

TOUCHINGbase

● Camilynn I. Brannan (1963–2002)

We at *Nature Genetics* were saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Cami Brannan, a frequent contributor to and referee for the journal, as well as an accomplished scientist. Her death is a loss not only to her family, friends and admiring colleagues, but to the entire scientific community. A graduate of Harvey Mudd College, Brannan received her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1990 after working with Shirley Tilghman on the structure and function of the imprinted *H19* gene, providing the best evidence that the *H19* RNA is untranslated. She conducted post-doctoral research at the National Cancer Institute under the direction of Nancy Jenkins and Neal Copeland, where she studied *Steel* mice, providing some of the first molecular descriptions of these classical mutants. She also began her studies on imprinting of *Snrpn*, and on the biology of neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1), which she continued in her own laboratory at the University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville. Readers of *Nature Genetics* will be familiar with a significant paper she and her colleagues published last year on an isoform of Nf1 that is specifically associated with learning deficits in a mouse model of the disease. Her most recent work focused, in part, on developing mouse models of Prader–Willi syndrome, an area to which she also made important contributions. Cami Brannan is survived by her husband and son. The University of Florida has established the 'Camilynn Brannan Memorial Fund' to be used for a graduate student fellowship in her honor. Donations, written out to 'University of Florida Foundation', may be sent to Connie Philebaum, Department of Molecular Genetics & Microbiology, University of Florida College of Medicine, 1600 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, Florida 32610-0266, USA.

● Pub demographics

A correspondence published in the 10 October issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that there has been a marked decrease in the proportion of articles from US laboratories being published in top research and medical journals relative to articles from scientists in other countries. Mahbubur Rahman and Tsuguya Fukui of Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine took on the mundane task of counting published articles in *Cell*, *Science*, *Neuron*, *Nature*, *Nature Medicine* and *Nature Genetics* and tabulating each corresponding author's country of affiliation. They found that from 1990 to 2000 the percentage of articles from the US decreased from 69.7% to 58.3% while the percentage of articles from the UK (8% to 9.9%), Japan (2.6% to 3.7%), Australia (0.7% to 1.3%) and Germany (4.4% to 4.9%), among others, all increased. The two compiled data for seven highly ranked clinical research journals as well and found similar trends. But the data have a few significant flaws. First, only data for the corresponding author for the paper was considered, without correcting for international collaborations. Second, *Nature Genetics* and *Nature Medicine* have only been published since 1992 and 1995, respectively. It is also unclear whether the group removed the physics and geology research published in *Science* and *Nature*. What the correspondence didn't reveal is that *Nature Genetics* had the highest overall percentage of non-US papers and that our numbers fluctuated greatly from year to year over the nine years of the study, with an average of 53.7% corresponding authors from the US (Mahbubur Rahman, pers. comm.).

● Survivor for scientists

There is little question that reality television has highlighted some of humanity's least desirable attributes. Whether it be whiney twentysomethings on MTV's *Real World* or conniving backstabbers on *Survivor*, television has doused itself with a little too much of the reality cologne. Now public television in the US is joining the fray with the debut of *Rough Science*, a highbrow reality show that, like the others, has little to do with reality. British viewers may already be familiar with the show, which debuted on the BBC in 2000. The premise is simple—five scientists are placed on a tropical island and are given a series of tasks to accomplish within three days. They have at their disposal some basic supplies combined with their scientific know-how and ingenuity. During the ten episodes the teams are challenged to make a primitive recording device, paper and ink, a camera and film and a underwater light, to name a few. Unlike other reality shows, there is little to be gained by the contestants other than saving face. You won't see a bunch of hard bodies parading around in bikinis either; these are genuine science geeks—though some men dare to reveal the true physique of a scientist by removing their shirts. More information about the show can be found at <http://www.open2.net/science/roughscience/> and <http://www.pbs.org/weta/roughscience/>.

● Mutant of the month

For our first installment of M.O.M. we have chosen *white*, the first mutant to be isolated in *Drosophila* by T.H. Morgan in March 1910. The gene is located on the X chromosome and encodes an eye-pigment-precursor transporter. By crossing his white-eyed flies with red-eyed flies, Morgan confirmed that transmission of *white* correlated with inheritance of the X chromosome during reproduction, linking for the first time the inheritance of a sex-specific trait and a specific chromosome.



Photo courtesy of G. Crumblin/K. Cook.

Questions? Thoughts? Ideas?
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