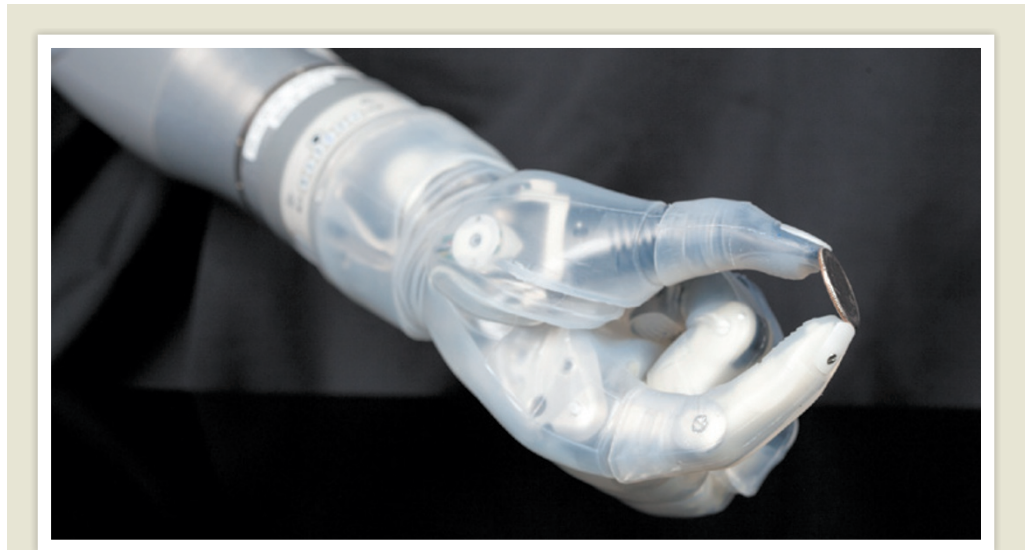
Minnesota will once again allow blood spots collected from newborns to be kept and used for research, unless parents opt out. On 6 May, state governor Mark Dayton signed the controversial bill into law, reversing a 2011 ruling by the state's Supreme Court, which said that the practice violated state laws that require written, informed consent for the collection and storage of genetic information. The 2011 ruling allowed most blood spots to be stored for only 71 days to allow time for routine disease screening, and the state was forced to destroy more than 1 million samples. See go.nature.com/5ckmbm for more.

Stanford axes coal

Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, will no longer invest in coal-mining companies from its US\$18.7-billion endowment fund, it announced on 6 May. The move follows the recommendation of the university's advisory panel of students, staff and alumni, which reviewed the social and environmental implications of investing in fossil fuels. Stanford is the largest of a number of US universities that have elected to remove fossil-fuel stock from their investments. The university said that the value of its investments in coal mining was "small".

GM labels

On 8 May, Vermont became the first US state to mandate labelling of food containing genetically modified ingredients by July 2016. Representatives of the food and biotechnology industries condemned the law, and the US Grocery Manufacturers



DARPA

FDA approves high-tech prosthetic arm

US regulators have approved the first prosthetic arm that can perform complex movements by picking up on electrical signals sent to muscles by the brain. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Silver Spring, Maryland, gave the DEKA Arm System (pictured) the green light on 9 May. The device uses electrodes to detect electrical

activity caused by muscle contraction near the prosthesis. The arm enables some amputees to perform more-complex activities, such as using keys and locks and preparing food, than are possible with current prosthetic technology. The system was a test case for a fast-track FDA programme announced in 2011 to speed up approvals for medical technologies.

Association in Washington DC pledged to challenge it in the federal court. Vermont's attorney general said that he is prepared to launch a vigorous defence. More than 60 countries require labelling of genetically modified foods.

RESEARCH

Misconduct verdict

Haruko Obokata, a stem-cell scientist at Japan's RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology in Kobe, who was charged with research misconduct, has lost her appeal to have her case reviewed. The RIKEN institute confirmed on 8 May that it has advised Obokata to retract two papers she published in *Nature* describing a new method to reprogram cells

to an embryonic state. On 7 May, an investigation committee advised RIKEN to deny Obokata's appeal. See go.nature.com/rttlvk for more.

Animal wrongs

An alliance of ten leading German research organizations has spoken out against animal-rights activists who are targeting neuroscientist Andreas Kreiter at the University of Bremen. Kreiter conducts research on monkeys. On 7 May, the alliance said it "expressly and decisively condemns" an advertising campaign that personally attacks Kreiter and that suggests he, and other animal experimenters, should not be thought of as human. See page 259 and go.nature.com/lzphx5 for more.

Open doors

Scientists who work with animals in the United Kingdom have pledged to be less guarded about their activities. On 14 May, 72 organizations including universities, charities, drug companies and government funders released a 'concordat' committing to more openness than in the past. On 1 May, the UK government proposed jettisoning a rule that has prevented it from releasing much of the information it holds on animal research (see go.nature.com/zijvk2).

