Fourth quarter lag in biotech hiring

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Tougher times returned for the fourth quarter of 2009, as the slight hiring increase seen in the previous quarter at the 25 largest biotech and 10 largest pharma companies (*Nat. Biotechnol.* 27, 1056, 2009) did not hold, according to three representative job databases (Tables 1 and 2). Big biotech and pharma companies across the board posted fewer job listings with the exception of Bayer (Leverkusen, Germany), whose US job listings jumped from 4 to 78 on Monster.com.

The landscape for existing jobs is mixed as well, with Seattle-based biotech VLST reportedly reducing its workforce by 30% as part of a restructuring. Contract research organization Charles River Laboratories (Wilmington, MA, USA) is cutting 300 jobs and plans to suspend operations at a preclinical services facility by the middle of 2010, after the completion of ongoing projects.

On the pharma side, Pfizer has informed New Jersey officials of its plans to lay off 400 employees at Wyeth's old research center, as part of its acquisition. In addition, Merck will eliminate 500 jobs—mostly sales and administrative positions—in conjunction with its takeover of Schering-Plough. The company, however, plans to safeguard 500 jobs as part of its acquisition of Avecia (Billingham, UK). Merck will acquire all of Avecia's assets, including all process development and scale-up, manufacturing, quality and business support operations. And Lonza Group of Basel, Switzerland, a large supplier of active pharmaceuticals ingredients, is closing three of its manufacturing sites in 2010. One hundred and seventy-five jobs are expected

to be lost. The sites are located in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, Shawinigan, Canada and Wokingham, UK. "The economic pressures of the past 18 months have clearly accelerated the cost reduction efforts of the pharmaceutical industry," according to Lonza's press release. Adds Lonza CEO Stefan Borgas, "The closure of the three sites will help to optimize our global operational network and further increase the competitiveness for our customers." The company says it will increase its platform in Asia.

In a sign of confidence of biotech's role in growing the economy, the governor of the state of Missouri embraced a proposal to "direct tens of millions of tax dollars to Missouri's biotechnology industry," according to the Associated Press. The plan would divert an annual portion of the new tax revenues generated by biotech companies to a special state fund, from which incentives could be given to new or expanding entrepreneurs in the same field, perhaps in the form of aid to startups, providing infrastructure to lure existing out-of-state firms and subsidizing college-based training for the employees of biotech companies. The move is expected to result in a sizable number of biotech jobs. Missouri already is home to some top university and private-sector researchers in the life sciences. But economic development officials say Missouri is lagging when it comes to converting that research into commercial ventures.

Nature Biotechnology will continue follow hiring and firing trends throughout 2010.

Table 1 Who's hiring? Advertised openings at the 25 largest biotech companies

Company ^a	Number of employees	Number of advertised openings ^b		
		Monster	Biospace	Naturejobs
Monsanto	21,700	0	0	112
Amgen	16,800	35	45	2
Genentech	11,186	11	22	73
Genzyme	11,000	54	0	105
Life Technologies	9,700	33	23	1
PerkinElmer	7,900	16	0	0
Bio-Rad Laboratories	6,600	5	10	0
Biomerieux	6,140	2	0	0
Millipore	5,900	4	22	0
IDEXX Laboratories	4,700	11	1	0
Biogen Idec	4,700	35	28	0
Gilead Sciences	3,441	2	12	0
WuXi PharmaTech	3,172	0	0	0
Qiagen	3,041	0	0	0
Cephalon	2,780	0	0	0
Biocon	2,772	0	0	0
Celgene	2,441	11	2	0
Biotest	2,108	7	5	0
Actelion	2,054	1	2	0
Amylin Pharmaceuticals	1,800	21	8	0
Elan	1,687	5	1	0
Illumina	1,536	26	0	10
Albany Molecular Research	1,357	0	0	0
Vertex Pharmaceuticals	1,322	19	33	4
CK Life Sciences	1,315	0	0	0

^aAs defined in *Nature Biotechnology's* survey of public companies (27, 710–721, 2009). ^bAs searched on Monster.com, Biospace.com and Naturejobs.com, January 10, 2010. Jobs may overlap.

Table 2 Advertised job openings at the ten largest pharma companies

Company ^a	Number of employees	Number of advertised openings ^b		
		Monster	Biospace	Naturejobs
Johnson & Johnson	119,200	203	1	0
Bayer	106,200	78	30	1
GlaxoSmithKline	103,483	1	3	4
Sanofi-Aventis	99,495	0	0	0
Novartis	98,200	3	30	60
Pfizer	86,600	39	33	8
Roche	78,604	8	17	4
Abbott Laboratories	68,697	30	0	0
AstraZeneca	67,400	18	7	5
Merck & Co.	59,800	0	0	0

^aData obtained from *MedAdNews*. ^bAs searched on Monster.com, Biospace.com and Naturejobs.com, January 10, 2009. Jobs may overlap.

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