PJect buys Celltech vax

Last month, the vaccines business that once belonged to Rhône-Poulenc came to reside with PowderJect Pharmaceuticals (Oxford, UK) through a circuitous path. Rhône-Poulenc sold the vaccine business to a UK pharmaceuticals outfit called Evans Medical. Because Evans Medical's in-licensed drugs failed to sparkle in the market, the company changed its name to Medeva. As Medeva, it built a profitable if unexciting portfolio of products, and was subsequently acquired by Celltech at the beginning of this year. Celltech didn't really want the vaccines business and has now agreed to sell it to PowderJect for £55 million ($80 million)—money that will be raised through a share offering and a convertible loan note from Celltech. *JH*

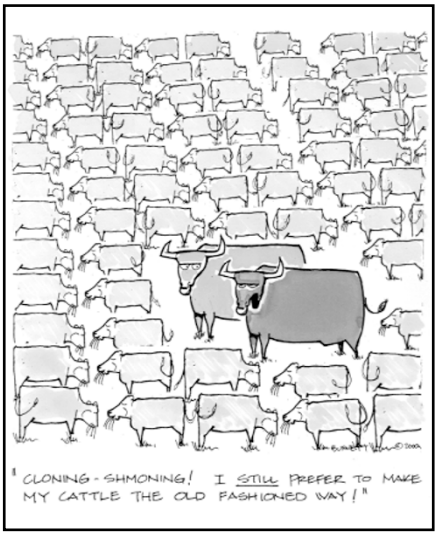
Biotech exec jailed

A former executive of BioCryst Pharmaceuticals (Birmingham, AL) and his wife have been sentenced to federal prison for their part in a plan to falsify clinical trial data on a psoriasis and skin cancer treatment. The couple, who falsified data from clinical trials of the enzyme inhibitor BCX-34, were convicted in March of conspiracy, mail fraud and making false statements to the US Food and Drug Administration. On August 31, a federal court judge in Birmingham sentenced Harry Snyder and Renee Peugeot, who was a nurse in the trials, to three years and two and a half years in prison, respectively. Snyder was also ordered to pay $26,000 restitution to the FDA. BioCryst spokesperson AK Schleusner says Snyder, who was running phase II trials of the drug in 1994 and 1995, was fired in 1995 when false data was discovered; BioCryst subsequently abandoned development of the drug in 1997 after phase III trails were unsuccessful.

The sentencing did not affect the firm's stock price, which was trading at $30 per share in early September. *EN*

IBM invests in life sciences

Computer superpower International Business Machines (IBM; Armonk, NY) on August 16 announced it will invest US$100 million in its new Life Sciences business unit to "develop solutions for the life sciences industry." IBM estimates the IT expenditure of life-science companies will nearly triple to $9 billion by 2003. Among other things, the new division plans to develop internet security for genomic information, improve biological images (particularly proteins), and maximize efficiency of annotated databases. The new division has also absorbed current research-oriented bioinformatics projects, including the DiscoveryLink data management software first licensed on September 11 by Incyte Genomics (Palo Alto, CA); this software speeds up genomic and proteomic analyses by translating information (such as gene sequence, expression, and proteomics data) from a variety of sources into a common text format. The new business directions will complement the development of supercomputer Blue Gene (*Nature Biotechnology*, **18**, 8), according to Caroline Kovac, vice president of IBM's Life Sciences unit (Somers, NY). *AB*



Research collaborations

Company 1	Company 2	$Million	Details
Biogen (Cambridge, MA)	Eos Biotechnology (S. San Francisco, CA)	55	A multi-year R&D collaboration to identify targets for antibody and protein therapeutics for breast cancer based on Eos's gene expression databases. In addition to any royalties, Eos could receive $55 million in upfront, research, and milestone payments. Biogen, which has made a $5 million equity investment in Eos, will have all rights on resulting products.
PPL Therapeutics (Roslin, UK)	Bayer (Research Triangle Park, NC)	40	Bayer will pay $15 million for a 9% stake in PPL and will fund development of marketingof PPL's effort to produce alpha antitrypsin (a protein therapeutic for emphysema and cystic fibrosis) in the milk of transgenic sheep. PPL could also receive $25 million in milestones.
Glycodesign (Toronto, Canada)	Leo Pharmaceuticals (Denmark)	*	A three-year joint venture to develop drug candidates based on glycosylaminoglycans for treating cardiovascular diseases. The firms will share development costs up to phase II trials, at which point they hope to collaborate with a pharmaceutical firm. Leo has the option to commercialize resulting products in Europe and Canada.
Maryland Bioscience Alliance (Annapolis, MD)	Scottish Enterprize (Edinburgh, UK)	*	A cross-Atlantic deal whereby the two biotech communities will share research and resourcesin the hope of improving their access to new markets and encouraging technology transfer.
EPIcyte (San Diego, CA)	Dow Agrosciences (Indianpolis, IN)	*	A multimillion dollar research and product development deal for manufacturing monoclonal antibodies in plants. Part of the agreement calls for EPIcyte to transfer genes for its anti-herpes antibody to Dow, which will have manufacturing rights for 7 years.

*Financial details not disclosed