US climate changes

Climate change is already affecting the United States, warns a 6 May report from the nation's government. The country's third national

PHOTOSHOT

assessment of climate change impacts says that rising greenhouse-gas emissions have made US summers longer and winters shorter, and have upped the risk of extreme weather events. John Holdren, President Barack Obama's chief science adviser, called for "urgent action to combat the threats to Americans from climate change". See go.nature.com/frmuuz for more.

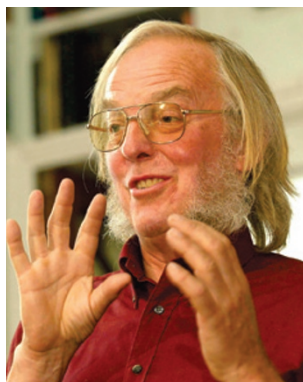
Biosafety law

The German government should bring in a new law to regulate potentially dangerous bioscience research, advised a national ethics council in a report released on 7 May. Such dual-use research, which includes studies on lethal pathogens and toxins, should be subject to approval by a federal, interdisciplinary commission of experts, the council said. The report also recommended that German universities and research organizations should set up a national code of conduct. The German government commissioned the report two years ago.

PEOPLE

Beagle 2 leader dies

British planetary scientist Colin Pillinger (pictured), best known for his role as lead scientist on the Beagle 2 mission to Mars, died on



7 May, aged 70. Beagle 2 lost touch with Earth after reaching the red planet on Christmas Day 2003, but the mission propelled Pillinger into the limelight and he quickly became an ambassador for UK space science. He started his career studying Apollo-mission lunar samples at NASA, then worked at the University of Cambridge, UK, before moving to Britain's Open University in Milton Keynes, where he spent 35 years.

NOAA chief

Oceanographer Richard Spinrad is the new chief scientist at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Spinrad, appointed by President Barack Obama on 8 May, is the first person to hold the job since 1996. Congress blocked Obama's first attempt to revive the chief

scientist slot in 2010. Spinrad is no stranger to NOAA: from 2005 to 2010 he served as an associate administrator there overseeing oceanic and atmospheric research.

FACILITIES

European lasers

A third facility in eastern Europe's Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI), a network that will allow scientists worldwide to probe the frontiers of laser science, received a funding green light on 8 May. The European Commission approved €111 million (US\$153 million) from the European Regional Development Fund so that Hungary can build the ELI Attosecond Light Pulse Source near the University of Szeged. The fund, designed to help poor regions to improve their infrastructures, has already paid for the ELI's two other pillars — the ELI Nuclear Physics facility near Bucharest and the ELI Beamlines facility near Prague.

Lost at sea

An US\$8-million deep-sea-research craft belonging to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts has been wrecked at sea. The unmanned vehicle Nereus was lost 9,990 metres under water

COMING UP

13–16 MAY

The United Nations holds its first meeting to address the problem of lethal autonomous weapons systems, or 'killer robots', in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting will include a debate between leading robotics experts.

go.nature.com/lugvpj

22–25 MAY

Elections for the European parliament take place. Science issues that may play a part include support for stem-cell research and genetically modified crops.

go.nature.com/lahzaj

while exploring the Kermadec Trench off New Zealand on 10 May. Crew members from the ship *Thomas G. Thompson*, who were operating Nereus, later recovered debris from the sea surface. The submersible seems to have imploded, the institute said in a statement. See go.nature.com/qiwrmd for more.

BUSINESS

Pharma exchange

US pharmaceutical company Merck announced on 6 May that it is selling its consumer care business, which includes over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, to Germany's Bayer for US\$14.2 billion. Merck will also pay Bayer at least \$1 billion to share in the development, marketing and profits of a class of cardiovascular drugs called soluble guanylate cyclase inhibitors. Bayer is developing the drugs to treat heart failure and some forms of pulmonary hypertension.

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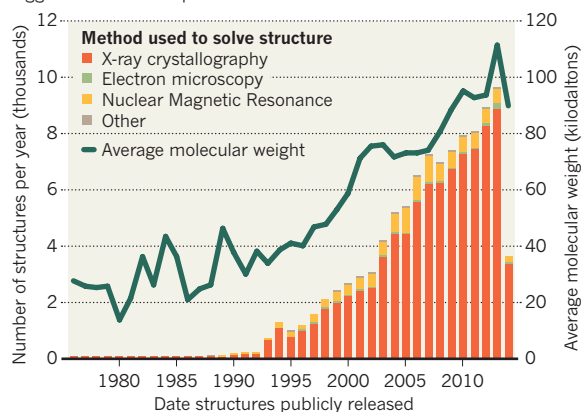
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

A digital compendium of proteins and other biomolecules has surpassed 100,000 entries, with the release of 219 new structures on 14 May. The Protein Data Bank (PDB) was started in 1971 to store three-dimensional structural data down to the atomic level. Then and now, scientists mapped most proteins using X-ray crystallography, but they are increasingly using other tools, such as nuclear magnetic resonance and electron microscopy. See also page 260.

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND PROTEIN STRUCTURES

Biomolecular structures stored in the Protein Data Bank are getting bigger and more complex.



SOURCE: PDBE